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INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

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Biography:

Russell Haffner currently serves as the director of the WVBS Online Bible School. He graduated from the Southwest School of Bible Studies in 1993. He is also an alumnus of Texas A&M University where he majored in Architecture. He has served as a minister of the gospel for over 30 years. He has spoken on various lectureships and has held several gospel meetings. He has also published articles in numerous lectureship books.

Russell and his wife Dee are blessed with three children - Ross, John and Kati. Ross and John are both graduates of the Southwest School of Bible Studies and currently serve as ministers in the Lord's church. Kati is married to Tony Lopez who is also currently serving as a minister in the Lord's church.

These Course Notes were developed from the original WVBS Course Notes.

BACKGROUND

The book of James is one of the most practical and needed studies for Christians of every generation. The practical wisdom of this book will impress all who read it. This book is closely connected to the books of Acts (15:13-21; 21:17-25) and Galatians (1:19; 2:9-10). The rebuke of worldliness and hypocrisy in religion by James are urgent messages needed in our day. His condemnation of social inequalities and discriminations has caused some to call James the "Amos of the New Testament." From the beginning to the end of his letter James appeals to Christians to make their lives consistent with the profession of their faith.

Protestant reformer, Martin Luther (1483-1546), called the book of James "an epistle of straw," implying that the inspired letter was of lesser value and did not have the same authority as other books in the Bible. He even tried to have it removed from the Scriptures by putting it in the appendix of his translation of the New Testament into the German language. He found its emphasis on "works" unacceptable. He thought the teaching of James concerning the necessity of "works" contradicted Paul's teaching on "faith" in the book of Romans. However, there is no contradiction between the inspired books of Romans and James. The contradiction is between Martin Luther's understanding of Romans and what it actually teaches. The book of Romans does **not** teach that we are saved by faith only without works. The Bible clearly teaches that works of obedience are required for salvation. God is not going to save those who disobey Him. It is an active, obedient faith that saves.

INTRODUCTION

WRITER

We want to make it clear that God is the author of this book, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). The **writer** whom God used to reveal this epistle was James (James 1:1). A man named James being the writer of this epistle (letter) has never been seriously questioned. The question to be answered is, "To which James does this refer?"

- A. There are four men who are named James in the New Testament. Two of these are almost unknown and a third was martyred in A.D. 44. This leaves James the half-brother of Jesus.
 - 1. There was a James who was the father of Judas (not Judas Iscariot) (Luke 6:16).
 - 2. There was James, the brother of Jude (sometimes called Joses), the son of Alphaeus (Matthew 10:3).
 - 3. James, son of Zebedee and Salome, brother of John and one of the apostles of the Lord (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19; Luke 5:10). In the year A.D. 44, he was put to death by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1-2).
 - 4. James, a half-brother in the flesh of Christ (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; Galatians 1:18-19).
- B. Two of these are almost unknown, the third was martyred in A.D. 44.
 - 2. This leaves James the half-brother of Jesus, and he was well known enough to identify himself using only the name James.
 - 3. Most scholars believe this James (the half-brother of Jesus) was the writer of this letter.
 - 4. [For additional information concerning this issue please see the appendices - JAMES, THE BROTHER OF THE LORD.]

LANGUAGE

This letter was originally written in Koiné Greek. The word "Koiné" means "common." This is a fitting name because it was the common language used by the people in that day. God's word is not reserved for theologians and scholars.

DATE OF WRITING

An early date for the writing of this letter is the most popular view. Historical tradition tells us that James, the half-brother of Jesus, was martyred for the faith in AD 62 or 63 by being stoned to death. If James died in A.D. 62 or 63 the letter had to be written before that time. Also, the character of the teaching indicates an early date. The epistle of James apparently comes after the persecutions of A.D. 33 and A.D. 41. However, the controversy over accepting Gentiles into the church is not mentioned, so it probably had not yet become an issue (A.D. 48). Therefore, we will set the date for the writing of this letter at 45-48 A.D.

TO WHOM WAS THIS EPISTLE WRITTEN?

James probably intended this letter for Christians, who had previously followed the Jewish faith, scattered throughout the Roman Empire (James 1:1). Some feel it was written primarily to the Jewish Christians in the eastern dispersion. This dispersion had come about because of attacks from unbelieving Jews. Compare Acts 8:1-4 (approximately 33 A.D.); Acts 12:1 (approximately 41 A.D.). These people had looked to James as an important leader and teacher when they were living in Palestine.

PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EPISTLE

This epistle seems to be written to instruct those Christians who had been scattered because of their Christian faith, to keep them from worldly temptations and to encourage them in the trials they were facing (James 1:2). James was written to correct their improper attitudes and behavior, which had come as a result of their trials. He wrote to encourage them in their difficulties. He warned them against spiritual negligence and forgetting their duties.

James wished for his readers to become perfect (complete, mature). Spiritual immaturity was a major problem in the church both then and today. God is looking for mature Christians to do His work – but usually He finds immature Christians, like little children who cannot even get along with each other.

KEY VERSES

James 1:2-5; 13-15; 1:27; 2:26; 3:1; 4:7, 17; 5:13, 16

KEY WORDS

The key words in this epistle include: "faith" (16 times), "Lord" (15 times), "works" (13 times), "law" (10 times)

MAIN THEMES OF THIS EPISTLE

- A. How to live through trials.
 - 1. Not just existing through them, but living through them by remaining spiritually strong and faithful.
 - 2. The first chapter deals with the purpose or value of trials.
 - 3. The right view of trials is presented, teaching that wisdom is needed to understand and accept that good can come through suffering.
 - 4. James assures the readers that temptations come from within the man himself, and cannot be thought of as coming from God, because God gives only good gifts.

- B. The "Word of Truth."
 - 1. That "word" is the tool God uses to make us His children.
 - 2. Since the word has the power to do this, it ought to be given the proper respect and attention it deserves.
 - 3. It must be received with meekness, it must be acted upon and it must be put into active use in a person's life.

- C. The sin of partiality (James 2:1-13).
 - 1. The partiality they were showing to some people was an example of their inconsistency in practicing pure and undefiled religion.
 - 2. It must have been a problem of the early church.
 - 3. Just as those who were hearers and not doers lacked control of their tongues and did not exhibit the love that led to visiting the fatherless and the widows. They also showed they did not possess the right attitude toward the poor.

- D. True religion must show itself by making the proper response.
 - 1. It is not merely the **hearer** who is saved by the word, but the **doer**.
 - 2. James shows that faith, as the foundational 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 deceiving himself.

3. There must be more than just faith; works must complete faith for it to achieve its purpose of justification.
4. There are some who believe they will be saved by "works only," but this is also a false doctrine and an overreaction to the "faith only" teaching.

E. The bridling of the tongue.

1. This relates to a Christian's responsibility to control his speech (James 3:1-12).
2. Control of the tongue is an indication of pure religion.

F. The analysis of true wisdom.

1. This refers to the teacher's wisdom (James 3:13-18).
2. The meekness of wisdom is an indication of pure religion.

G. Warnings against strife and contention.

1. Wisdom from above (James 3:13-18) leads to peace and righteousness. Therefore, the strife and fighting among them was from the devil, not God.
2. Since the devil was the source of their lusts and desires craving worldly satisfaction, their prayers went unanswered.
3. There is a call by James for repentance and humility to bring his readers back into the favor of God.

H. Worldly strife.

1. James corrects a specific sin growing out of this strife — evil speech against brethren and unrighteous personal judgment.
2. We cannot have a wrong attitude toward our brethren and be right toward God (1 John 4:20-21).
3. Rebuke of one another is not to be couched in harsh terms as though the one doing the rebuking were God Himself.

- I. Warnings against planning activities without thinking of God.
 - 1. They were, in effect, boasting they could live independently of God.
- J. The proper perspective the church should have toward rich men.
 - 1. The rich men James uses as an example were actually visitors to the congregation (James 2:2).
 - 2. James used them to put such unjust people in the proper perspective before the church.
 - 3. 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 (Romans 12:14-21).

MAIN EMPHASIS OF THIS EPISTLE

The practice of true religion.

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

<u>What James Said</u>	<u>What Jesus Said</u>
James 1:5	Matthew 7:7
James 1:17	Matthew 7:11
James 1:22	Matthew 7:24
James 2:5	Matthew 5:3
James 2:8	Matthew 7:12; 22:39
James 3:12	Matthew 7:16
James 3:18	Matthew 5:9
James 4:11	Matthew 7:1
James 5:2	Matthew 6:19
James 5:10	Matthew 5:12
James 5:12	Matthew 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 EXPOSITION

CHAPTER ONE

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

1:1 *James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.*

James - There are four men who are named James in the New Testament. Two of these are almost unknown and a third was martyred in A.D. 44. This leaves James the half-brother of Jesus.

- A. He was well known enough by the brethren to simply use his name to identify himself as the writer of this letter (Acts 15:13, 19).
- B. Most scholars believe this James (the half-brother of Jesus) to be the writer of this epistle.
 - 1. Of course, God is the author of this book.
 - 2. James is simply the writer God chose to deliver His words through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:20-21, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

- C. [For additional information please see the appendices - JAMES, THE BROTHER OF THE LORD.]

a bondservant - It is interesting to note that the writers of the New Testament who directly identify themselves by name always call themselves servants (DOULOS): Paul (Romans 1:1), Peter (2 Peter 1:1), Jude (Jude 1) and John (Revelation 1:1). The writers of the New Testament were men of humility.

- A. James was a "bondservant" of God.
 - 1. The word "bondservant" is a translation of the Greek word (DOULOS) meaning, "a slave, involuntarily or voluntarily; frequently therefore in a qualified sense of subjection."

2. This indicates that James (and indeed all Christians) should be in total submission to God.

a) Christians are purchased at great cost. This should create great loyalty and love.

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

b) Jesus loved us so much that He redeemed us with His own blood.

1 Peter 1:18-19, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

c) Therefore, Christians belong to God.

1 Corinthians 6:20, "For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

3. Like James, Christians should consider themselves slaves of God. It should be understood that Christians choose to voluntarily become slaves to God the Father and Christ.

of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ - James describes himself as a bondservant (slave) "of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." There are at least three implications in this description:

- A. It implies **absolute obedience**. A slave has no rights and he is owned by his master.
- B. It implies **absolute humility**. This is a person who loses himself in service to his master.
- C. It implies **absolute loyalty**. This person is one who does not consider his own preferences, only his loyalty to his master.

To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad - We know that the phrase "twelve tribes" is being used in a figurative sense because, in Christ, there are no tribal distinctions. The phrase is used in this same sense by Paul in Acts 26:7, where we know he was speaking to them as Christians. This phrase was used by James to indicate Christians all over the world. Scholars have suggested three possible meanings for the phrase, "twelve tribes which are scattered abroad."

- A. Some scholars say this phrase refers to all Jews outside Jerusalem.
- B. Other scholars say this phrase refers to all the **Christian** Jews outside Jerusalem.
- C. However, from the context we must conclude that this phrase refers to all Christians.
 1. The church is the true Israel of God (Galatians 6:16).
 2. The book of James was written to all Christians scattered throughout the world (whether of Jewish or Gentile background).
 3. This phrase, "twelve tribes," is a figurative representation of the true Israel of God the church (Romans 4:11-12; Galatians 3:7; 6:16).

Romans 2:28-29, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God."

Galatians 3:28-29, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

4. Physical Israel was scattered by the various exiles she suffered during her long history.
5. Spiritual Israel, the disciples of the Lord, were "scattered abroad" through the persecution directed largely by Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:1-4), and so could properly be referred to as "the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (ESV).

Greetings - The Greek word translated as "greetings" comes from the Greek word meaning, "joy to you." The word is used to express a wish for happiness for those being addressed. The word was a common expression used often in the letters of the day.

1:2 *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,*

My brethren - The word "brethren" suggests that James is pleading with them as members of a spiritual family. This is additional proof that the phrase, "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" refers to Christians. All Christians (those who have obeyed God's requirements for salvation) are part of the family of God (Matthew 12:47-50) being adopted into the family (Romans 8:15-17).

count it all joy - The trials themselves are not joyous. The "joy" is knowing that the proving of your faith works patience.

when you fall into - The Greek word here (PERIPIPTŌ) means, "to fall into as to be encompassed, to fall into something to be surrounded."

- A. The best time to decide how we should respond to a temptation is not after we are already caught up in the trial. It is always best to decide how to respond before the trial begins.
- B. Example: How will we respond when we have an opportunity to take something that is not ours?
 - 1. We should have already decided before the temptation comes that we will never take something that does not belong to us.
 - 2. We should not put ourselves in a position that we must decide while in the midst of stress, temptation and despair.
 - 3. How many foolish decisions could be avoided by **not** making choices when angry or under stress?

various - This comes from the word (POIKILOS) meaning, "of various sorts" or "many kinds."

- A. This 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.
- B. As Christians mature they should be better able to overcome these trials.

- C. Those things which were once a temptation should no longer be tempting to us.

trials - The Greek word here (PEIRASMOS) refers to those trials or temptations that God allows to come upon a Christian with the purpose of benefitting the Christian's faith. These Christians were undergoing many trials (James 2:6-7; 5:1-3; 5:6; 5:13-15) and were being taught to be joyous concerning the growth these trials would bring to their faith. Trials represent an outward opportunity to sin, while temptations refer to the inward desire to sin.

- A. God Himself, does **not** tempt anyone.

James 1:13-14, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed."

- B. **If** God placed within us the desire to sin, it would be part of our nature to sin. Then it would be God's fault if we sinned.
- C. God would be unjust if He condemned us for sinning.
- D. However, God **does not** place within man the desire to sin. This would contradict the very nature of God.
 - 1. God did not create us so that we had to sin.
 - 2. He clearly gives us freewill—the freedom to make our own decisions.
 - 3. Everyone proves on a daily basis that he or she does, in fact, have the freedom to do or not to do various activities.
 - 4. No matter how desirable a particular temptation is, it is able to be resisted.
 - 5. We desire to sin because of the momentary pleasures of sin, not because God wants us to do evil.
- E. We should not feel guilty just because we are tempted.
- F. We should also remember that we are not helpless to submit to temptations. God's help is available (Hebrews 4:16; 2 Peter 2:9).

1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

1:3 *knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*

knowing that the testing of your faith - This comes from the Greek word (DOKIMION) that is sometimes translated as "trying" or "proving." The word means, "to test, examine, prove, to see whether a thing is genuine or not; to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy."

