

JAMES - VERSE-BY-VERSE

THE TRIUMPH OF TESTING



TEXT: James 1:1-4

THEME: To show how the Christian can profit from trials and testings.

SIMPLE OUTLINE FOR THE BOOK OF JAMES:

- 1-The testings of faith
- 2-The twin of faith (works)
- 3-The tongue of faith
- 4-The triumph of faith (A)
- 5-The triumph of faith (B)

INTRO: A. God has a strange way of turning chaos into order, of bringing glory out of tribulations, advantage out of adversity and triumph out of testing.

B. The Christian should be aware that in God's plan and program for his life, there are valleys as well as mountain-top experiences, there is poverty as well as prosperity, vicissitudes as well as victories; but in all these experiences, Christians should be "more than conquerors" knowing that God is working in us to bring us into conformity to the image of His dear Son. James writes on this subject in the opening verses of his epistle of exhortation.

I. SERVITUDE & ITS CHARACTER: v 1

A. The Writer: A Servant (Bond-Slave)

ILLUS: The "bored ear" ear principle:

Exodus 21:5-6 And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: 6 Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.

1. The apostle James: James the son of Zebedee

- a. James, the half brother of the Lord was **not** an apostle
- a. James, the half brother of the Lord was a "late bloomer" or more specifically a late-believer, like his other family members
- b. He apparently became a believer after the resurrection of Christ

Matthew 13:55-58 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? 56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? 57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. 58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

John 7:5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

2. This James apparently became the leader of the Jerusalem Church

NOTE: When the early church began to have questions concerning the duties of Christians in relationship to the Law of Moses, they held a meeting of the leaders of the church over which James presided. Acts. 15:1-33

B. The Servant's Master:

1. God the Father
2. Christ the Son

C. The Servant's Fellow Laborers

1. Jews...in and out of Jerusalem (dispersed, but not forgotten... Ez. 11:16)

Ezekiel 11:16 *Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.*

2. James identifies with the recipients of his letter "**my brethren**" (not "lording it over the flock")
3. The Jews great testing was the Dispersion (*Diaspora*):
 - a. This was God's method of spreading His Word
 - b. This was also God's method of saving Gentiles

II. ADVERSITY AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS: v. 2-4

A. The Definition of "Temptation:"

1. Solicitation to evil.
2. Testing under trial.

ILLUS: A founder casts a bell but doesn't hang it immediately in the church steeple. He beats it with a hammer on every side to locate flaws first. So Christ, after our conversion doesn't transport us immediately to Heaven, but suffers us to be beaten with trials and testings and then finally exalts us as trophies of His grace in Heaven.

B. Adversity Is Inevitable: (WHEN ye fall...not walk...into DIVERS testings...")

NOTE: The adverb of time is used for "when" ("hotan") meaning whenever and not "if." In other words adversity is a certainty.

1 Peter 4:12 *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

ILLUS: All sunshine makes a desert. Someone said "the future of the Christian dispels the gloom of the present."

Acts 14:21-22 *And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*

Philippians 1:29 *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*

Psalms 34:19 *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*

1 Thessalonians 3:3-4 *That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. 4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.*

1 Peter 2:20-21 *For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

John 15:20 *Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

ILLUS: The blacksmith thrusts metal into the fire, beats it to see if it will take a "temper"...if not, he casts it into the scrap heap. If so, places it back into fire until white hot. Then quickly plunges it into the cold water, shaping and molding it into something useful. Adversity or trial is like that; the Lord places us into the furnace of testing to see if we will take a "temper". If so, He thrusts us into the white heat of the furnace again and again, and into the deep cold waters. Our only prayer should be, "Lord don't throw me into the scrap heap".

C. Adversity Is Invaluable: (*"count it all joy..."*)

NOTE: The word "all" is the Greek word "pasa" and when referring to a number means the totality of things. When it is used of one thing only, it means "entirely, completely." An experience enters our life and we let it pass without it making any impression on us. According to this passage that is wrong. We should get the most out of every experience, but rather get all the joy out of it. The world teaches that adversity is an unwelcome visitor; Christ teaches that it should produce joy. Philosophy teaches us to be calm under trial; Christ teaches us to be joyful.

1. Invaluable to our character:

ILLUS: Paul said: *"In whatsoever state (we find ourselves) therewith to be content." "All things work together for good..."*

a. Adversity should improve our disposition (attitude)

ILLUS.: We should be like the poor family man who came to prayer meeting and said, "I managed after great effort to buy some meat for my children, but somebody stole it from me. I praise the Lord, however that though I lost the meat, I still have an appetite."

b. Adversity should improve our discipline (self-control)

c. Adversity should increase our determination (strength)

2. Invaluable to our conduct:

NOTE: It should be noted that in this epistle noted for an emphasis on works that James mentions faith before he mentions works and mentions it sixteen times!

a. Adversity should make us patient: v. 3

b. Adversity should make us mature ("perfect"): v. 4

NOTE: Maturity of faith is the theme of James. This maturity is seen as developed by the believer's works.

3. Invaluable to our capacity: v. 4

a. "Wanting nothing: a "full" Christian...complete, entire.

b. Adversity brings us to our full stature in Christ.

ILLUS: It is the cold snow of winter that warms the ground to produce the beautiful blossoms of spring. "The Christian should never make the mistake of thinking that the goal is everything. There is enjoyment to be had on the way." - Zodiates

D. Adversity is Not Invincible:

ILLUS: If I have a pure gold coin, I am not afraid of any test to which it may be submitted!

1. Adversity or trials never affect our relationship with Christ

Romans 8:35-37 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

2. Adversity or trials should not cause discouragement

Habakkuk 3:17-18 *Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: 18 Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

3. Adversity or trials should produce rejoicing

Matthew 5:11-12 *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

CONCL: This then is the message of comfort James gives to those of his brethren under the rule of an alien government. He instructs them not to be surprised that they are experiencing testings, but to be aware that God is forging triumph out of these sometimes bitter experiences. Everything hinges on their reaction. Do they see God in it all? Then they can "*count it all joy*" and claim the victory. If not, they shall be defeated.

What about you, Christian?

DIVINE COUNSELLOR



TEXT: James 1:5-8

THEME: To show that in times of testing God is to be our Resource and to reveal that He desires that we seek His wisdom and counsel.

INTRO: A. In times of trouble we often go to and fro seeking counsel and advice from those around us. How much better it would be to go directly to God Who is willing to give to us "*liberally and upbraideth not*". He desires to give to us the divine counsel and wisdom that only HE CAN give! For His "*thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and His ways higher than our ways.*" One of His holy names is Counsellor!

B. Counselling is dealing with people on an individual basis about their problems. Praise God, we have a divine Counsellor Who is also our individual and personal Savior!

TRANS: V. 1-4 have dealt with trials and testings and the desired result. Now James deals with our resource...

I. WISDOM AND ITS CONNECTION (to adversity): v. 5

A. The Type of Wisdom Needed

1. Not intellectual wisdom, but practical knowledge of things divine. (Not knowledge [gnosis], but wisdom [sophia])
 - a. Wisdom to enable one to see things from God's standpoint.
 - b. Wisdom to enable one to make wise choices in a state of trials, tribulations, troubles and testings.

NOTE: Zodiates said it well: "Unless there is within us that which is above us, we shall soon yield to that which is about us."

2. A wisdom that will help us count manifold trials joy

ILLUS: We should pray not so much for the removal of our affliction, but for wisdom to make right use of it.

B. The Divine Source of This Wisdom

1. This wisdom comes only from "the Giving God".
2. We can't get it in school, through experience or from our own intellect.
3. Wisdom is one of God's attributes. His prerogative is to impart it to others.
 - a. God gives it to those who truly seek it.
 - b. He will not scold us for seeking it again and again.

ILLUS: Solomon asked for wisdom and also received riches and honor. He gives liberally and abundantly.

1 Kings 3:9-13 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? **10** And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. **11** And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; **12** Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. **13** And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

- c. Reveals God's willingness to give us what we need and what is best for us.

II. FAITH AND ITS COUNTERPART (instability): v. 6

A. Faith Defined

ILLUS: John Paton, missionary to New Hebrides Islands, was translating the New Testament. The language did not have a word for "faith". One day while he was sitting in a chair with his feet on another a native saw him and used one word which meant "I am resting my whole weight on these 2 chairs". One word meant "resting my whole weight upon;" he had found his word! Let us try it on John 3:16; 1:12. It works for salvation and it works for prayer.

B. Faith, the Prerequisite to Answered Prayer

C. Doubt, the Counterpart of Faith, A Hinderance to Prayer

ILLUS: "Nothing doubting" should be the Christians motto in prayer.