A. 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.

1. Then when you come out you will be as pure gold or silver.

1 Peter 1:6-7, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

2. The trying ("testing") gives us a chance to prove what we are made of as Christians.

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

produces - This comes from the Greek word (KATERGAZOMAI) meaning, "to work fully, that is, accomplish; by implication to finish, fashion, perform, work (out)."

patience - This comes from the word (HUPOMONĒ) meaning, "cheerful (or hopeful) endurance." This Greek word is compound word of HUPO (meaning - "under") and MENŌ (meaning "to remain or abide"). Patience is what enables a Christian to continually resist the pressure of external circumstances. Patience does not mean to "take whatever comes along." The best meaning is active endurance. It is not the ability to wait, but how we act while we are waiting.

A. If you were on a battlefield and the enemy were overrunning your lines, some would flee. Others would stay and continue to fight on and on. These were called HUPOMONĒ.

- B. When one overcomes the trial, he comes out with more steadfastness and patience. The first trial is often very hard to overcome, but it becomes easier the next time and even easier the next time, etc.
- C. If your attitude is to "count it all joy" in your trials, you will come out more steadfast, and with more patience (cf. Romans 5:3; Hebrews 12:5-12; Luke 21:19; Matthew 24:13; Romans 12:12; James 1:12; 2 Corinthians 6:4; 12:12; 2 Timothy 3:10).
- D. Impatience and unbelief usually go together just as patience and faith do (cf. Hebrews 6:12).

1:4 *But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

But let patience have its perfect work - In other words, "let steadfastness have its full effect."

that you may be perfect - "Perfect" does **NOT** mean sinless. "Perfect" comes from the Greek word (TELEIOS) meaning, "brought to its end, finished, wanting nothing necessary to completeness, full grown, mature" (Ephesians 3:19; 4:13).

- A. Illustration: If I had a chair falling apart that was held together by cross-head screws, I would need a cross-head (Phillips) screwdriver to put it back together. If I asked you for a screwdriver and you handed me a beautiful, chrome plated, standard (slotted) screwdriver it would do me no good! If you then handed me an old, rusty, cross-head screwdriver it would work better because it would fit the purpose! This has nothing to do with how beautiful it looks but rather, is it fit for the purpose?
 1. A Christian who is walking in the light (1 John 1:7) is fit for the purposes of God, and thus perfect!
 2. We do not go through trials to be sinless, BUT to be perfectly fit for God's purposes.

and complete "Complete" comes from the Greek word (HOLOKLĒROS) meaning, "complete in all its parts, entire, whole."

1 Thessalonians 5:23, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1. In this verse Paul is not asking for the soul, spirit and body to be together, but to be sound and without blemish.
2. This describes a Christian who lacks none of the graces that are essential to the Christ-like life: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love (2 Peter 1:5-7).
3. This signifies whole or complete in every part.
 - a) Therefore, a Christian will need to endure many kinds of trials to be able to come to full maturity in Christ.
 - b) If we use afflictions, ridicule, pain, sufferings, adversity or any other trials for the purpose that God intended we will come out more like God wants us to be.
 - c) If we frustrate those purposes, we will frustrate the reason for God allowing those trials to come.
 - d) We will have gone through bad times for nothing.

Romans 5:3-5, "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

lacking nothing - This is only referring to the spiritual things, like the following verse:

Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

If any of you lacks wisdom - The "wisdom" James has in mind here, is the wisdom needed in order to see the value in trials.

- A. This wisdom is necessary to our understanding God's providence.
- B. He is allowing the trials to come upon us for our good (cf. Romans 8:28; Hebrews 12:2-13).
- C. The source of all true wisdom is God; the method of obtaining it is prayer (cf. Matthew 7:7; 1 Kings 3:5-15; Proverbs 2:6).

1. In this context, James is not referring to ordinary wisdom, but the wisdom that comes from above to see the value in trials.
2. James elaborates on this wisdom later in the letter (James 3:13-18).

let him ask of God - The Greek word translated as "ask" is present, active, imperative that literally means, "let him keep on asking." It is asking for the wisdom that comes from putting into practice the principles and instructions given to us in the revelation of God's word.

who gives to all liberally - "Liberally" comes from the Greek word (HAPLŌS) meaning, "bountifully, simply, openly, frankly, sincerely."

Ephesians 3:20, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us."

1. Some look upon God as limited. They think of God as a force field around the entire universe.
2. But God is a personal God, NOT an impersonal force.
3. He is intelligent and has emotions, such as love, mercy and compassion.

and without reproach, and it will be given to him - God does not rebuke us for our lack of wisdom. He provides to us what we need for growth and better understanding.

1:6 *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.*

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting - Not having doubts can be very difficult. However, God can still give us blessings even when all of our doubts are not completely cleared up. Those who prayed for Peter in Acts 12 did not believe it even when he was at the door, but God still answered their prayers. Abraham did not believe he would have a child by Sarah even after God had told him so.

for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind - There must be no wavering, nor debating, nor indecision in the asking. There is an old saying that says, "Pray as if everything depends on God, and work as if everything depends on you."

1:7 *For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;*

For let not that man - This refers to the man that lacks faith.

suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord - He will not receive one thing that he asks for. The context limits "anything" to those things he has prayed for. Of course, the doubting, unstable one who is praying may receive many good things in life (Matthew 5:45), but not in answer to his prayer.

1:8 *he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

he is a double-minded man - The phrase "double-minded" comes from the Greek word (DIPSUCHOS) meaning, "wavering, uncertain, doubting." The idea here is partly wanting God's way and partly wanting our own way. It describes a man who is wishing to have the best of two worlds.

Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

James 4:8, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

1. We can be weak in our faith in many areas.
2. 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.
3. This person is a hypocrite.

unstable in all his ways - The word "unstable" is translated from the Greek word (AKATASTATOS) meaning, "inconstant, restless, staggering, reeling - like a drunken man."

1:9 *Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation,*

Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation - Those who are humble should be satisfied with the honor ("exaltation") of being a servant of Christ. There is no higher station or manner of life that anyone can achieve.

1:10 *but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.*

but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away - The rich man who trusts in his own riches (Mark 10:24) has no reason to rejoice,

unless he humbles himself to become a servant of Christ. The uncertainty of his wealth is like the flowers that briefly bloom and then quickly vanish away.

- A. The context of being double-minded and unstable is still under consideration.
 - 1. The Christian should not be unstable in life, but he should glory in his life as a servant of Christ.
 - 2. Focusing on wealth will cause us to underestimate what is really important in life.

- B. There can be no respect of a person's wealth or estate. James will come back to this later in this letter (James 5:7-9). Everyone is equal in the church!
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. 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.

1:11 *For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So, the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.*

For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes - In Palestine this was a common occurrence. 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.

So, the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits - Worldly wealth is not permanent. It is as short lived as the green grass and flowers under the scorching winds and blazing sun.

2 Corinthians 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."

1:12 *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

Blessed is the man - "Blessed" comes from the Greek word (MAKARIOS) that means more than simply "happy." It has a deeper meaning of, "spiritually prosperous" (1 Timothy 1:11; 6:15). The man (rich or poor), who endures trials and does not break down under them is truly blessed because he is spiritually prosperous.

who endures temptation - We should not think of the word "endures" as him going through the temptation just because he has to face it. The meaning here is that 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 defeated in sin.

for when he has been approved - "Approved" comes from the Greek word (DOKIMOS) meaning, "tried and found to be true or authentic" (same as verse 3).

- A. God allows us to be tested along the way. Consider, it was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted (Mark 1:12; cf. 1 Peter 1:6-7).
- B. Knowing how to use trials causes the Christian to have an attitude of joy in meeting these challenges. The Christian who does **not** understand trials or how he is supposed to use them becomes frustrated and asks, "Why, God? Why me?"

he will receive the crown of life - "Crown" comes from the Greek word (STEPHANOS) that describes the crown given to a winner in an athletic contest. It is the victor's crown (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:19) It is a crown of exultation.

- A. Our faith is sometimes stronger when it comes to biblical commands than biblical promises.
- B. However, if we do not truly believe in the promises it is ridiculous to do the commands.

which the Lord has promised to those who love Him - Love is the spiritual motivation behind every command in this section. Someone once said, "Where there is love for God there is surrender and obedience."

1:13 *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*

Let no one say when he is tempted - The Greek word (PEIRAZŌMENOS) translated as "tempted" in this verse is a present participle meaning "while being tempted."

- A. In the course of being tempted one should not try to justify himself into yielding to the temptation by thinking he can blame others — including God.
 - 1. James is making a contrast between the kind of excuse a tempted person might make with the actual truth about temptation.
 - 2. Some Jews blamed God for sin.
 - a) They observed an evil tendency in man, which they called YETZER HARA.
 - b) In this way they attempted to excuse themselves from their evil deeds.

"I am tempted by God" - We should not think that just because God permits us to be tested, He is therefore to blame if we yield to the temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

for God cannot be tempted by evil - The truth here expressed is that God's nature is such that He is not susceptible to evil or sin.

- A. This is not the same thing as the testing of God's holiness ("try Me") in the Old Testament (Malachi 3:10).
- B. The Greek word (KAKOS) translated as "evil" is "that which is contrary to God's nature and law."
 - 1. Evil is not an entity — a thing or a person.
 - 2. Evil, wrong, transgression and lawlessness have to do with God's nature and His law.
 - 3. Anything that we do contrary to the nature and law of God is evil.
 - a) It is evil to murder because God said so!
 - b) It is against His nature.

- C. God did not create evil. He made laws and when Satan disobeyed the laws, **that** was evil.
- D. When we are tested by God, Satan may use this trial to seduce us into sinning.
- E. Sin appeals to the entire personality: emotion (promises); intellect (facts); willpower (commands), just as the gospel does.

nor does He Himself tempt anyone - This is an emphatic statement, "He, Himself tempts no man!" God does not put inside a person the uncontrollable desires to do evil. God made man with free will — each man has the opportunity to choose whether to follow God or to go against Him. Some mistakenly say from this circumstance that God created evil. This is in no way true. God giving man the freewill to choose evil is not the same thing as creating evil.

1:14 *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.*

But each one is tempted - James now explains the real source of temptation. We also see the process of temptation. First one is "drawn away" by his own lust and enticed. The word "enticed" literally means, "to bait", figuratively, "to trap by enticing." One is trapped or ensnared by their own desires.

Guy N. Woods in, *A Commentary on The Epistle of James*, said the following, "As a fisherman uses the most attractive sort of bait, or the most alluring fly to induce the fish to strike, so Satan tempts us by means of those things which are to us most desirable."

when he is drawn away by his own desires - He is drawn away by his own desire to do evil. Note the use of the word "when," not "if." The phrase, "drawn away" comes from the Greek word (EXELKŌ) that was originally used to describe a lure on a fishing line or bait in a hunter's trap.

- A. Sin drags or pulls us (James 4:1) by our own desires.
- B. These evil desires are not given by God (2 Timothy 4:3; 2 Peter 3:3; Jude 1:18-19).

and enticed - The Greek word (DELEAZŌ) translated as "enticed" was originally 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.

- A. This shows us that modern philosophers are wrong when they tell us we can blame our surrounding circumstances, natural forces or inherited factors.
- B. Whenever we are faced with a temptation we should stop looking at the bait and focus instead on the consequences of sin and the judgment of our God.

1:15 *Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*

Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin - James now uses terms regarding conception and birth to explain the process of lust and sin.

- A. Lust dwelt upon (or entertained in the heart) brings forth sin; for as a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7).
 - 1. At the point where one has the desire, there is no sin.
 - 2. At the point when one is drawn to it, there is no sin.
 - 3. It is when the desire for self-gratification is yielded to, that the deadly offspring of sin is brought forth.
- B. Just as sin begets death (James 1:15), God our Father begets us as His children.

and sin, when it is full-grown - The Greek word translated as full-grown (APOTELEŌ) comes from the Greek participle (TELEOS) meaning, "having been fully formed." In other words, it is completed and has reached its maturity.

brings forth death - This refers to spiritual death, not physical death (James 5:20; Genesis 3; Romans 6:23). Sin will bring forth spiritual death unless the Christian repents of the sin and returns to God.

1 John 5:16, "If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that."

The "sin leading to death" refers to continuing in sin with never repenting of the sin until one physically dies, it is a sin unto death.

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

Hebrews 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 Corinthians 9:27, "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

1:16 *Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.*

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren - This is a transition and may mean:

- A. "Do not be deceived about the source of temptation, it is not from God," referring to the previous section, or
- B. "Do not be deceived to the fact that God is a giver of only good and does not change," referring to the next verse that there is no variation or fickleness with God.

1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

Every good gift - This refers to the act of giving.

and every perfect gift - This refers to the gift itself.

is from above - This tells us two things:

- A. God never gives bad gifts.
- B. Every good gift we have ever received has its ultimate source in God.

and comes down from the Father of lights - In the Scriptures God is often connected with lights (Matthew 24:29).

1 John 1:5, "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."

with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning - The comparison being made is like one going to sleep in the shade of a tree but when he wakes up, he is in the sun.

- A. This also can be used to refer to the apparent variation that the heavenly bodies have:

1. Length of day or night.
 2. Variation of the course of the sun with the seasons.
 3. Different levels of brightness of the stars or planets.
- B. Variation is characteristic of all created things, but God is the Creator of all things (including sun, moon, stars, etc.) and there is no variation in Him!
- C. Because God has no variation He constantly gives us good (Matthew 5:45).
1. The gifts God bestows on us are, like Himself, free from anything that is dark, corrupt or improper.
 2. Satan never truly gives us any "gift," because we end up paying dearly for the things he gives.
- D. God, being so good, would not and could not be the father of temptations.

1:18 *Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.*

Of His own will - God is NOT obligated to offer us salvation! He could have just let man sin and then said, "Too bad!" He loved us enough to provide us a way of salvation.

He brought us forth - "Brought us forth" is the same as James 1:15, "it gives birth." In this verse the phrase is the aorist tense, indicating a point in time; it refers to the point of salvation which is in baptism. It is in baptism that we are brought forth out of spiritual death when we obey the truth, the gospel.

1 Peter 1:22-25, "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because 'All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.' Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you."

1 Corinthians 4:15, "For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

Many passages speak of the rebirth of those souls that are dead in trespasses and sin (1 Peter 1:3; Titus 3:5; 1 John 2:29; 3:19; 4:7; 5:1; John 3:5).

By the word of truth - Notice this is not just by words BUT by the word of truth.

- A. There is no scripturally sound explanation of the new birth that makes it independent of the word (preached, read, or spoken) and obedience to the ordinances of that word.
- B. 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.
- C. Any confidence a man has that he is saved, based on some subjective feeling apart from obedience to God's word, is not the assurance that the New Testament gives regarding forgiveness of sins (1 John 2:3).

that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures - The first-fruits 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. Deuteronomy 18:4).