1. The present scientific age merely suggests to "pray to God", if there be a God; to "save the soul", if there is a soul.
2. Christians are apt to speak with surprise at answered prayer, even as unusual or remarkable. This is not praying in faith, believing.

Acts 12:5-17 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. **6** And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. **7** And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. **8** And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. **9** And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. **10** When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. **11** And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. **12** And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. **13** And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. **14** And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. **15** And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. **16** But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

3. Faith is the active element in prayer - the appropriate power! Not asking, but faith that moves God to action.

III. DOUBT AND ITS CONSEQUENCE (Unanswered Prayer): v. 7, 8

A. Doubt is Responsible for Much Unanswered Prayer: v. 7

ILLUS: We pray for salvation of souls, revival in the church with doubt, and our prayers go unanswered.

B. Reason: God is displeased with doubt.

ILLUS: We trust God for salvation, but not for our needs.

C. Doubt breeds more doubt!

1. Doubt produces disbelief.
2. Doubt produces double mindedness.
3. Doubt produces discouragement.
4. Doubt produces despondency.

D. The Results of Doubt Illustrated

1. Illustrated by water:

- a. One who doubts, like water, conforms to the vessel in which he is placed.
- b. One who doubts, like water, is easily disturbed.
- c. One who doubts, like water, is driven by the "winds" of circumstances.
- d. One who doubts, like water, never seeks anything higher than his own level.

2. Illustrated as a double minded man (spiritual schizophrenia)

- a. A man of 2 minds fails in both purposes between which he has hesitated.

ILLUS: Someone has likened this to a bat which always sided with the winners...birds or beasts. When the bat's hypocrisy was discovered it was rejected by both.

- b. A man of 2 minds in the matter of prayer is uncertain AND unstable in other areas of life.

CONCL: In times of testing and adversity, God desires that we "be not ignorant concerning His will" but that we seek His will and the wisdom which only He can give.

FOR RICHER, FOR POORER



TEXT: James 1:9-11

THEME: To show some of the blights and blessings of the trial of wealth and the trial of poverty.

INTRO: A. The cry has gone forth from all ages to remove the distinctions between rich and poor, to have all share in equal wealth (or equal poverty). The basic tenet of communism/socialism is the equal distribution of all wealth. Communism claims that jealousy and the exploitation of the poor by the rich will thus be eliminated.

B. The Democratic party have always declared" war on poverty" to eliminate the advantages of some over others. This is the philosophy of socialism i.e., let the government supply that which the individual does not supply for himself. Let the state answer the prayers of the needy. What is the result of the socialist philosophy? DEPENDENCY on the state. It doesn't work! Socialism says don't go into business! Don't take out insurance! Don't grow crops!

C. But James is not speaking here of the evil Siamese twins of communism or socialism, but rather he speaks concerning the rich and the poor. Jesus said, "**The poor ye have with you always**" (in spite of the Democrats declarations to the contrary). The Bible doesn't speak of a "leveler" or "equalizer" between rich and poor in terms of taking from one and giving to the other, but rather that Christ is to be allowed to be the Great Equalizer. Inequalities exist everywhere: intelligence, abilities, opportunities, health, strength, energy, ambition, wealth. James here speaks of the inequalities of wealth and poverty.

I. THE TRIAL OF POVERTY: v. 9

A. The Blights of Poverty:

1. Poverty tries the body by exhausting it with labor.
2. Poverty tries the mind by placing obstacles in the way of acquiring knowledge.
3. Poverty tries the heart by limiting the enjoyment of the luxury of giving.
4. Poverty tries the temper by wearing out patience and causing anxieties and sarcasm.
5. Poverty tries the character...THE GREATEST SIN OF POVERTY IS ENVY!

B. The Blessings of Poverty:

1. The greatest of all blessings is that "in Christ" there is equality!

2 Corinthians 8:9 *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

- a. All may gain Heaven.
- b. All are called "brethren".
- c. All may call God "Father".
- d. All may share in Christ's inheritance.
- e. All are exalted to sit in "the heaventies".

2. To share poverty with Christ is a blessing.

- a. He "had not where to lay His head".
- b. He depended on others to supply His needs.
- c. He even had to borrow a tomb.

3. Even the poorest can be blessed with true riches. cf. James 2:5

1 Corinthians 1:26 *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:*

Luke 12:15 *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

Mark 8:36 *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*

4. The blessings of poverty are a matter of perspective and position.

Revelation 2:9 *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. [the church at Smyrna]*

Revelation 3:17 *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: [the church at Laodicea]*

- a. Perspective:

1. Count your blessings, not your blights.

ILLUS: A tax collector came to a poor pastor to assess the value of his property. "I am a rich man", the preacher said. "What do you own?" the tax collector asks. "A Savior, eternal life, heaven, a godly wife ("her price is far above rubies"), health, obedient children and a merry heart" replied the poor preacher. "Indeed, you are rich, said the tax collector, but your property is not subject to taxes."

2. Look at things in the light of their eternal value.

b. Position:

1. We are citizens of Heaven.
2. We should have humility: **"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."**

II. THE TRIAL OF WEALTH: v. 10, 11

A. The Blights of Riches:

1. The temptations of wealth are more serious because they are more subtle.
 - a. The mind is distracted with care.
 - b. Spirituality becomes corrupted with abundance.
 - c. The rich are prone to high-mindedness and self-sufficiency.
 - d. There is the danger of selfishness.
 - e. The rich often trust in "things money can buy".

Luke 12:16-21 *And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

- f. There is always the tendency to abuse prosperity.
- g. The greatest SIN OF WEALTH IS PRIDE!

2. One of greatest blights of wealth is to exalt self when self should be abased: v. 10
3. The writer illustrates our frailty with a comparison in this passage.
4. Worldly wealth and the worldly wealthy are withering things.

ILLUS: A young couple travel overseas to gain enough money to build new home when they get back to states; while there they see a beautiful picture, a vase...send on ahead. Next, they see some fine furniture and send it back to the states. In like manner we ought to be sending our "wealth" here on ahead to heaven. The things we do here for the Lord will be our "treasures in Heaven..." You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead.

B. The Blessings of Wealth:

1. The Bible SEEMS to speak against wealth, but that is not so; money is not the root of evil, but rather "the love of money".
2. It is not necessary for the wealthy to rid himself of riches unless they hinder his service.

ILLUS: The rich find it hard to hold the "full cup" steadily...so they should "pour it out before the Lord."

3. The Lord blesses the rich man who holds his riches loosely.

ILLUS: John Wanamaker spent so much time and money in church work, someone asked if he wasn't neglecting his business. He replied, "This is my business, my other interests keep it going." **"It is more blessed to give than receive."**

4. The greatest blessing a wealthy man can receive is the humility that comes from a proper view of himself AND his riches. v. 11

CONCL: It is not a matter of how rich or how poor you are, but rather of the estimate you have of yourself and of wealth.

Recognize the value of your soul and spiritual riches. (Mt. 6:19-21)
Both poverty & wealth are considered trials. Will you receive the blights or the blessings?

A CROWN FROM THE KING



TEXT: James 1:12-16

THEME: To show the rewards for trials endured, and the root and results of temptation.

INTRO: A. Scofield gives two different definitions for the English word "temptation" found in our text. 1. Solicitation to evil. 2. Testing under trial. James here deals with both aspects or meanings of the word. The dictionary calls for a combination of the two: "to try the strength of"

B. This verse is linked both linguistically and in thought to verses 2, 3, 4. The King James Bible translators properly used the word "temptation" for our word "trials" because of the context.

I. THE REWARD OF TRIALS ENDURED: v. 12

A. The Promise of the Reward

1. In this life...patience, perfection, maturity, wisdom and joy.
2. In the next life...blessedness or happiness.

- a. The form is that of a beatitude [12a] (Beatitudes promise the opposite of what is normally expected. Here it is NOT "blessed is the man who is tried"... but who endures.)
- b. A beatitude is a "promised blessing".

B. The Prerequisites to the Reward

1. Endurance: If we bear the cross for time, we will wear the crown for eternity.
2. Love is the substance of Christian character and **"Love endureth all things"**

C. The Prize for Endurance

1. The Blessing: Trials (v.2) are regarded as opportunities, and should be the cause for great joy.
2. Happiness: ("blessed") characterizes the one who is tried and endures: (the word "patience" comes from the word "endure")
 - a. Our reaction to trials is usually to run away.
 - b. Happiness only comes from enduring, never from running.
 - c. "Happy is the one who stands his ground in the face of trials."

3. The crown of life:

Revelation 2:10-11 *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a*

crown of life. 11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

- a. A crown speaks of authority...kings and priests.
- b. We shall reign with Him...if we are overcomers.

ILLUS: Boy to girl: "I love you...would go through fire for you...would die for you." When leaving said, "See you tomorrow night...if it doesn't rain." Just like many Christians.