- A. The term "firstfruits" can be used to represent different things in the Scriptures:

- 1. It is NOT used here in the same sense as:

1 Corinthians 16:15, "I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints—"

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

- 2. It is used here in the same sense as:

Revelation 14:4, "These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These

were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb."

Jeremiah 2:3, "Israel was holiness to the LORD, The firstfruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend; Disaster will come upon them,' says the LORD."

3. Not the first **called**, but the first **set aside** as God's increase.
- B. While Christ is the true fulfillment of the firstfruits, James is saying to the Christians that they too are a "kind of" firstfruits.
1. In other words, God is seeking to perfect the character of the Christians so that they may be examples of what He, through the gospel of Christ, is able to make of ordinary human beings.
 2. Christians are also designed to be the special possession of God and the pledge and earnest of a redeemed people.

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

1:19 *So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;*

So then, my beloved brethren - Once again James addresses these Christians as "beloved brethren." He uses this phrase to indicate his close spiritual relationship with them and his deep and abiding affection for them.

let every man be swift to hear - If we consider the context of this verse we will understand that this does not teach how important it is for them to be better listeners. The subject of verses 18 and 22 is the word of God and James is not changing his subject in the middle of the passage.

- A. This is actually teaching that they (and we) ought to be eager to hear God's word.
- B. Christians must come to worship with a readiness of mind (Acts 17:10-11).
- C. The Scriptures often emphasizes the importance of listening to God's word.

Proverbs 1:5, "A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,"

Acts 10:33, "So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

1 Thessalonians 2:13, "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."

1 Peter 2:1-3, "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

slow to speak - Once again understanding the context is of utmost importance if we are to know the meaning this phrase. The idea here is being "slow to speak back" against God's word. In Antioch (Acts 13:45) the Jews became jealous and contradicted the word spoken by Paul and in Galatians 4:16 others became angry at his teaching.

slow to wrath - This means slow to become angry at the teaching of the word. A man could accept God's word when first becoming a Christian, but then be against other parts of God's word when he learns more.

- A. 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 (Jeremiah 36).
- B. We should note that James is not talking to people who do not believe, he is talking to Christians.
 - 1. For example, there are some Christians who grow angry toward God's word concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage.
 - 2. There are some who do not like what God's word says about it, so they do not accept it, and they do not teach it correctly.
 - 3. We must warn them about their attitude toward the word as James did to the brethren of his day, even if it results in our persecution!

1:20 *for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*

for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God - Christians who speak in a wrathful, argumentative and abusive spirit against the word are offenders of the gospel, not defenders of it.

Ephesians 4:15, "But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—"

1 John 3:18, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

1:21 *Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

Therefore, lay aside all filthiness - "lay aside" comes from the Greek word (APOTITHĒMI) meaning, "to put off or aside or away." It is laying aside or putting away like laying to the side a dirty garment. "Filthiness" comes from the Greek word (RHUPARIA) meaning, "moral uncleanness, to defile, dishonor." This comes from a Greek 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).

Sermon idea: "The Devil Will Provide."

1. If you want to do something evil, the opportunity will be provided.
2. Example: when Jonah was preparing to flee from the presence of the Lord, a ship was available.

Romans 13:14, "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."

and overflow of wickedness - This overflow means surplus and implies evil is not a normal part of character, but an excess.

Romans 6:12-14, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

and receive with meekness - This is a key phrase of the passage. Those who think that all that is needed to be pleasing to God is to hear the word suffer from the worst kind of self-delusion. The word must be received with the proper attitude of meekness.

- A. Meekness (PRAUTĒS) is often defined as, "mildness of disposition, gentleness." However, we should never think that this word means "weakness." This Greek word is used of a wild horse brought under control when using a rein. It must be clearly understood, therefore, that the meekness shown by the Lord and commanded to the believers is the fruit of power.
- B. 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 the power of Deity at His command.
- C. We actually show meekness when we submit to the power and will of our Lord.
 - 1. We are to receive, accept and show approval.
 - 2. Some people have said, "God's word says it; I believe it; and that settles it!"
 - 3. It would be more accurate to say, "God's word says it; that settles it!" I do not have to agree with God's word to make it true. It is already settled because it is God's word! (Psalm 119:89)
- D. The teachable person receives the instruction without resentment and without anger and is, therefore, able to face the truth of God's word, even when it hurts and condemns.

the implanted word - The idea is of the truth becoming infused and engrafted in our hearts and minds. The essence or tendency of God's word is to root itself in our hearts (Matthew 13:21). This means that one is not born with it. In Matthew 13:21, the sower had to sow the seed; it was not there originally.

- A. Why should we receive it with meekness? Because it is able to save our souls!
- B. Do we implant enough seed in our hearts?

1. A farmer who puts a tiny amount of seed on an acre does not reap much of a crop compared to one who plants an abundance of seed.
2. It is the same with one who does not spend much time studying God's word.
3. He is bound to be weak spiritually. Not enough seed is being *planted!*

which is able to save your souls - Any conversion apart from the word of God is not true Christian conversion. It is unscriptural and unacceptable to God. God's word is not a dead or inactive thing, but is the source of salvation (Hebrews 4:12). If the word of God is going to judge us, and it is (John 12:48-50), we had better know what it says.

Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

1:22 *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

But be doers of the word - James is writing to Christians, so this applies to all. This is the key verse to the letter. Jesus hates the hypocrisy of those who "say and do not" (Matthew 23:3). What about those who hear and do not?

and not hearers only - Those who hear, read or study the "perfect law of liberty" but do nothing about it receive no benefit.

deceiving yourselves - This is the second time James returns to the idea of one deceiving himself.

- A. We are deceiving ourselves into thinking we are in good standing before God when we frequently hear the word, but do not do anything about it.
 1. It is like a congregation that constantly brags about how good their preacher is, and how good his sermons are, but they do not apply the lessons they learn to their lives to make changes.
 2. In this way, when they neglect to obey the word of God, their religion is vain.
- B. Difficulties are always multiplied when one deceives himself.

1:23 *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;*

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer - This is talking about a person who takes no action in response to God's word. Christian must be hearers and doers. We can also see the foolishness of the "faith only" doctrine in this lack of action.

he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror - Seeing one's face in a mirror is a time to evaluate. The mirror shows the true appearance of the person.

1:24 *for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.*

for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was - It is like getting up in the morning and looking in the mirror and saying to yourself, "I need to get cleaned up." But you immediately forget what you saw in the mirror and fail to make the necessary corrections. All day long people can see what you forgot to fix.

A. God's word is a mirror and you can see what is wrong in your life.

B. However, it is foolish to do nothing about the problems.

1:25 *But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty - The "perfect law of liberty" is God's word, the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2). The Law of Moses is never called a "law of liberty" (cf. Galatians 5:1).

A. This "law of liberty" is the same as "that which is perfect" in 1 Corinthians 13:10.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10, "Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away."

a) "That which is perfect" has to be the completion of "that which is in part."

- b) That "which is in part" was the revelation of God's word in prophesying and inspired teaching (1 Corinthians 13:8-9).
- B. Those who closely examine (study) God's word will see what is wrong in their lives.
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. Nevertheless, its precepts still require obedience (Romans 8:2).
- C. The term "law of liberty" is actually a paradox, for law in its very nature is restraint or limitation rather than freedom.
- D. One can truly understand the gospel of Christ only when he understands this paradox, because failure to understand it leads either to legalism or to unrestrained excess.
 - 1. There can be true liberty only where there is law.
 - 2. Law is a restraint; where there is no restraint the most hopeless and abject slavery exists.
- E. James himself shows that the "law of liberty" does not mean that the Christian is free from regulation.
 - 1. If one shows partiality and is without pity for the poor, he sins (James 2:9) and will be judged without mercy (James 2:13).
 - 2. If one errs as a teacher, he will receive the heavier judgment (James 3:1).
 - 3. If one is worldly, he becomes God's enemy (James 4:4) and is a sinner (James 4:8).
 - 4. If one swears, he falls under judgment (James 5:13).

and continues in it - "Continues" comes from the Greek word (PARAMENŌ) meaning, "to stay near, that is, abide, continue."

- A. The good hearer:

1. Looks deeply and with much thought into the Scriptures.
 2. Remains with the Scriptures, not allowing the world to distract him from the "perfect law."
- B. The perfecting of character, and thus our salvation, depends upon both a continual contemplation of the word and translating the word into fruit in our lives.
- C. Ephesians 2:10 tells us our purpose as Christians here on this earth (good works).

Ephesians 2:10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

- D. We must not only continually look into God's word, but we must also do what it requires.
- E. Christians do this not for a means of forgiveness, but because it is a result of our becoming a new man in Christ (Romans 6:6; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:23-24; Colossians 3:10).

and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does - The "doer" is the one who is blessed, not the one who just hears.

John 13:17, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

Matthew 7:24-27, "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

- A. 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:
1. The tongue
 2. Benevolence

3. Purity of life

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 Corinthians 9:21; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Jeremiah 31:31-34, cf. Hebrews 8:10-13; 10:16-17).
 2. A person, by exercising his liberty, elects to be born again of water and the spirit (John 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 - Romans 8:1-10.
 4. As a volunteer, who counts the cost (Matthew 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, 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 (Galatians 5:1,13; 1 Corinthians 8:9; 10:23-32; 1 Peter 2:16).
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SEVEN REASONS WHY THE GOSPEL IS PERFECT

1. It was given by the Holy Spirit (John 14 and 16).
 2. It will judge us in the last day (John 12:48; Romans 2:26).
 3. It contains all things necessary for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).
 4. It cannot be improved upon (Psalm 19:7; Galatians 1:6-9).
 5. It cannot be added to (Jude 3; Revelation 21:18-19).
 6. It is complete for its given purpose, bringing salvation (Romans 1:14-16).
 7. It shall never pass away (Matthew 5:18).
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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' (Galatians 6:2; 2 Corinthians 9:21); a 'law of the Spirit of life' (Romans 8:20); a 'law of liberty' (James 1:25; 2:12); the 'law of love' (Romans 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."

1:26 *If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.*

If anyone among you thinks he is religious This refers to a man who deceives himself and thinks himself to be religious. The word "religious" carries the idea of external "rights" or "service."

- A. Many people go to religious services, but the idea from this verse is that they may be doing so in vain.
 - 1. A member of the church (or even an entire congregation) can have a name that he (or it) lives, but actually be spiritually dead (Revelation 3:1).
 - 2. A member of the church (or even an entire congregation) can think himself (or it) is rich (spiritually), but actually be poor (Revelation 3:17).

and does not bridle his tongue - This does not speak of completely taming the tongue, because it cannot be tamed (James 3:8). However, it can be controlled.

- A. The man who has a tongue which produces vile language shows a lack of respect for what God's word commands regarding language.
- B. A person who speaks against God's word when it does not suit his own life or thinking (James 1:19-20) has not learned to bridle the tongue.
- C. To bridle the tongue may be a reference to the Christian teacher (chapter 3).

- D. One who speaks against his brother is not bridling his tongue (James 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 is even more difficult to overcome.

this one's religion is useless - 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 he has deceived himself into believing he is acceptable to God.

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

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

- B. We are not ignorant of the devil's devices (2 Corinthians 2:11), and one of his devices is to get us to believe we are religious, while thinking we do not need to bridle our tongues.

1:27 *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

Pure and undefiled religion - As opposed to vain religion. "Pure" comes from the Greek word (KATHAROS) meaning, "clean, clear, or pure." "undefiled" comes from the Greek word (AMANTOS) meaning, "not defiled, unsoiled." This word would have been used of cloth that was free from any stain.

before God and the Father is this - Many have a pure religion according to the latest church council, creed book or some tradition, but this "religion" (pure, undefiled) must be done according to the standard of God and not man (2 Corinthians 10:18).

- A. Will-worship is condemned in the Scriptures (Colossians 2:23).
- B. There are also many additional warnings about vain worship (Romans 2:13; Job 9:2; 1 Corinthians 3:19; Galatians 3:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:6; 1 Peter 2:4; 2 Peter 3:8; 2 Corinthians 10:18).

to visit orphans and widows in their trouble - 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.

- A. The word "visit" does not mean you are a good Christian if you just spend a few minutes at an orphan's home and a few minutes at a

widow's home. It means to discover the needs they have and to supply those needs (cf. Jeremiah 23:2; Zechariah 11:16; Matthew 25:36, 43).

- B. "Visit" is continuing action and does not mean a social call, but actually helping them as their needs become evident as indicated by "in their affliction."
 - 1. Helping widows and orphans was a characteristic of the great men and women of faith in the Old Testament (Genesis 21:1 Exodus 3:16; 4:31; Deuteronomy 27:19; Psalm 68:5, 94:6; 146:9; Jeremiah 7:6; Malachi 3:5).
 - 2. Care for the widows was also practiced by the early church (Acts 6:1).

"Fatherless" does not necessarily mean that both parents are dead. Also, there is no reference as to whether these widows and orphans are Christians or non-Christians (cf. Galatians 6:10).

and to keep oneself 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 (James 4:4). Micah 6:6-8 elaborates on this. The people were trying to appease God and still live the way they wanted to live. We are not to love the world (cf. 1 John 2:15-16).

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

III. THE SIN OF RESPECT OF PERSONS2:1-13

2:1 *My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.*

My brethren - This term is used by James 15 times as a form of address (James 1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9-10, 12, 19). This loving expression is frequently used prior to a warning about their conduct.

do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ - The faith refers to the gospel (cf. Jude 3; Acts 6:7; Galatians 1:23; 3:23, 25-26). This means they cannot hold on to both faith and partiality. The two cannot be in harmony. To have the gospel and show respect of persons is an inconsistency. The implications are that they should abandon any feelings of partiality.

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

with partiality - The phrase "with partiality" comes from the Greek phrase (EV PROSŌPOLĒPSIA) that literally means, "in receiving the faces." This is used to describe showing respect of persons or partiality. 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. Galatians 2:6). It has never been right to show partiality (Deuteronomy 1:17). Not only should we not show partiality to the rich, but we must not be partial to the poor either (Leviticus 19:15).

- A. Mark 12:14 states that Jesus did not show partiality to any group.
- B. This does not mean you cannot have close friends. Jesus often took only Peter, James and John with Him. Compare Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25; Acts 10:34; 1 Peter 1:17; Galatians 2:6.
- C. Paul charged preachers to not show partiality as they were fulfilling their duties (1 Timothy 5:21).
 - 1. Perhaps the most well-known verse in the Bible is Matthew 7:1 that says, "Judge not, that you be not judged."
 - a. This verse is often misused by sinners who want to continue in sin without being corrected.
 - b. However, Jesus was not condemning all judgment.
 - 2. We have actually been commanded to judge! John 7:24 clarifies **how** and **what** we are to judge.

John 7:24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."
 - 3. Judging "righteous judgment" is judging according to God's word. It is the standard.
 - a) We are not to judge by appearance (John 7:24; Philippians 3:2).
 - b) We are not to make hypocritical judgements (Matthew 7:1-5).

- c) We are not to be guilty of harsh judgments (Matthew 5:7; Titus 3:2).
- d) We are not to judge falsely (Proverbs 19:5).
- e) We are not to make self-righteous judgments (Luke 18:9-11).

4. We also tend to judge motives, but how can we who are mere human beings judge the motives of others?

2:2 *For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes,*

For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel - The fact that this occurs in the meeting place for the church shows that **no** place is safe from temptation. When someone had rings on every finger, in the culture at that time, he was thought to be rich. Some people would even rent rings in order to appear rich.

- A. The Greek word translated as "assembly" here (SUNAGŌGĒ) is the word for synagogue.
- B. There are two possibilities as to what assembly [synagogue] means here.
 - 1. The church meeting in the Jewish synagogues indicates a very early date for the writing of this epistle (cf. Acts 26:11; 22:19).
 - 2. The Christians who had been Jews continued to call their assemblies after the Jewish name, synagogue.

and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes - It is implied that both of these are strangers to the assembly since they have both been judged by their appearances.

- A. The Greek word (PTŌCHOS) translated as "poor" is the same word that is translated as "beggar" in Matthew 19:21.
- B. In the culture at this time there were special situations that could arise:
 - 1. The poor man could be a slave and the rich man his owner.

2. Also, the poor man could be one of the leaders of the congregation.
3. Therefore, there could be no respect of persons allowed.

2:3 *and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool,"*

and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," - This is not the only place in the Scriptures that warns against showing partiality.

Luke 11:43, "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces."

Luke 20:46-47, "Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

Mark 12:38-40, "Then He said to them in His teaching, 'Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.'"

2:4 *have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?*

have you not shown partiality among yourselves? - The problem was that the congregation was saying they loved everyone, but they showed more love and respect for the wealthy.

- A. The sin was in making a distinction between the rich and the poor; they expressed a doubt concerning their faith.
- B. For the faith they had professed did away with such distinctions.
- C. They professed one thing (Equality), BUT practiced another (Partiality).

and become judges with evil thoughts - This would be better translated as: "Evil thinking judges." Judging by outward appearances is condemned as evil (1 Samuel 16:7; John 7:24). Jesus also emphasized this idea strongly in Matthew 7:1-5.

- A. God is the only flawless judge — even when we see evidence of evil deeds, human judgments are not always correct because we cannot **know** the heart, also, we often judge people by their past, not their future.
- B. Their judgment was based on the false theory that the cost of a man's clothing showed the value of his character.

2:5 *Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?*

Listen, my beloved brethren - James wants them to especially make note of this fact.

Has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith? - This does not mean the poor, as a class of people, are destined to become rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, nor does it exclude the rich. However, those in poverty would often turn toward God. Those who would obey His will would largely fall among this group of people (1 Corinthians 1:26). But the rich could also qualify as James has indicated in James 1:10. Both the rich and the poor will be judged equally (2 Peter 3:9).

- A. There is nothing wrong with making money (Luke 12:21).
- B. The danger is the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10; Matthew 9:23; 11:15; Luke 4:18; 6:20).
 - 1. Their favoritism was inconsistent with God's attitude toward the poor and the rich.
 - 2. The point is 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.

and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him - Loving God and being heirs means keeping His commandments (John 14:15, 23-24, etc.). In other words, "If you love God, stop showing partiality!" From this point on James will deal with how the rich generally treat Christians.

2:6 *But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?*

But you have dishonored the poor man - To dishonor means to belittle or look down upon the poor. Some of the disciples had been guilty of this attitude toward those people who were poor.

Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? - "Oppress" comes from the Greek word (KATADUNASTEUŌ) that includes the idea of, "complete exploitation or domination." It is often the wealthy who use the courts to squeeze a little more money out of their unfortunate debtors. However, even if the rich do this, Christians are still commanded to love their enemies (Romans 12:14).

2:7 *Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?*

Do they not blaspheme? "Blaspheme" comes from the Greek word (BLASPHĒMEŌ) meaning, "to speak evil of, or revile." It does not necessarily include cursing, swearing, etc.

that noble name - This is what they were blaspheming. The name meant here is "Christian." The Jews would not blaspheme the name "Christ" (Messiah) which was a sacred title to them, unless they were ridiculing the idea of Jesus being the Christ (1 Corinthians 12:3).

by which you are called? - The phrase here literally means, "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.

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

B. The only new name is "Christian."

Isaiah 62:2, "The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name."

Acts 11:26, "And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So, it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."

2:8 *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well;*

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture - 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 royal sovereign over all laws, the Law of Love.

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself" - This law is in both Testaments (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-39; Mark 12:30-31). This seems to be summed up in loving one's neighbor.

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

2:9 *but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*

but if you show partiality - This is a first-class conditional sentence showing that the condition had been fulfilled — so it should be translated "since" you have shown partiality.

you commit sin - Literally this is, "you work sin." 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 (Leviticus 19:15-18). Therefore, nothing but sin can be made of their actions against the poor.

and are convicted by the law as transgressors - The Greek word translated as "transgressors" has the idea of "going beyond." It describes one that goes beyond the line that separates righteousness from sin. They may have tried to appeal to the old law, but the one who shows partiality is guilty of being a transgressor of the law.

2:10 *For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.*

For whoever shall keep the whole law - The basic idea here is that keeping of the old law (law of Moses) is useless as a matter of justification unless it is perfectly kept.

and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all - This means if one sins he becomes guilty of violating the law as a whole. He becomes a lawbreaker.

- A. The Jews many times regarded the law of Moses as a series of detached laws.
 - 1. To keep one of them was to gain credit and
 - 2. To break one of them was to incur debt.
- B. So, by adding up the credits and subtracting the debts they could feel that they had earned salvation.
- C. Some Christians may have done many good things and have resisted many temptations, but there may be some sin in their lives by which everything is spoiled and they are lost!
- D. Law, once broken, can never declare one innocent.
 - 1. James is saying that 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.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. ONLY Christ's blood justifies our sins!

2:11 *For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.*

For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." - James may have chosen these commands because these sins are the most offensive against the law of love. One cannot pick out the part of the law that pleases him to keep and let the others go.

Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law - Therefore, by their appeal to the law for judgment, and not keeping the whole law, those showing partiality condemned themselves as sinners.

- A. Breaking one commandment puts the offender in the class of the transgressors.
- B. It also shows that he is indifferent to law and the will of God expressed in the commandments.

- C. It is either by accident or the absence of temptation that prevents him from breaking the other commandments.

2:12 *So, speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.*

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. Compare the "double minded" in James 1:8.

as those who will be judged by the law of liberty - We will not be judged by the Old Testament (old covenant, law of Moses).

- A. The law of liberty (law of Christ) judges us.

1 Corinthians 9:21, "To those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but **under law toward Christ**), that I might win those who are without law."

Galatians 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the **law of Christ.**"

James 1:25, "But he who looks into the perfect **law of liberty** and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."

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

1. Remembering the yoke, that we have freely assumed out of gratitude to Christ, we must act toward the poor in the way His law tells us.
2. This is freely accepted and is no longer a burden of law keeping.
3. We need to realize that we will be judged and our actions will be considered.

2:13 *For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

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 Samuel 22:25-27). James is teaching that if a man shows no mercy to others, he shall have no mercy shown to him on the day of judgment. This verse is stating the negative side, whereas Matthew 5:7 states the positive side.

Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Mercy triumphs over judgment - If a man is merciful to others he will not have any fears of the judgment day as far as this subject is concerned. Mercy relieves the Christian of the fear of judgment.

- A. Those who have shown mercy under the law of liberty may face judgment with confidence!
 - 1. The Christian who has loved the poor and shown mercy toward them (all other things being equal) will be justified in the final judgment and will receive the blessings of Christ.
 - 2. Just as "love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18), so does mercy.
- B. This verse does **not** mean that we earn mercy by showing mercy, because it is impossible to earn mercy.
 - 1. If it is earned it is not mercy!
 - 2. It also does **not** mean that we should be "soft on sin" and never condemn it in the lives of others.
 - 3. A man who says, "I don't condemn anyone so God won't condemn me" is wrong.
- C. Compare the following verses: Matthew 5:7; 6:14-15; 7:1-2; 18:23-35; 25:23, 31-46; Luke 6:36-38; 2 Timothy 1:18; 1 John 3:17; Jude 1:21.
 - 1. One who is not a Christian, even though he shows mercy, has no hope of mercy triumphing over judgment.
 - 2. Why? Because he has no access to the mercy of God (Ephesians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-12).
- D. James has just dealt with the sin of partiality in the church.
- E. He has shown that partiality is a sin clearly inconsistent with the Christian's profession of faith.

I. CAN WE BE SAVED BY OUR OWN WORKS OF MERIT?

- A. Ephesians 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 Timothy 1:8-9, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began."
- C. Romans 11:6, "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work."

II. WE NEED GOD'S GRACE.

- A. In Romans 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.

Romans 4:1-4, "What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt."

- B. Paul argues that God would then be indebted to that person due to their perfect life (Romans 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.
- C. 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 Samuel 15:22, "So 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. Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all."
- C. John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commandments."
- D. Romans 6:17-18, "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you 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. Ephesians 2:10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, 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: Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 1:8-9; Romans 11:6; 4:4-5.

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

- A. 1 Thessalonians 1:3, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father."
- B. Hebrews 6:10, "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
 - 1. God desires all to do the same thing (Hebrews 6:11).
 - 2. Be not slothful (Hebrews 6:12).
- C. Galatians 5:6, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love."

- D. Romans 16:26, "But now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures 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 Corinthians 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 Corinthians 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: done in obedience to God's commandments, that 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 (Hebrews 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 (Numbers 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 (Joshua 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 Kings 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 is a result of God's commands through faith. Nothing more and nothing less is acceptable to God.

CONCLUSION: WE ARE NOT SAVED BY WORKS (OF MERIT), BUT WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH THAT IS PERFECTED BY DOING THE WORKS (OF OBEDIENCE) THAT GOD REQUIRES TO RECEIVE HIS GRACE.

- A. Faith by itself is dead.
1. We must do the will of God, not just be hearers only (Matthew 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. The grace of God will be in vain by NOT doing the works which He commanded.
1. In Revelation 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!**

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

2:14 *What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?*

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith? - Notice 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?" Compare Jesus saying, "What is a man profited?" (Matthew 16:26).

- A. It is essential to James' argument that one may be **assumed** to be a believer without being a worker.
- B. 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 (the fruit of the Christian life - Matthew 5:16; John 3:20).

- A. If the word "obedience" would have been used here instead of "works" there would have been less confusion in the religious world. **James is speaking of works of obedience, not works of merit.**
- B. Matthew 7:21-23 is a good section to show works of merit versus works of obedience. Without works of obedience these are still lost.

Matthew 7:21-23, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

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

Matthew 23:3, "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do."

- D. Romans 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.

Romans 2:6, "Who will render to each one according to his deeds."

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

Titus 1:6, "If a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination."

- F. Romans 3:23 and 4:2 show God's condemnation to those who try to be justified by works of merit. Our works of obedience come out of the kind of faith we have.

Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Romans 4:2, "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God."

1. Philippians 2:12 - Just as you have always obeyed — work out your own salvation. Faith must work!

Philippians 2:12, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

2. Ephesians 2:8-10 - It is not of works [of merit] (verse 9), but works [of obedience] (verse 10).

Ephesians 2:8-10, "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. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

- G. Those who are trying to teach the false doctrine of "faith only" most often point to the book of Romans as proof, but the book begins and ends with **obedience to the faith**.

Romans 1:5, "Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for **obedience to the faith** among all nations for His name."

Romans 16:26, "But now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for **obedience to the faith—**"

1. The "works" being addressed in the book of Romans are the works of the old law.
2. Paul was telling the Jews who had become Christians that the "works" in the law of Moses will not save.

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

John 6:29, "Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.'"

- I. 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 faith save him? - This means the kind of faith just mentioned — faith only. In the Greek the question is rhetorical. A rhetorical question is a question not intended to require an answer. The answer is implied by the context. It is asked in such a way that a negative answer is implied; "Faith alone cannot save him, can it?"

2:15 *If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,*

If a brother or sister is naked - "Naked" does not mean completely without clothes, but without sufficient clothes. This is especially emphatic because it is a brother or sister.

- A. We are to do good to all, but especially to those who are Christians.
- B. It is a real shame when a Christian brother or sister goes without sufficient food or clothing (Galatians 6:10).

and destitute of daily food - We do not know if this was a real circumstance or a supposition about what possibly could happen. Perhaps the famine foretold by Agabus was still in existence (Acts 11:28-30).

2:16 *and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?*

and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be 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 (verse 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 (Galatians 2:10). The danger pointed out here is one of having good intentions but not doing anything about it.

2:17 *Thus, also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

Thus, also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead - 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.

- A. People with dead faith substitute words for deeds.
- B. We can claim for ourselves all the faith we want to, but if there are no works, it is useless, it is the same as having no faith at all.
- C. However, the moment we act, our faith is no longer without works and it is no longer dead.

2:18 *But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*

But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." - This refers to a man who seems to think that "faith" and "works" are two separate and distinct virtues which can be justifiably chosen alone while keeping their value without the other. God's word does not endorse either without the other.

Show me your faith without your works - This is stating an impossible thing to do. The challenge is to demonstrate or prove the existence of faith without works. How can that be done?

- A. Those who teach "Faith only" have many problems explaining this passage.
- B. It should be remembered that Christians are included in this admonition.

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** truly doing good? The effectiveness of the actions being taken must always be evaluated.

- A. Faith is demonstrated only through works! One who boasts about his faith, but never does any good works must be doubted.
- B. Compare Romans 2:6; 1 Corinthians 3:8; 2 Corinthians 5:10.

2:19 *You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!*

You believe that there is one God - James is probably referring to Deuteronomy 6:4.

Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!"

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

- A. James has selected the greatest fundamental doctrine of all religion — the Existence of One Supreme Being!
- B. James shows that even if one believed this, it is also believed by demons and cannot save you (without the required works of obedience).

You do well - James does not belittle faith, he encourages it. His teaching is that one who has real faith will let it do for him what it should. His faith causes him to do God's will. If it does not, he is no better off than the demons.

Even the demons believe—and tremble! - In Matthew 8:29 we find one account of the demons believing and crying out in fear, but their belief and fear did not bring them any benefit.

Matthew 8:29, "And suddenly they cried out, saying, 'What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?'"