II. THE ROOTS OF TEMPTATION EXPOSED: v.13, 14

QUOTE: Zodhiates: " There is a shift in v. 13 in the meaning of the word. It is interesting to note that in this verse he does not use the noun any more, but the verb, which indicates the inner solicitation to evil, the subjective impulse to sin."

A. The False Theory: v. 13

1. That God tempts man to do evil...impossible!
 - a. Trials may come from the Lord.
 - b. Solicitation to evil (temptation) never !
2. Only an evil being can tempt others to do evil: the Tempter

ILLUS: The carnal mind desires to charge God with its own sin. This characteristic is hereditary... "Papa Adam" blamed the woman God gave him for his sin...thus, indirectly blaming God.

3. That God can be tempted...impossible!
 - a. This answers those who say there was a possibility for Christ to sin on the Mount of Temptation. (Christ was unable to sin, not merely able not to sin. He was impeccable.)
 - b. God CANNOT sin!

NOTE: Notice the logic. If Christ is God (and He is!), then He cannot sin. It is not that He did not sin, but that He could not sin.

B. The Facts in the Case: v. 14

1. The origin of sin:
 - a. It is always man's will yielding to desire, instead of resisting. ("We are free to choose, but we are not free to choose the consequences of our choice, for those are determined by the eternal purposes and laws of God." IBID.)
 - b. We blame Satan and others...yes, even God, for making us as we are.
 - c. The world and the devil only stir the filthy pool of depraved personal desire which is already there.

ILLUS: Like an angler baiting the hook to catch fish. The reason the fish bites is because of his nature! It is instinctive. The bait looks attractive...but underneath is the hook. (We will return to this analogy shortly.)

- d. The heart is the root of all sin!

NOTE: A healthy person may be forbidden to take a certain drug which is a must for a sick person, e.g. insulin. What makes the difference? The condition of the individual. *It is what is in you that determines what is outside you. Nothing from without is able to bring sin into any will.*

2. The alternative to sin:

- a. It is possible for all men to avoid sin and choose good...(theoretically).
- b. For the believer...the Holy Spirit dwells within and Christ proved that victory is possible through His power, via God's Word on the Mount of Temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13 *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

III. THE RESULTS OF TEMPTATION EXAMINIED: v. 15

QUOTE: Zodiates "That word 'then' with which our verse begins, is very significant. It indicates the impossibility of the thought, the idea, the desire ever remaining in that stage. It either has to move forward and take upon it some kind of expression, or it must be thrown into oblivion."

- A. Result #1: Temptation denied = victory
- B. Result #2: Temptation indulged = defeat, death
 - 1. The genealogy of sin: (in 18 words!)
 - a. Lust in the heart and temptation to evil are related.
 - b. Conception and pregnancy results.
 - c. The offspring grows and is born as sin.
 - d. Sin when brought to completion brings death.

ILLUS.: Let's return to the analogy of the fish. He sees the bait and is attracted to it (**TEMPTATION**). He thinks about taking the bait (**LUST**). He is drawn to it (**ENTICED**). He takes the bait (**SIN**). The angler reels him in (**DEATH**)!

Peter repented of his sin; Annanias and Sapphira did not! The man who dallies with temptation, instead of meeting it with prayer and resistance, will succumb! (Presentation, illumination, debate, decision, commission)

- 2. The result of all sin is death! (This is the only by-product: something dies each time we sin. It may be our testimony, our reputation, our character, our health, etc. It can be physical, spiritual or even eternal if the person does not receive Christ's forgiveness. This is the second death.)

CONCL: V. 16 **"Do not err, my beloved brethren."** To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

ILLUS: An eagle catches a large fish and takes off. But the fish is too heavy, and the eagle cannot let go, so he falls and drowns. THE FISH CATCHES THE EAGLE! This is like Christians with sin. We hold on so tightly we become enmeshed and can't let go. THE SIN CATCHES THE SINNER! "BE NOT DECEIVED"!!! (Don't get hooked!)

THE FATHER OF LIGHTS



TEXT: James 1:17, 18

THEME: To reveal God as the Great Giver of all good, and especially the Giver of the new birth.

INTRO: A little girl announced she was going to buy slippers for her daddy's birthday. Her friend asks, "Where will you get the money?" She says, "Father will give it to me, of course." Her father appreciated the gift even though he paid for it. We have nothing of our own to give to God. He is the Author of every good and perfect gift.