This shows that strong belief, that could even cause trembling in fear, is not enough by itself without works of obedience.

A. Things Demons Do:

1. Pray (beseech) (Mark 5:10)
2. Have knowledge about God and Jesus (Matthew 8:29)
3. Have faith (James 2:19)
4. Confess their faith (Luke 4:34)

B. Things Demons Do Not Do:

1. Show signs of repentance
2. Seek to do the will of God

2:20 *But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?*

But do you want to know, O foolish man - The phrase, "do you want to know" means, "Are you willing to learn something?" 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.

- A. "Foolish" means, "vain or empty." He is foolish because he is not willing to learn. The "foolish man" describes one who is spiritually empty, that corresponds to the emptiness of his faith.
- B. The one who would argue against the logic of James (who was inspired by the Holy Spirit in this) is foolish.

that faith without works is dead? - "Dead" comes originally from a word which means, "unemployed, idle, inactive, ineffective, amounts to nothing" (Matthew 20:3,6; Titus 1:12). Therefore, it means to be lazy and useless. It is useless to have faith if it does not express itself in obedience.

- A. It has been said that Satan who is the great deceiver uses imitation as one of his most effective weapons. If he can convince a person that dead faith is living faith, he has that person in his power.
- B. The idea of faith without works is that it is only the result of wanting salvation.

C. The rest of this section explains this verse.

2:21 *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?*

Was not Abraham our father justified by works - This is a rhetorical question that implies an answer of "yes." The fact that Abraham is used shows that even the father of the faithful had to obey.

- A. It is possible that this point is being made because the Jews believed that being a descendant of Abraham was all that was needed for salvation (Mathew 3:9-10).
- B. "justified" means, "to be acquitted or pronounced and treated as righteous or innocent."
 - 1. James is talking about faith saving a man (James 2:14).
 - 2. This does not mean that one who is **already** just or acquitted is **now** proved or declared righteous, as some contend!
 - 3. **THIS** is the action of God in declaring him righteous!
- C. "by works" - This refers to works of 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 (Genesis 22:9-12).

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.

- A. The only kind of work that brings justification is a work done in obedience to a command of God.
- B. Abraham had faith in God but it was not accounted to him for righteousness until it proved itself in works.
- C. Abraham recognized that it was his obligation to obey God and to trust God to keep His promises.
- D. In Genesis 22:9-12, where this account is told, there is nothing said about justification!

1. 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" (Genesis 22:18).
2. This phrase should be compared with "because you have **done** this thing" (Genesis 22:16).
3. Paul's use of the Old Testament passage implies justification also.
4. This promise was also repeated in Genesis 26:5 — "because Abraham **obeyed** My voice."
 - a. James could clearly see from the Old Testament record that acts of obedience had led Abraham to another declaration of righteousness before God.
 - b. Thus, the act ("works") is shown to be the basis of Abraham's justification.
 - c. This does NOT mean that his works alone saved him.
 - d. James mentions only what has been left out by some in explaining man's justification.
 - e. The two (Faith and Works) worked together, as he goes on to show.

E. The difference between the section on Abraham's justification in Romans 4:2-5 and this one is to be explained by the difference in their meanings of the word "works."

Romans 4:2-5, "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness."

1. In this passage, Paul is referring to "works" of the law of Moses as the basis of justification.

2. Also notice Galatians 2:16; 3:11; 5:4; Romans 3:28 where Paul adds "the law" to his denial that one is justified by "works" or "deeds."
 3. He insists that Abraham's justification was before the law of Moses and apart from it, just as he insisted it was before circumcision (Romans 4:10-12).
- F. Therefore, Paul and James agree that a **work of obedience** growing out of one's faith in God and Christ is the basis of justification.

2:22 *Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?*

Do you see that faith was working together with his works? - "Working together with" means to cooperate with or to help (Romans 8:28).

and by works faith was made perfect? - Abraham's faith was not perfected or completed, until after it had been combined with works. Only then did his faith do for him what God intended faith to do. Justification is what faith is to bring about, BUT it will not do it without works to complete it.

- A. Without works, Abraham's faith was imperfect; not complete, not mature, nor reaching its desired ends.
- B. Without works our faith is also imperfect!
- C. Works are necessary for acceptable faith.

2:23 *And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.*

And the Scripture was fulfilled which says - This refers to what is said about Abraham in Genesis 15:6.

Genesis 15:6, "And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."

Genesis 15:6 gives facts which point to later actions in which they receive their full accomplishment.

"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." - The Scripture that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" was fulfilled when he acted on his faith and offered Isaac on the altar (Genesis 15:6; James 2:21; Genesis 22:9-12).

- A. Faith alone has never been enough for righteousness.
 - 1. The demons have faith but they are not righteous (James 2:19).
 - 2. Righteousness requires faith and obedience working together.
 - 3. Abraham demonstrated an active obedient faith (Genesis 11:31-12:4; Hebrews 11:8).
- B. There is really no reason for the confusion in the religious world today concerning the issue of faith and works.
 - 1. One extreme says faith only and the other extreme says works only.
 - 2. The Bible is clear that neither extreme is correct.
- C. God's word teaches that we are counted as righteous when faith and works of obedience combine (Galatians 5:6; James 2:18, 22).
- D. Today, we follow the example of Abraham by having an active, obedient, working faith.

And he was called the friend of God - Abraham is not called the friend of God until much later in Scripture (Isaiah 41:8; 2 Chronicles 20:7).

- A. Abraham becoming the friend of God was a result of the obedience of his faith in offering Isaac.
- B. He was justified by his working faith and as a consequence he was also referred to as God's friend.
- C. We speak of "being made friends again with God" and mean that we are "reconciled to God."

2:24 *You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.*

You see then that a man is justified by works - James makes it clear that his argument, that works justify, is clear and forceful. Not works alone, but works are necessary for justification. If Abraham was not justified by works, that made his faith complete, then the argument made by James does not make sense.

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, teaching that one is saved by "faith only" is clearly wrong.** One who hopes to be saved by the "word of truth" must show his faith by his works.

- A. The New Testament teaches we are saved by many things. We are saved by:
 - 1. Grace (Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8)
 - 2. Mercy (Titus 3:5)
 - 3. Jesus' Blood (1 John 1:7; Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7)
 - 4. Works (James 2:24; Acts 10:34-35; Philippians 2:12)
 - 5. Obedience (Hebrews 5:8-9)
 - 6. Endurance (Matthew 10:22)
 - 7. Patience (Hebrews 6:12; Revelation 14:12-13)
 - 8. The Love of the Truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10)
 - 9. Fear (Jude 23; Philippians 2:12)
 - 10. Faith/Belief (Hebrews 11:6; Acts 16:30-31)
 - 11. Repentance (Luke 13:3; 2 Corinthians 7:10)
 - 12. Confession (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9-10)
 - 13. Baptism (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21)
- B. There is no doubt we are saved by faith, but we are not saved by faith only.
- C. Looking at the list above we can clearly see we are not saved by faith only. The phrase "faith only" is only found once in the scriptures, and it teaches we are not saved by faith only. James 2:24, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and **not by faith only.**"

2:25 *Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?*

Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works? - Rahab was justified by works in the same way as that of Abraham. Rahab provides another example for James to emphasize that justification is not by faith only, but of necessity includes acts of obedience to God's will. Her example is probably used by James to show that the requirements for justification are the same for all. In matters not if one is rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, male or female, etc. (Galatians 3:28).

when she received the messengers and sent them out another way - Both James and the book of Hebrews point out that it was Rahab's faith and obedience that resulted in her justification. Faith and works cooperated with, and helped, each other.

Hebrews 11:31, "By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace."

2:26 *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

For as the body without the spirit is dead - This is a well-known medical fact and quite appropriate to illustrate the argument's conclusion.

so faith without works is dead also - Faith without works is dead, just like a physical body without a life-giving spirit is dead. Faith that is not expressed in obedient works is useless and definitely not able to justify or save. In response to the question, "What must I do to be saved?", the answer has always been to, "believe AND obey!"

- A. Let the Christian (to whom this section is primarily intended) remember that obedience to the word is necessary:
 - 1. In worship
 - 2. In service
 - 3. In morality
- B. In order to perfect his faith and result in justification!
- C. Faith is trust, devotion, love and obedience. Obedience cannot be neglected.

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

3:1 *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*

My brethren - Once again James reminds them of their close relationship as a spiritual family.

let not many of you become teachers - The Greek construction in this phrase is imperative. In other words, he is saying, "Stop becoming many of you teachers." This indicates that this was already an established problem. Even today many who want to become teachers do not realize the responsibility involved.

- A. Teachers were ranked highly in the church at Antioch which had sent Paul and Barnabas on the first Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1).
- B. Paul lists teachers second only to the apostles and prophets in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (compare Ephesians 4:11).

James is not discouraging Christians from becoming teachers. Instead he is calling attention to its responsibilities. Teaching is encouraged by the Scriptures (Titus 2:3-4; Hebrews 5:12-14).

knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment - Teachers must not only give an account for themselves, but also for what they cause others to believe and do. James says "**we** shall receive," using the first-person plural, because he himself is a teacher in the church and knows he must someday give an 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!

- A. Brethren were becoming teachers without considering the tremendous responsibility involved.
- B. The teacher's condemnation is greater than that of others because he has (or professes to have) clear and full knowledge of his duty and he is therefore that much more bound to obey it.
- C. There are two main dangers every teacher must avoid:
 - 1. He must be teaching the Truth and NOT his own opinions.
 - 2. He must not contradict his teaching by his lifestyle. A teacher should never say, "Do as I say, but not as I do."

3:2 *For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.*

For we all stumble in many things - Literally this phrase means, "We all stumble with respect to many things" (compare Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). The point is that

since this is true, we should think soberly before choosing to teach because it brings the greatest responsibility and the greatest temptation to sin!

If anyone does not stumble in word - "Word" here refers to the gospel message, to the doctrine (compare James 1:18, 21-23).

he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body - "Perfect" is a translation of the Greek word (TELEIOS) meaning, "that which is complete, mature." It does not mean sinless. On the use of "perfect" compare the following: 1 Corinthians 2:6; Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:14-15; Colossians 4:12; Hebrews 5:14.

- A. 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.
- B. This emphasis is on a **mature** Christian.

3:3 *Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.*

Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us; and we turn their whole body - This is one of two comparisons that shows you are in charge of your tongue. The bridle, though small, exerts its curbing influence over the whole body of the strong horse. The horse then pursues a straight course and not an erratic one, a course that is determined by its rider.

3:4 *Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.*

Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires - The ship that is "so large" (compare Hebrews 2:3) is contrasted with the "very small" rudder.

- A. The man who has command of the rudder, which in ancient ships was a kind of oar or paddle, can influence the movement of the big ship regardless of what wind might blow on the ship.
- B. 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.
 - 1. The point is that we cannot stop the wind (desire) but we **can** control the ship (tongue).

2. It is up to us to realize that small things (bridles, rudders, tongues) determine the destiny of what is under discussion (horses, ships, people).

Matthew 12:36-37, "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

- 3:5 *Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!*

Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things - The tongue has the power to influence man's whole course and future. Just as a little gossip can bring down a great man, a little heresy can bring down a great congregation of the Lord's church.

See how great a forest a little fire kindles! - Many Old Testament passages use the same illustration of fire destroying (Isaiah 9:18; 10:16-18; Zechariah 12:6; Psalm 83:14). Even Euripides, who was a Greek poet (480-406 BC), compared the careless revealing of a secret to a spark catching hold of a forest. A careless word can consume a whole congregation or family (compare Galatians 5:15).

- 3:6 *And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.*

And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity - The tongue is like a fire in the pain it causes, the destruction it accomplishes, and the consequences it brings. We must remember that the context refers to the improper use of the tongue. The tongue is "a world of iniquity" because of the enormous harm it can cause. It is impossible to fully measure the damage that comes from gossip, slander, profanity, false teaching and blasphemy.

The tongue is so set among our members 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). We cannot say, "I am really a pure person, but it is just my tongue that is impure." If we do not control the tongue the rest of the body is not under control!

and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell - "Course" is from the Greek word (TROCHOS) meaning, "that which is set in motion at birth and runs through life." Therefore, everything in life seems to be affected by the tongue. We are a part of the wheel of existence; we do not live isolated lives, but we affect others by what we do and say.

- A. 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.
- B. Rumors cannot be stopped! Therefore, before we speak, we must remember that once we have spoken a word it has left our control.
- C. Also, we will be called upon by God, on the judgment day, to answer for those words (Matthew 12:36-37).
- D. Notice the phrase, "and it is set on fire by hell."
 - 1. Such a fire, as this just described, would have its origin in hell (i.e. from Satan).
 - 2. Note: James says earthly wisdom is demonic (James 1:15).
 - 3. Jesus traces evil speech to the heart (Matthew 15:19) and James tells us the evil heart is influenced by hell (Satan).
- E. Someone once said there are three kinds of minds, "Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people."

3:7 *For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.*

For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind - The "for" points out the fact that since the tongue cannot be tamed by man it is more vicious than any of the wild creatures.

3:8 *But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

But no man can tame the tongue - The tongue can never be tamed. It will never be safe to speak without thinking about what we are going to say first. The idea of being "tamed" is different from being "controlled."

It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison - "Unruly" comes from the Greek word (AKATASCHETOS) meaning, "restless." It is a wild and restless evil, it is like a caged beast that is never still but paces back and forth. It is like that caged animal which wants its freedom, but when it gains it, it causes nothing but harm.

- A. James has just pointed out the wickedness of the tongue.

B. He now gives just one instance of the improper use of the tongue.

3:9 *With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.*

With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men - "Bless" comes from the Greek word (EULOGĒŌ) meaning, "we say good things about God." To curse someone is to wish evil on them.

who have been made in the similitude of God - "Similitude" comes from the Greek word (HOMOIŌSIS) meaning, "made after the likeness" of God. James is pointing to the inconsistency of this action:

A. Man bears the image or likeness of God.

B. To harm man is, in a sense, the same as harming God.

C. Compare Proverbs 14:31; Matthew 25:34-40; 1 John 4:20.

3:10 *Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.*

Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing - Peter shows a good example of this (Matthew 26:33; 26:69-75).

A. 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.

B. Only the curses which God Himself has pronounced upon men (whom He has had to curse) may a Christian repeat.

1 Corinthians 16:22, "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!"

Galatians 1:8-9, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."

C. Otherwise we would be guilty of usurping God's place as judge (Numbers 22:12).

These things ought not to be so - This refers to something that is out of harmony with the nature of things.

3:11 *Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?*

Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? - James is telling them that they should learn from the example of nature if they refuse to learn from the word of God. The world around us, in its beautiful harmony of operations, often 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.