TRANS.: After having argued against the theory that God is the source of evil and temptation, James now declares that:

I. GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL GOOD: v. 17 **"the Father of Lights"**

- A. His Gifts: **"Good and Perfect"**

ILLUS.: Sir Walter Raleigh was continually submitting requests to Queen Elizabeth on behalf of convicts. Once the Queen said to him: "Sir Walter, when will you stop being a beggar?" "When Your Majesty ceases to be a giver," was his answer. It is wonderful to know that God is an inexhaustible Giver of blessings!

1. The manner of bestowal is **"good"**: They are GIVEN so we cannot boast.
2. The matter bestowed is **"perfect"**: God gives only good, never evil.

ILLUS.: Here is a parent who has a severely handicapped child. What is so good and perfect about that? Here is a man diagnosed with terminal cancer. What is so good and perfect about that? Here is the apostle Paul with 195 whip lashes on his body, shipwrecked, beaten, stoned and left for dead, chased and harassed by the Jews wherever he went. What is so good and perfect about that? Well his evaluation of it all was **"when I am weak, then am I strong"** and **"I will glory in mine infirmities!"** How could he say that? He knew the source was God! He was caught up to heaven and saw wonderful things. Because of his boastings when he returned to earth, God gave him another **"good and perfect"** gift – a thorn in the flesh. Paul doubted that gift and prayed to have it removed three times. God answered: **"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."**

What is the "perfect" gift then? That which makes us perfect, even as He is perfect. Even the Captain of our salvation was made "perfect through sufferings." Heb. 2:10

B. His Habitation: the highest heaven

1. **"Above"**: therefore look not down or around.

ILLUS: The apples at the base of the tree do not grow there, they are grown on the tree above. Do not be so ignorant as to ascribe to chance, accident, or luck that which God has given.

2. **"Cometh down from the Father..."**: All good comes from Him Who is above all:

- a. Christ came down from the ivory palaces
- b. The Blessed Holy Spirit is from above
- c. The ministering angels descend
- d. We are "born from above"
- e. Grace for salvation and to live for Him is from above
- f. The New Jerusalem shall come down from God **"out of Heaven"**
(His gifts are "good;" His habitation is **"above"**)

C. His Title: **"the Father of Lights"**

1. He is Light and the Creator of it.
2. He is the Father of all lights: of nature (sun, moon stars, planets, etc.), grace, reason, conscience, knowledge, goodness and He is the Father of the children of light.

ILLUS: In hell, all is darkness; on earth, light is mixed with darkness; in Heaven, all is Light. In Heaven everything reflects His light; jasper walls, pearly gates, golden streets, the crystal river, the white robes of saints the 12 stones in the foundation of the New Jerusalem! Imagine the colors we will see which are invisible to us now! "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven"...(Millennium) **"and the Lamb is the Light thereof"...**glory!

D. His Nature: Imutable

1. No **"variableness"**: there is not one God in Old Testament, another God in the New Testament.

ILLUS: Bishop Oxnam (late liberal Methodist) said the God of Old Testament is a "dirty bully". That same man was one of the supposed "apostles of love". He taught that Christ is all love, but not God the Father. *He knows better now, He is in hell!*

2. **"No shadow of turning"** speaks of God as the Father of the Lights of the universe: sun, moon, stars; yet, He is not subject to eclipse, revolutions or mutations. (He is still the "I AM".)

TRANS: God is not only the **"Father of Lights"** but in v. 17 He is the **"Father of Life"**. Light produces life.

II. GOD IS THE SOURCE OF NEW LIFE: (Father of Life)

A. God's Attitude in Giving New Life: (If you "will not" receive Christ, God will not count you as elect...if you are! We will and He will...Jn.1:12...No one is saved against his will)

1. "Of His own will"...a free decree...He was not bound to do it.
2. "Begat He us"...speaks of the Fatherhood of God...reveals His attitude and relationship.

QUOTE: Henry Ward Beecher used to say "The elect are whosoever will; the non-elect are the whosoever won't."

B. God's Instrument to Give New Life:

1. **"With the Word"...**The Word is the scalpel God uses to operate on the heart.

ILLUS: A scientist declared "I know the chemical make-up of this seed and can reproduce it exactly. The seed I make even looks like this real one; but when planted, the earth absorbs the elements in my "home-made" seed. But if I plant the seed God made, it will produce a plant because it contains the "life principle".