3:12 *Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus, no spring yields both salt water and fresh.*

Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? - This is a rhetorical question with an implied answer of, "No." In a sense he is asking, "A fig tree cannot yield olives, nor a grapevine produce figs, my brethren, can it?" James refers to the unchanging law of nature that like produces like. In the Scriptures we find this law being used to make a spiritual point (Matthew 7:15-18; 12:33-35).

Thus, no spring yields both salt water and fresh - Again another example from nature is used to teach the point of using our tongues for good. James is not pleading for cowardly silence, but for the wise use of our speech.

- A. This section is a continuation of the subject begun in verse 1.
- B. After mentioning the teacher in verse 1, James discusses the more specific subject of the tongue's influence and evil.
- C. Now James goes back to the subject of the teacher.

3:13 *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.*

Who is wise and understanding among you? - The phrase "wise (man)" was often applied to a teacher. "Understanding" is from the Greek word (EPISTĒMŌN) that indicates one who has the knowledge of an expert.

- A. "Wise" may describe the possession of wisdom as such and
- B. "Understanding" may relate to the practical details of life.
 - 1. Compare Romans 1:14,22; 1 Corinthians 1:19,26ff; 3:20; Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21 and especially Matthew 23:34.

2. The point is, since it is usually true that a teacher has a reputation of more skill and knowledge than others, he should show by his conduct that this is, in fact, true (Compare James 2:12).

Let him show by good conduct - 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 good deeds, not just good words. Someone once remarked, "Who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying."

that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom - "Meekness," not arrogance, is the proper attitude of wisdom!

- A. Literally this is "a wise meekness," that is, doing what wisdom says.
 1. This is one more qualification of a teacher.
 2. In James 1:21 the hearer of the word is exhorted to receive it with meekness, **now** the teacher of the word is exhorted to show this same quality of mind (compare 2 Timothy 2:24-25; 1 Peter 3:15).
- B. 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 (compare James 3:9).
- C. If the teacher's deeds are the right kind, they will be characterized by meekness and that meekness will show that wisdom is present.
- D. A lack of meekness proves a lack of wisdom!

3:14 *But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.*

But if you have bitter envy - This is a negative characteristic of some teachers. These qualities are the opposite of meekness.

- A. "Envy" comes from the Greek word (ZĒLOS) meaning, "indignation, jealousy, zeal." It means to resent others for their success.
- B. James is probably referring to the jealousy between teachers in their competing for positions and in their seeking honors and praises from their hearers.

and self-seeking in your hearts - Here James refers to selfish ambition or rivalry. Possibly a teacher forcing his own opinions to be the accepted views. This is unethical political status seeking.

do not boast and lie against the truth - If you are boastful, arrogant and prideful, the life you live is the very opposite of a godly teacher.

- A. The charade of wisdom is a boast — wearing the name of "wise man" or "teacher:"
 - 1. If he does not manifest the wisdom in his life he should not wear the title.
 - 2. But if he does wear that title, it becomes a lie against the truth.
- B. This even applies to the spirit of one fighting false doctrine.
 - 1. What is your attitude after talking to a lost soul?
 - a. Sad because his soul is lost or
 - b. "I sure set him straight!"?
- C. James shows us four characteristics of wrong teaching:
 - 1. FANATICAL ATTITUDE — not based on sound reasoning.
 - 2. BITTERNESS — it sees opponents as enemies rather than friends to be helped.
 - 3. SELFISHLY AMBITION — they are more interested in showing off knowledge than showing the truth.
 - 4. ARROGANCE — pride in knowledge rather than humility in ignorance.

3:15 *This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.*

This wisdom does not descend from above - That kind of 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 (James 1:5).

but is earthly, sensual, demonic - The one who is earthly will give in to the desires of the flesh and surrender to Satan. This is the pattern of apostasy (Romans 8:7).

- A. The Greek word for "earthly" (EPIGEIOS) is used 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" (Philippians 3:19).
- B. This refers to those things that are merely human as opposed to spiritual (compare 1 Corinthians 15:43, 46; 2:14).
- C. "Sensual" (PSUCHIKOS) refers to the sensual nature with its enslavement to appetites and passions.
- D. It is "demonic" because it is full of pride and selfish ambition (compare 1 Timothy 3:6).
- E. It is also "demonic" because it results in disorder:
 - 1. Instead of bringing people together, it drives them apart.
 - 2. Instead of producing peace, it produces strife.

3:16 *For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.*

For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there - This is proof that the wisdom behind these attitudes is earthly. The fruit of this evil world is confusion and vileness — especially in the church.

- A. This would be the result of teachers characterized by their previous worldly wisdom (compare 1 Corinthians 14:33; 2 Corinthians 6:5; 12:20).
- B. James describes those teachers, with their false wisdom, who trouble the church by demanding their own rights and exercising a party spirit.

3:17 *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure - James now returns to the positive. The word "first" is not being used numerically but principally — the rest of these are a result of purity.

- A. One who is guided by pure wisdom (because it is from above) would desire to be free from any impure motive such as:
 - 1. Arrogance

2. Jealousy
3. Selfish ambition, etc.

B. James now lists the characteristics of the godly teacher:

then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy - Remember these characteristics all flow from the pure wisdom that is from above.

- A. "Peaceable" means, "not given to conflict, harmonious, opposed to confusion" (compare 1 Corinthians 7:15; 14:33). We must be pure before we can be peacemakers.
 1. There is an unholy peace with the world that makes no distinction between the clean and the unclean.
 2. When someone is in error, the wise teacher is **not** the problem, **nor** the cause of the problem, when he must and does tell them they are wrong (compare Romans 12:18).
- B. "Gentle" means, "reasonableness, graciousness, absence of bad manners."
 1. One who does not insist on his own rights, even when he could; yielding.
 2. It refers to one who is reasonable in judging others.
 3. The word signifies patience or steadfastness which is able to submit to injustice without hatred and malice, while trusting in God in spite of it all.
- C. "Willing to yield" means, "easily persuaded, the opposite of disobedient."
 1. This is also the opposite of dogmatic.
 2. The teacher himself must be teachable, open to reason.
 3. A teacher should beware when he has taken a final position and closed his mind.
 - a. A teacher needs to continue to study.

- b. This includes even those things where he is sure.
 - 4. This also means to not be stubborn or refusing to do something just because it was suggested by someone else.
- D. "Full of mercy and good fruits"
 - 1. "Mercy" includes having mercy for the man who is in trouble — even if the trouble is his own fault.
 - a. God has mercy for us when we are in sin.
 - b. And sin is our own fault.
 - 2. A teacher's life must be filled with what he teaches.
 - a. If one teaches Christianity, there should be evidence of Christianity in his life. It should fill his life.
 - b. Therefore, mercy (usually connected with helping the poor and sick) would be evident.
 - c. Jesus went about doing good (Acts 10:38).
 - 3. Many are full of mercy, but they do not show the fruits of mercy.
 - a. Mercy must result in good fruits or "practical help."
 - b. We can never say we have fully pitied someone until we have helped him.
- E. "Without partiality" means, "undivided, unwavering, wholehearted."
 - 1. This is not acting one way when it is advantageous, then changing to another way when circumstances make it favorable.
 - 2. This wisdom knows its own mind, chooses a course of action and stays with it.
- F. "Without hypocrisy" means, that true wisdom not only says what it means, but it means what it says.
 - 1. Its teachings are always straightforward, free from all pretense.

2. Hypocrisy is being insincere — teaching for reasons other than to spread God's word, such as one's own fame, etc.
 - a. We must teach, "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."
 - b. This kind of wisdom never pretends to be what it is not.
 - c. It never acts a part in order to gain its own desires.

3:18 *Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace - This indicates an additional thought which is not part of the description of wisdom. This phrase means that a righteous life of good deeds (fruit) is what is reaped by the one who sows in the right way (not in jealousy, faction, confusion, etc.).

- A. The wise teacher must do everything he can to make peace **without** compromising truth!
- B. Righteousness is produced in the atmosphere of peace.
 1. The foolish teacher who seeks to advance the cause of truth with ranting and wild accusations will not reap a harvest of righteousness.
 2. He will leave a trail of disturbed congregations and divided brethren given to agitation and confusion.
- C. No matter how dynamic a teacher might be in reputation, if his life is not righteous, if the sowing is not in peace, he must be rejected as a teacher!

VI. **WORLDLINESS IN THE CHURCH**.....**4:1-10**

4:1 *Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?*

Where do wars and fights come from among you? - "Fights" is from the Greek word (MACHĒ) that is always used in the plural and always of battles without weapons. In other words, it is used for figurative battles (compare the same Greek word used in 2 Corinthians 7:5; 2 Timothy 2:23; Titus 3:9). "Wars" is also used frequently as a figurative word meaning, "quarreling, conflict and strife." Such conflict does not show wisdom from above. The phrase "among you" refers to those in the church.

Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? - This shows that the "desire for pleasure" is the source of these evils (compare James 1:14). This does not mean that pleasure, in and of itself, is necessarily evil. James is probably using "members" to refer to the individual's body as in James 3:2; Romans 7:23; 1 Peter 2:11.

- A. "Pleasure" is a translation of the Greek word (HĒDONĒ) meaning, "sensual delight; by implication desire, lust, pleasure."
1. This Greek word is the basis for the description of the hedonistic philosophy (Luke 8:14; Titus 3:3).
 2. The motto of the hedonists was, "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die."
 3. It promotes the carefree attitude of people encouraging one another to eat up, drink up and give no thought to the future, because life is short.

4:2 *You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.*

You lust and do not have - "Lust" comes from the Greek word (EPITHUMĒŌ) meaning, "a strong desire." In the context the meaning here is a strong desire for those things that are not good (see also Acts 20: 33; Matthew 5:28). When men live merely to satisfy their desires they never gain the good in this life.

You murder and covet and cannot obtain - 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 did Jesus and John.

Matthew 5:21-22, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not **murder**, and whoever **murders** will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."

1 John 3:15, "Whoever hates his brother is a **murderer**, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

"Covet" is from the Greek word (ZĒLOŌ) meaning, "jealous, burning with zeal or envy" (compare Acts 7:9; 17:5; 1 Corinthians 13:4; Galatians 4:17).

- A. This is not the Greek word usually used for "covet."
 - 1. It seems to be more of an emphasis on the desire to have something.
 - 2. If the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God (James 1:20), certainly jealousy, hatred and lust would not bring God's blessings on any one.

You fight and war - The thought is: "You desire to have these things, but you do not have them; so, you go on fighting and arguing."

Yet you do not have because you do not ask - They were trying to get what they wanted using their own means without prayer and without considering God.

- A. The statement implies that if they had asked and sought their desires for good things in the right way they would have received them.
- B. The question is, "Will they continue in this way or will they come to God with the right attitude?"

4:3 *You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss - "Amiss" comes from the Greek word (KAKŌS) meaning, "improperly, wrongly." They were asking for things with wicked motives as clarified in the next verse (compare: Proverbs 28:9; Psalms 34:15, 19; 145:18; Luke 18:14; 1 John 5:14).

that you may spend it on your pleasures - "Spend" is from the Greek word (DAPANAŌ) that means, "in a bad sense: to waste, squander, consume."

- A. This is similar to what is found in the parable often referred to as the "Parable of the Prodigal Son" (Luke 15).
- B. It says of the son "But when he had **spent** all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want" (Luke 15:14).
- C. His inheritance was not "spent" for anything good, but to satisfy his sinful desires.

4:4 *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

Adulterers and adulteresses! - In the context, it appears that this phrase is referring to spiritual adultery (compare Matthew 12:39; 16:4; Revelation 2:22). One who is a friend of the world has broken his "marriage vow" (purity) to God (compare 2 Timothy 3:4).

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? - This is making friends with the concepts of the "world." It is the idea of worldliness. Christians must live **in** the world, but they should not be **of** the world! Christians must live as dead to the world; not friends with it (compare John 17:25; 15:19; 1 Corinthians 1:20; 15:33; Galatians 6:14; James 1:27; 1 John 2:15; 5:19; etc.).

- A. The word "enmity" is different from the word "enemy."
- B. "Enmity" means "to be at war, or antagonistic against something or someone" (compare Matthew 6:24).
 - 1. The Bible never teaches the idea of, "one foot in the church and one foot in the world."
 - 2. It is all or nothing with God!

1 John 2:15, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

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. If we **want** to be a friend of the world, we cause ourselves to be an enemy of God. How do we act at work, school or in our communities? Do people know by our actions, dress and habits that we are different from the world?

- A. God does not withdraw from us (Romans 8:39), but we withdraw from Him and make ourselves His enemy by not following His will.
- B. We do this by showing that we prefer the world (compare Matthew 22:37).
- C. We can either **use** the world OR **be used** by it:
 - 1. To use the world to evangelize as the servant of God is to be a friend of God.
 - 2. To use the world and worldliness as the object of our love and desire is to be the enemy of God.

3. We must prepare to be an **enemy** of the world if we are not a **friend** of it! We must be prepared to face persecution.

4:5 *Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?*

Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain - The word "Scripture" is singular but can be understood as meaning the entire Bible. It is used in this way in John 7:38,42; Acts 8:32; Romans 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; Galatians 4:30 and 1 Timothy 5:18. Therefore, the meaning is: "Do you think that the general teaching of the Scriptures is not significant concerning this issue."

"The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? - This is the most difficult phrase in the entire letter from James. It is extremely difficult to determine the meaning of the term "spirit."

- A. Is this talking about man's spirit or the Holy Spirit?
- B. The translators of the KJV translated it as man's spirit, while the translators of the NKJV translated it as the Holy Spirit.

James 4:5 (KJV), "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?"

James 4:5 (NKJV), "Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously'?"

1. "Spirit" is from the Greek word (PNEUMA) that means, "breath, breeze, spirit, soul."
 2. It can be used to refer to man's spirit or the Holy Spirit.
 3. Also, there is no capitalization in the Greek texts.
 4. Therefore, the answer to the question must be determined by the context.
 5. In the context James is commanding his readers to be a friend of God, not following after the ways of the world, but to live in humility.
- C. Therefore, many teach that this phrase refers to the human spirit, and not the Holy Spirit.

1. If this is the case, then the words, "lusteth to envy" or "yearns jealously" are to be understood in their ordinary sense.
2. Therefore, the passage teaches: "Man (man's spirit) is often covetous and envious."
3. Man is warned to guard against such an attitude with humility (verse 6).
4. This seems to fit the context well.

D. Others would say this passage shows that the Holy Spirit lives in the hearts of the Christians and He desires the same love from Christians as He has for Christians.

1. This would be an amazing phrase that tells of the love the Holy Spirit has for the sons of God.
2. In this interpretation James would be asking if they think that the Spirit's concern for Christians is in vain or to no purpose.
3. This would be a rhetorical question with a negative answer implied.
 - a) For more information concerning the indwelling compare the following: John 14:17; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:19f; Ephesians 2:22; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:2; Acts 5:32; Romans 8:6; Galatians 4:6; 5:17; Ephesians 3:17; 1 John 3:24; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 1 John 4:12-13; Hebrews 6:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Romans 8:2-27; Ephesians 3:16; 2 Timothy 1:14.
 - b) Also see - Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16; Exodus 34:14; 20:5; Zechariah 8:2.

4:6 *But He gives more grace. Therefore, He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*

But He gives more grace - Man's situation is not hopeless. God gives more grace for us to overcome our weaknesses.

A. This is in contrast to the ones mentioned before who were wanting things and could not have them.

- B. God does not abandon the Christian in his temporary falling away, but His grace is always available.
- C. God's demand for obedience goes hand-in-hand with His supply of divine aid (grace) necessary for that obedience (compare Romans 5:20-21; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Therefore, He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" - "Resists" comes from the Greek word (ANTITASSOMAI) meaning, "in battle against, to oppose, resist." Literally it means, "God sets himself in array against the proud," as one draws up a host of soldiers for battle.

A PERSON WITH PRIDE SHUTS HIMSELF OFF FROM GOD BECAUSE:

1. HE DOES NOT KNOW HIS OWN NEEDS. 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 even 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.

He cannot receive help because he does not know he needs help, and therefore, he cannot ask for help.

4:7 *Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

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, we should put ourselves under God's rule!

- A. This requires a complete submission to God's will.
- B. If there is any area of our lives kept back from God, there will always be conflict.

Resist the devil - This is not as easy to **do** as it is to **say**. The devil is the ruler of this world; therefore, we must resist the world (Ephesians 2:3; John 14:30).

- A. To give comfort to the enemy is to align ourselves against God; therefore, we cannot be friends with the devil and be true to God.
- B. The roaring lion of 1 Peter 5:8-9 is really a cowardly beast. When he is confronted by the resistance of faith, he will flee.

1 Peter 5:8-9, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world."

- C. The main way to accomplish this is to not allow pride to get in the way of our subjection to God.

and he will flee from you - **THIS IS A PROMISE!** Remember the Devil is the ruler of the world (Ephesians 2:3; John 14:30). The phrase "he will flee from you," shows that Satan does not have an overwhelming hold on us!

4:8 *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you - 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 (compare Exodus 19:22; Hebrews 4:16).

Cleanse your hands - This is **external**. In the Old Testament this was a part of the ceremonial purification; therefore, it indicates a call to repentance (compare Exodus 30:20; Isaiah 1:15-16).

you sinners - Notice that James pulls no punches — this is written to Christians! This is meant to pierce their conscience. One will not repent unless he realizes he is a sinner. Those who have obeyed the gospel must realize they can still sin.

and purify your hearts, you double minded - This is **internal** (Compare 1 Peter 1:22).

- A. God knows if we want to be friends with the world because He knows our hearts and our hearts are the source of desires.
- B. If we want to embrace the world and Christ we are double minded and need to purify our hearts (compare 1 John 1:22; Psalm 24:3-4).

4:9 *Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.*

Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom - James is saying to have sorrow over your sinful condition. It is better to do these things now than in eternity (compare Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10; Luke 6:25-26; Job 28:29).

4:10 *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up - Here James primarily means a self-determined act of submission to the will of God rather than to the character of humility (Luke 14:11; 1 Peter 5:6). Pride is the greatest barrier to the salvation of many!

- A. Some people only have enough religion to make themselves miserable.
- B. They never fully commit to complete obedience to God's will.
- C. If we remove from our lives all that is contrary to God's will, and we obey Him completely making Him the center of our lives, we will have the full joy of the salvation He offers.

VII. JUDGING OUR BRETHREN 4:11-12

4:11 *Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.*

Do not speak evil of one another, brethren - Notice James is speaking to brethren. To "speak evil" (KATALALEŌ) is to literally "to speak against one." In the original Greek it shows that they were already guilty of this.

- A. Some people accuse and slander others to remove suspicion from themselves, while some are self-righteous and accuse others as if they themselves have never sinned.
- B. This is another sin of the tongue (compare Romans 14:4, 10).
- C. This also ties in with verse 10 because much of this is done because of pride.

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

(James 2:9) or personal dislikes (compare 1 Corinthians 13:5; Jude 22-23). The original Greek indicates that these were being done by the same persons. Also compare Galatians 6:1.

Speaks evil of the law and judges the law - In the original Greek there is no article in the phrase. It is simply "law" not "the law." If any part of the law is meant as opposed to the whole, it is most likely the "law of love" (James 2:8). James is teaching that if you do not follow the law, you must not have thought it was worth anything.

- A. There are two problems if you judge the law:
 - 1. You are not a doer of the law and
 - 2. 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 James 1:21. This applies to all matters of the law (speeding, trespassing, tax evasion, etc.).

4:12 *There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?*

There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and destroy - To judge the law as they were doing 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 (compare Deuteronomy 32:29; Luke 12:4-5).

Who are you to judge another? - We are not to judge by appearance (John 7:24). What good is it to pronounce judgment on someone if you do not have the power to carry out that judgment? Compare the following verses: Romans 2:1; 14:4,13; Matthew 7:1-2, 20-21; Luke 6:33, 37.

- A. This law against judging does not forbid:
 - 1. Rebuking sin (1 Timothy 5:19-20),
 - 2. Correcting one another (James 5:19-20) or
 - 3. Carefully restoring one who has fallen away (Galatians 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:1).

VIII. PRESUMPTUOUS SELF-SUFFICIENCY4:13-17

4:13 *Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit";*

Come now - This expression is by James to call the attention of the readers to his following words.

you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit" - James is describing a group of Jewish traders sitting, as it were, in front of a map and pointing to the next city they intended to visit. It is as if they make their plans to spend a year there, buying and selling, and making a profit.

- A. There is nothing in this section to indicate James is condemning business or planning ahead (cf. Luke 14:28).
 - 1. The real point is brought out by the contrast that follows "If God wills."
 - 2. They were making plans without taking God's will into consideration.
- B. It is not the planning that is condemned, but the self-confident attitude that ignores the will of God (compare 1 Corinthians 10:12).

4:14 *whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.*

Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow - Compare this with the rich fool condemned in Luke 12:16-21.

- A. We should never make plans without considering God's will.
 - 1. We do not know if we will be alive tomorrow or not.
 - 2. And if we are alive, will we have good health?
 - 3. Will we be able to carry out our plans? or any plans?
- B. We who know so little about the future would be foolish to ignore God's will when making our plans.
 - 1. God has not put it within the power of man to command one moment of that which is in the future.

2. How foolish then, to plan without God.

Proverbs 27:1, "Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth."

For what is your life? - They had forgotten that they were merely human. Mankind has no certainty of life at all, whether he shall live or die; be healthy or ill; have prosperity or poverty (compare Hosea 6:4).

It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away - James connects man's life with a higher power and will than his own.

4:15 *Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."*

Instead you ought to say - Here James explains the proper attitude.

"If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." - Literally, this is saying, "If the Lord has so determined it in His wisdom." It is important that our attitude always reflects this idea rather than just saying the words, "If the Lord wills." We should not just say it as an idle phrase, as some people do (compare Acts 17:28; 18:31; 21:14; 1 Corinthians 4:19; 16:7; Hebrews 6:3).

4:16 *But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.*

But now you boast in your arrogance - "Arrogance" is from the same Greek word as is used for the "pride" of life (ALAZONEIA) in 1 John 2:16. This phrase indicates that the real problem was they were actually making it a point to leave out God — almost defying Him. They put their trust in their own abilities.

All such boasting is evil - "Boasting" is from the Greek word (KAUCHĒSIS) meaning, "the act of glorying."

- A. This word originally referred to a traveling fake doctor, who offered cures that were not cures and boasted of things he was not actually able to do.
- B. The future is **not** in the hands of men to decide and no man can claim to have the power to decide the future.
- C. To boast of self-sufficiency, with an attitude that omits God, is evil.
- D. In what can we glory?

Romans 5:1-4, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the **glory** of God. And not only that, but we also **glory** in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope."

Romans 5:11, "And not only that, but we also **rejoice** in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."

4:17 *Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

Therefore - This shows that this verse is a conclusion to the preceding section.

to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin - God has taught us what is right and if we fail to do it, it is sin.

- A. The danger is that we agree to the truth about the brevity of life and the uncertainty of the future.
- B. BUT we go on living, as we did before, with our far-reaching plans and without any reference to the will of God.
- C. Such an attitude is the very essence of sin!
- D. Sin is not only doing evil, but failing to do the good we know to do.
 - 1. These are often referred to as sins of omission.
 - 2. The greatest danger threatening the spiritual welfare of Christians is often sins of omission.
- E. If we do not act with the understanding that we are entirely dependent on God, we sin (Acts 17:28).
 - 1. Since God has made His will known to us, it is our responsibility to act accordingly (compare John 15:22; Luke 12:47).
 - 2. A person could be sitting at home relaxing, not actively engaged in sin, but still sinning because he is not doing what he should be doing.

- a. Compare this with a person who sees a broken railroad track and does not notify anyone.
 - b. When a passenger train came, it derailed and many were killed.
 - c. Who would say that he was innocent?
3. How many souls die and go to hell while we sit back and take our leisure?

IX. CONCERNING RICH OPPRESSORS5:1-6

5:1 *Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!*

Come now, you rich - James is not condemning all rich people, but rather those rich who fall into the group he describes.

- A. However, Bible writers, as a rule, almost always class the rich with the evil, and the poor with the good. This is because we often see this as a general truth (Luke 6:24).
- B. Compare Isaiah 13:1-6 and Isaiah 14:31 where audiences are addressed, but not directly considered as the readers of the text.

weep and howl - "Weep" is used as the expression of violent grief (compare Joel 1:5, 13; Isaiah 13:6; 14:31; 15:3; 16:7; Jeremiah 4:8). If the evil rich understood their coming punishment, they would literally shriek over it.

for your miseries that are coming upon you! - This can refer to either the destruction of the Jewish economy in which their standing in the community, money and perhaps even their lives would be taken away, or possibly it refers to their final judgment.

- A. However, the Greek word translated as "are coming" is present tense.
- B. Therefore, this means that James is not just talking about their future, but what is coming upon them at this time. This is miseries in this life; miseries resulting from their sins.

5:2 *Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.*

Your riches are corrupted - "Corrupted" comes from the Greek word (SĒPŌ) meaning, "to putrefy, that is, (figuratively) perish: to become corrupt, rotten." When wealth is not used for good it becomes worthless.

and your garments are moth-eaten - 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" were highly valued.

5:3 *Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.*

Your gold and silver are corroded - Actually gold and silver do not rust, but the word "corroded" can also mean "tarnished."

and their corrosion will be a witness against you - "Corrosion" means rusted through to the bottom. It serves as proof of their sin.

and will eat your flesh like fire - A terrible image that describes the disastrous results of treating money as the primary goal in life.

- A. It is possible the treasure he has laid up for himself **is** the "fire."
- B. If so, the corrosion shall eat your flesh because you have treasured up fire.
- C. And that "fire" would be the fire of "hell" (Matthew 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43-47).
- D. Therefore, the life of the evil rich is to be pitied, **not** envied.

Noted preacher, Dr. J. W. Roberts, said the following: "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 (Luke 16:9-12). There are many things that a Christian may use his money: for his family (1 Timothy 5:4), for payment of taxes and good deeds (Romans 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."

you have heaped up treasure in the last days - The phrase, "heaped up treasure" should be compared to the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:19-21.

Matthew 6:19-21, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

To amass wealth through covetousness or greed is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). The "last days" may refer to the Christian age (compare Romans 2:5).

- A. It is not necessarily wrong to accumulate wealth if done in the right way.
 - 1. With the proper exercise of stewardship money can be used to further the kingdom of God. Many Christians with wealth do this.
 - 2. However, some die and leave their wealth unused and it goes to the state in taxes or to relatives who are not Christians or are not faithful and will not use the wealth for God's glory (compare 1 Timothy 6:6, 9).
- B. God's word certainly teaches that wealth imposes heavy responsibilities and dangers upon those who have it.

5:4 *Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.*

Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields - For a land owner to hold back the wages from the ones who were directly responsible for his great harvest is almost inconceivable (compare Deuteronomy 24:15).

which you kept back by fraud, cry out - Compare Genesis 4:10; Exodus 2:23. "Cry out" is present tense and shows a continual crying out. It is an ongoing wrong that needs to be put right. It demands justice!

and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth - Notice the word used here is "Sabaoth" not Sabbath. "Sabaoth" means, "hosts" or "armies." The phrase, "Lord of Sabaoth," is used only here and Romans 9:29 in the New Testament, but it is used 282 times in the Old Testament and is sometimes translated "Lord Almighty." This phrase is one of the highest titles for the power and majesty of God (compare Isaiah 1:6; 6:3).

- A. The phrase "have reached" is 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.
- B. 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.
- C. All who are tempted to cheat his fellow man should remember who works justice.

5:5 *You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.*

You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury - "In pleasure and luxury" indicates to be given to a soft and luxurious life. It is possible to have a luxurious life temporarily (on earth) by dishonesty (compare Amos 6:1-6).

you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter - Compare: Jeremiah 25:34; Isaiah 34:2,61; Ezekiel 21:15. The rich have fattened themselves up for their day of slaughter. It is as though the animals had supplied their own food which eventually prepared them for the slaughter. This reference here by James probably refers to the day of judgment rather than to the destruction of Jerusalem.

5:6 *You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.*

You have condemned, you have murdered the just - This could be referring to the killing of Jesus (Acts 3:14; 7:12; 22:14; 1 John 2:1) or any innocent man.

he does not resist you - James here describes the helplessness of the victims of the ungodly rich men. Also, the book of 1 Peter tells Christians, using Christ as their example, how to act in a time of persecution (1 Peter 2:21-24, compare Matthew 5:39; Romans 12:19).

X. CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD MISTREATMENT 5:7-12

5:7 *Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.*

Therefore, be patient, brethren - "Patient" means to "hold the mind in check." Patience is not the ability to wait, but how we act while we are forced to wait. It describes the attitude which can endure delay, bear suffering and never give in.

- A. The Greek word used here is the same word used to describe God in 2 Peter 3:9 as "longsuffering."
- B. Our sins do not provoke Him to destroy us at the moment we sin.
- C. The opposite meaning of this word in the Greek is "wrath."

until the coming of the Lord - "Coming" comes from the Greek word (PAROUSIA) that literally means, "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 waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain - A farmer does not expect his harvest on the very day he plants the seed. He is "waiting patiently for it" to grow. Just because a farmer may have some disappointments over his crops (weeds, birds, etc.), he does not impatiently plow up everything. The farmer is patiently waiting "until it" (the crop) receives the early and latter rain. Christians must also wait until the proper time for the blessings to come.