The Bible looks like other books, but when it is planted in fertile soil, it brings forth life, because it has the life principle from God.

1 Peter 1:23 *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

John Wesley used to ask young men (whom he sent out to preach) two questions: "Has anyone been converted?" and "Did anyone get mad?" If the answer was no, he told them he did not think the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel, and he sent them about their business.

2. **"The Word of truth":** Satan is the father of lies; God is the Author of Truth.

C. God's Purpose in Giving New Life:

1. That we should be a kind of **"first fruits"**
 - a. **"to the Jew first..."** James is writing to Hebrews (the "diaspora")

ILLUS: James uses the illustration of the Jewish dedication of the first-fruits of field and family (the cream of the crop).

2. To assert their own value as Divine gifts.
3. To foreshadow the consecration of a harvest to come.

b. **"of His creatures"...**

1. Every regenerated man is a pledge (token) of the ultimate re-generation of the multitude which no man can number.
2. We are but a type of the redemption of all creation, yet future.

Romans 8:22-23 *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

CONCL: What a wonderful God we have! He is the Author of all good and the Giver of all life. (Some of the **"First fruits"** raised from the dead were Dorcas, Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, Jonah, Paul, etc. They all died and were raised but died again. Christ, alone was raised and lived, never to die again!)

A MESSAGE OF MATURITY



TEXT: James 1:19-21

THEME: To show the desirable characteristics of a mature Christian.

INTRO: A. ***Maturity is the main subject of the book of James.*** Church babies make the church a nursery instead of a workshop! The Preacher becomes a cradle rocker and baby burper, and instead of doing the work of the ministry they make work of the ministry! They don't walk and work, they shirk and talk.

B. You know the characteristics of the Jew. He is shrewd, uses his hands when he talks, he is often boisterous, unable to constrain himself and is very excitable. James knows too - by experience. It is very apparent here in this passage that when they met together for the purpose of worshipping the Lord, these Christian Jews were not able to contain their excitability. They had been saved by the "Word of Truth" (v. 18), but were not willing to be instructed by it. This is one of the besetting sins of the Jews, and Gentile believers as well (us!).

Luke 4:28-29 *And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.* (The first time Jesus preached in Synagogue.)

Acts 13:45 *But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.* (Paul in the Synagogue at Pisidia)

I. A QUICK EAR: "swift to hear" v. 19

A. Refers Primarily to Acquisition of Religious Knowledge

1. Take care what and who we listen to in the spiritual realm.

ILLUS: Some are fascinated by every "preacher" and every "new" doctrine. We ought to be more ready to go to the Word itself on our own, than to listen to what someone says ABOUT the Word. This is obviously not meant to denigrate genuinely called and biblically qualified "pastor-teachers."

Ephesians 4:14 *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive...*

2. Take advantage of every opportunity to hear the Word preached: If preachers are admonished to "***preach the Word...in season, out of season,***" a hearing is implied.

Amos 8:12 *And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.*

- a. Because the Word appeals to the heart more powerfully when spoken by God's under-shepherd, than when simply read.
- b. Because if you are "swift to hear" the Word of truth, you will be a strong Christian.

ILLUS: Pentecost was possible because they were ALL PRESENT together in one place. They "***continued steadfastly***" in doctrine and fellowship one with another. What a sorrowful thing to have missed out on the blessings of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down to endue them with power. (The same thing applies today. One of the reasons why we

have no revival is due to believers who are more ready to express their opinions about spiritual things than to listen to a man of God preach the Word.)

c. Because a wise God commands it

Hebrews 10:25 *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

ILLUS: In a small village in Europe the folks each carried a lamp to the evening service. These were the only lights for the service. If a member was absent, there was a dark space.

I wonder how dark our services would be if we had to depend on each member for light on a given night? The truth is, when we are absent, there is darkness in our place. The more present, the greater the illumination and inspiration. Many small lamps together make a great and beautiful light.

B. Refers Also to Instruction of Any Kind:

1. We ought to be willing to receive counsel from others.
2. We ought to hear for ourselves, not second-hand instruction.

ILLUS: Not: "You really hit THEM hard today, preacher!"

3. We ought to close our ears to gossip.

ILLUS: Under the law, the tip of the priest's ear was sprinkled with blood, he heard God first, then he spoke to the people.

II. A CAUTIOUS TONGUE: "slow to speak" v.19

A. We Ought to Weigh Our Words Well:

ILLUS: Someone has noted that we have two ears, but only one mouth.