5:8 *You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

You also be patient - The example of the farmer should show us that if we can be patient in material things, we can also be patient in spiritual matters.

Establish your hearts - "Establish" comes from the Greek word (STÉRIZŌ) meaning, "to make stable, place firmly, set fast, to strengthen, make firm, to render constant, confirm, one's mind" (compare 1 Thessalonians 3:13).

- A. Prepare yourselves, with a fixed faith, to endure difficult times, even though they are not convenient.
- B. One day the harvest will come to those who do not give up.

for the coming of the Lord is at hand - The phrase "is at hand" comes from the Greek word (EGGIZŌ) meaning, "to draw or come near to, to approach."

- A. James could be referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, or to the second coming of Jesus for the judgment.
- B. The time would be "at hand" (near to) either way when one considers the endless duration of eternity.

5:9 *Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!*

Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at 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 making it clear that God's judgment will consider the Christian's behavior as well as that of their persecutors.

- 5:10 *My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.*

My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience - The prophets had also suffered wrongs but persevered through it all without complaint (Compare: Hebrews 11:33-38; 2 Chronicles 36:16; 23:37; 1 Thessalonians 2:15; Matthew 5:12; 23:29-32; Acts 7:52).

- 5:11 *Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.*

Indeed we count them blessed who endure - Compare: James 1:12; Daniel 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 of Job - There may be a faith that never complains or questions, **but** the greater faith is the one that is tortured by questions, such as Job's, and still believes. The book of Job points out that God has a purpose in allowing the suffering of His children (Hebrews 12:5-10). Assuming we have a knowledge of Job we can see that it is pleasing to God for us to be faithful in trials.

and seen the end intended by the Lord - "End" is from the Greek word (TELOS) meaning, "goal, purpose, outcome, result, conclusion." The Lord uses trials to produce steadfastness and to make better Christians (James 1:2-4).

Someone once said, "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."

that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful - James wants to reassure his readers that, just as God blessed Job after he proved himself faithful, He will do no less for them in a spiritual manner, if they bear their troubles with the patience that Job exhibited (Compare 2 Corinthians 11:23-33; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Peter 2:20-23).

- 5:12 *But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.*

But above all, my brethren - The phrase "above all" is another way of saying, "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 and condemned in James 3:9-12. In this section James is condemning the making of oaths.

Matthew 5:34-37, "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."

- A. To "swear" is to use the name of God, or other sacred things (the temple, heaven, earth, the sun, the moon and the stars), to give weight or significance to a promise being made (an oath). Doing this seems to have been a common practice by the Jews in the first century.
- B. Some rabbis taught that a man must tell the truth only when the name of God was used in the oath, on the grounds that God became a party to the promise.
- C. They would say if God's name is not included in the promise, then the oath was not required to be kept.

either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath - This statement forbids the use of all oaths of this kind. All such swearing must be avoided as sinful.

- A. All oaths, whether sincere or not, that fall into this classification, are wrong.
- B. James is not saying it is wrong to use the name of God in our conversations, or when called on a witness stand (Matthew 26:63; Acts 23:6), when it is being done in a reverent, respectful and sober way.

But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment - To say more than "yes" or "no," by the use of such oaths, was an act of taking God's name in vain. It was using God's name in a flippant, empty and vain way.

- A. We should always remember that we will be judged by our "idle words" (Matthew 12:36).

- B. People who are honest and truthful do not need any more than a simple "yes" or "no" to express the truth to others.
 - 1. The best guarantee of any statement is not an oath, but the good character of the man who makes it.
 - 2. If we are Christians no one should ever demand an oath from us because they would know that we always tell the truth.
- C. The New Testament clearly teaches that every word is spoken in God's presence and should therefore be true.

XI. THE CHRISTIAN IN ILLNESS AND SIN 5:13-20

5:13 *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.*

Is anyone among you suffering? - The Greek word translated as "suffering" (KAKOPATHEŌ) may refer to things other than illness. This same word is translated as "bonds" in 2 Timothy 2:9 and is used of the hardships of the evangelistic life in 2 Timothy 2:3; 4:5. James also uses this word in James 5:10 concerning the prophets.

Let him pray - Literally this is, "Let him keep on praying." Prayer will gain for us God's help. This truly benefits us as opposed to the impulsive outbursts of oaths (James 5:12). Also consider the following on prayer - Psalms 46:1; 50:15; 62:8; Matthew 7:9-11; James 1:5; 5:7, 16; 1 Peter 3:12.

Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms - It should be noted that this is an imperative statement. In other words, it is a command! When we are cheerful, do we sing praises **or** is this only done during our times of worship?

- A. Do we go to God only in times of suffering?
- B. It is not unusual for us to go to God during a time of need, **but** we may neglect Him when all things are going well.
- C. [For additional information concerning singing "Psalms" please see the appendices - PSALLO, ITS MEANING.]

5:14 *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

Is anyone among you sick? - The word "sick" (ASTHENEŌ) refers to the one who is without physical strength. This **is not** to be applied spiritually.

A. Compare John 5:3 for this same word.

John 5:3, "In these lay a great multitude of sick people (ASTHENEŌ), blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water."

B. Also notice that verse 15 adds the phrase, "**and** if he has committed sins."

C. Therefore, the sickness in this verse **does not** refer to spiritual sickness.

Let him call for the elders of the church - Some have translated this as "call for the priests," but this is not supported by the text. Notice some other New Testament passages on elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5-11).

A. Does this mean the elders were called to miraculously heal the sick?

B. There may have been some elders endowed with the miraculous gift of healing, but there is no indication that all of them possessed this gift.

C. Therefore, if James was referring to miraculous healing he would have said, "Let him call for someone in the church who has the gift of healing."

and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord - Notice that the "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.

MISUSE OF THIS PASSAGE

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 Catholic 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 FOR THIS PASSAGE:

- A. That it endorses using the best available medical means for the sick (as oil was in the 1st century) [compare Luke 10:34; Isaiah 1:6; Jeremiah 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 (James 1:16). [For a defense of this position see Ross, *James and John*, New International Commentary Series; and Lenski, *Interpretation of James*.]
- B. That it was miraculous healing in the 1st century. Oil was used in the 1st century in some cases where miracles were worked (Mark 6:13). Prayer was a part of the preparation both of the miracle worker and the onlookers (Matthew 17:21; John 11:41-45).
 - 1. 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).
 - 2. 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 (John 9:1-7).
- C. [For additional information concerning this please see the appendices - ELDERS ANOINTING WITH OIL.]

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 (compare Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4; Acts 14:3; John 20:30-31). However, miraculous gifts are not needed today because the word has already been fully given and confirmed.
- B. The Scriptures teach that the gifts were to cease (compare 1 Corinthians 13:8-13).
- C. The ability to perform miracles could only be received by the laying on of an apostle's hands (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.
- 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 and could not be disputed, such as sight given to the blind or raising the dead.

5:15 *And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*

And the prayer of faith - The "faith" referred to here is on the part of those doing the praying. God requires that when a man prays, he believes that God hears him, and that God can and will answer his prayers according to His will (1 John 5:14-15).

- A. Praying in faith that God's will be done will enable us to stand up under and overcome all difficulties.
- B. There is no faith required on the receiver's part in the prayer of faith (compare Luke 8:49-56; John 9:1-38; Acts 3:1-10).

will save the sick - "Save" here means "heal." Forgiveness of sins is mentioned later.

- A. Under 1st century circumstances the healings had to confirm the word and was **not** just for the sake of healing someone [compare - Paul was not healed (2 Corinthians 12:7) nor Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20)].

- B. We should not think that God's power can only be manifested miraculously.
 - 1. It is also false to think 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.
 - 2. Physical laws are under His control.
 - 3. If physical laws are not under His control there would be no need to pray and we would be denying the providence of God.

and the Lord will raise him up - The raising is from the sickbed, which is the **effect** of the cure just mentioned.

And if he has committed sins - This implies that this person could also be unfaithful and have sins which have not been corrected.

- A. Many Jews believed that the ones who were sick were suffering because of their sins (John 9:1-3).
- B. The Lord taught this was not true (Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-3).
- C. However, sickness often makes sinful men more conscious of their spiritual condition.

he will be forgiven - This forgiveness is conditional as all forgiveness is. The condition is the subject of the next clause.

5:16 *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

Confess your trespasses to one another - Confession assumes that repentance also takes place (Acts 8:22). The principle of confession is broader than this specific circumstance (1 John 1:9) and is in continuous action — i.e. continue to confess. James does not just say to confess that you are a sinner, but to confess your sins.

- A. The phrase "to one another" does not refer to a priestly set of workers.
- B. And, **IF** it did apply to the elders it would still not be approval for the Roman Catholic idea of "Confessionals."
- C. Speaking against the confessional system, Martin Luther commented, "A strange confessor! His name is 'One Another.'"

and pray for one another, that you may be healed - In the Greek the word "healed" is 1st aorist, passive, subjunctive. This shows that it is God who is doing the healing.

- A. This refers specifically to this context.
- B. In these cases, the sin stands between him and his being healed.
- C. **If** he is willing to confess his sins, **then** the elders may do as they were called to do.
 - 1. The tense of these imperatives is durative implying the praying and the healing were going on all the time.
 - 2. This is used of the soul in Matthew 13:15; 1 Peter 2:24; Hebrews 12:13.

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much - This type of prayer is an earnest entreaty for something for which one longs. "Avails much" means it is "able to do much."

- A. The petition of a righteous man avails when it is doing its work, which is petitioning, pleading and begging.
- B. The action of prayer must be earnestly and persistently engaged in.
- C. God wants us to express our desires and thoughts (compare Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8; Matthew 15:21-28).

5:17 *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.*

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours - The Jews had 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 - In the Greek this is literally, "he prayed with prayer." This is an expressive way of telling us how he prayed. Some people do not **pray** in their **prayers**. They just utter religious words never involving their hearts in their prayers.

that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months - Compare 1 Kings 17:11-18:45 (note: God had promised to withhold rain if they were evil and to give rain if they repented).

5:18 *And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.*

And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit - These events were miraculous, but they were obtained through natural prayer. The same God who heard and answered Elijah's fervent prayer will do the same for Christians today (in a non-miraculous manner).

5:19 *Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,*

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth - "Wanders" comes from the Greek word (PLANAŌ) meaning, "to go astray, wander, roam about."

- A. From the many warnings given by James in this letter the people were in danger of forsaking the truth and falling into the sins which were unique to their situation.
- B. "Truth" is something that must be *done!*
 - 1. It is not only something to be studied; but something to be done.
 - 2. It is not only something to which a man must submit his mind, but something to which he must submit his whole life.
 - 3. One cannot wander from the truth unless he has been in it.
 - 4. Once again, this is proof that one can fall away, fall from grace (compare Galatians 5:4).

and someone turns him back - "Turns him back" comes from the Greek word (EPISTREPHŌ) meaning, "to turn around, to turn, to convert." Some have put themselves beyond turning back (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-27), but others have not so seared their consciences.

5:20 *let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*

let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins - Eternal life is the life in mind here. This does not appear to be significant in many lives today, for if it were they would think more about its greatness and do more about it.

- A. The phrase "cover a multitude of sins" refers to the sins of the one converted, for his sins are covered by the blood of Christ.
- B. This is indeed a labor worthy of a Christian!

END

APPENDICES

JAMES THE BROTHER OF THE LORD

DISAPPOINTMENT

PSALLO, ITS MEANING.....

ELDERS ANOINTING WITH OIL

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. Ehiphanian 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 (Galatians 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 (Galatians 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" (Galatians 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 (Galatians 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 (Matthew 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 (Mark 15:40; Matthew 27:56 and John 19:25) say the following about this third Mary:

- a. She is the mother of James and Joses (Mark 15:40).
- b. She is the mother of James the less and Joses (Matthew 27:56).
- c. She is the sister of Jesus' mother (John 19:25).
- d. And she is the wife of Clopas (John 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 (John 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 (Mark 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 Colossians 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 (Romans 16:7), and other unnamed brethren (2 Corinthians 8:23). These were evidently apostles of the churches (Philippians 2:5; 1 Thessalonians 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 (John 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 stepsons 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” (Galatians 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 (Matthew 1:16; Luke 1:27; Romans 1:3; 2 Timothy 2:8; Revelation 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;

²⁵and *knew her not till* she had brought forth a son: and he called his name Jesus. (Matthew 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? (Matthew 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 (Matthew 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 (Matthew 4:15).

He did not believe in Jesus at first (Mark 3:21), and sought to make Him quit His madness (Matthew 12:47; Luke 8:19; John 7:5). After the resurrection of Christ, he experienced a personal interview with Jesus (1 Corinthians 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 (Galatians 1:18-19). Fourteen years later Paul describes him as one of the pillars of the church (Galatians 2:1-9).

He took part in the meeting at Jerusalem (Acts 15; Galatians 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 (Galatians 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 (Galatians 1:18-2:10).

ENDNOTES

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 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.

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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.

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 Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 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 Romans 15:9; Ephesians 5:19; and 1 Corinthians 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

PSALLO, ITS MEANING

By: 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.

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 Mt 10:8; Lk 7:10; Jn 4:46; 11:3; Acts 9:37; Phil 2:26,27; *et. al.*) The word in verse 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 Revelation 2:3 (fainted).

It is a valid Christian concern to take special care for those Christians who are sick (see Mt 25:26 & 3 Jn 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 (Jn 11:41). Also elders need to show their concern for those under their oversight, 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 - Colossians 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 (Revelation 6:6), cosmetics - hair oil (Matthew 6:17), embalming (Luke 23:56), medicine (Luke 10:34 as well as historical records by many including Celsus and Herod the Great (in Josephus), socially (Luke 7:46), commodity (Luke 16:6), and fuel for light (Matthew 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 *chrio* (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, bedsore 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 (Mark 7:33; 8:23), and clay and spit (John 9:6) and the pool (John 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; Matthew 18:5; Mark 9:39; Luke 9:49; 10:17; John 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 Corinthians 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 - Matthew 26:39) (see also 1 John 5:14-15). Not all people were healed, even in the age of miracles since Paul (2 Corinthians 12:8), Trophimus (2 Tim 4:20), Epaphroditus (Philippians 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) (Matthew 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) (v. 36) and when she was raised he gave her to the *saints* and widows (v. 41). (2) The effect of this miracle was that many believed (v. 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 everyone 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.)