1. Think before you speak

Proverbs 15:1-2 *A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. 2 The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.*

2. Beware of publishing speculations; base your doctrine on fact, not sentiment.

B. Our Tongue and Mouth Betray Us:

Ecclesiastes 10:12-14 *The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. 13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. 14 A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?*

Matthew 12:34-36 *O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. 36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

III. A CALM TEMPER: "slow to wrath" v. 19,20

A. Note the Continuity: (ear, mouth, temper)

ILLUS.: Jonathan Edwards the great revivalist preacher and the third president of Princeton had a daughter with an ungovernable temper. This was not something known outside the family. A good Christian young man asked Edwards for his daughter's hand in marriage. Edwards said, "You can't have her?" "But I love her," the young man replied. "You can't have her," said Edwards. "But she loves me," continued the young man. Again, Edwards said "You can't have her." "Why?" asked the young man. "Because she is not worthy of you." "But," he asked, "she is a Christian, is she not?" "Yes, she is a Christian, but the grace of God can live with some people with whom no one else could ever live."

1. Much speaking tempts to passionate speaking.

2. This does not mean a lack of emotion, or conviction.

B. Note The Context: (in religious assembly!)

1. Guard against temper especially at church meetings.
2. Guard against temper when debating spiritual subjects.
3. The preacher must speak and warn in love.
4. The hearer must not listen with an angry heart or quarrel with truth in practical form. v. 20

C. Note the Contrast: (mutually exclusive pacts) v.20

IV. A PURE HEART: "*lay apart all filthiness*", etc. v. 21

A. Their Attitude is Termed Sin

1. Their hearts were unclean, therefore they were unfit receptacles for God's Holy Word.
2. "**Filthiness**": sensuality (physical, sexual) "haughtiness": malignant sin (vicious, evil intent)

B. The Admonition Toward Sanctification:

1. From: "**filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness**"
2. To: meekness and receptivity

C. The Agency Transmitting Salvation:

1. Initially: ("engrafted"...implanted...must be part of you)

Romans 10:17 *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

2. Progressively: The Word is that which produces mature Christians. (Grow up!)

CONCL: Have you ever seen grey-headed babies? I have. Some are 30-70+ years old and permanently dwarfed in spiritual infancy! It is no disgrace to **be** a baby, but it is a disgrace to **remain** a baby.

We cannot grow in grace feasting on sinful pleasures, or indulging our childish whims. We eat the wrong food. We need to feast on the meat of the Word. Many are drinking milk who should be eating meat!

Paul said: "**When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.**" "**Receive with meekness the engrafted Word which is able to save your souls.**"

THE CULT OF WORSHIP



TEXT: James 1:22-25

THEME: To point out the folly of attending worship services and listening to the Word preached...as an end in itself.

INTRO: When we think of a cult, we think immediately of Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Christian Scientists, Freemasonry, The Roman Catholic Church, The Elks, The Moose, etc. However, there are cultists even in Christian circles! I don't mean followers of Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland or Richard Roberts (although they lead cults),

but rather those who make the attending of worship services and the hearing of the Word an end in itself. This is the Cult of Worship! These are they who make the spiritual exercise of worship a cult. These are they of whom James speaks.

I. AN INJUNCTION AGAINST SELF-DECEIT: v. 22

A. Doctrine Without Demonstration is Self-Deceit.

1. To hear and understand the Word is to be orthodox. To put it into practice is to please the Lord.

ILLUS: We are often like posts instead of trees. Plant a tree and it grows, plant a post and it decays.

2. To think "all is well" because your doctrine is sound is to be like Ephesian Church.

Romans 2:2-4 *But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. 3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? 4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

3. Doctrinal orthodoxy alone makes a cold-Christian.

ILLUS: The most attentive and most frequent hearing of the Word will not avail, unless we become doers of the Word.

B. Hearing Without Heeding Is Self-Deceit.

ILLUS: If we hear a sermon every day and an angel from Heaven is the preacher and we do not transfer that which we hear to action, it can never save us or make us effective servants. We become like the Dead Sea which constantly takes in but never gives out.

1. The difference between doing and hearing is the difference between eating and working.

ILLUS: Food is supposed to provide energy for work, but if there is no activity, it produces only fat and waste (and waist!).

2. The difference is like the difference between learning and experience.

II. AN ILLUSTRATION ABOUT SELF-KNOWLEDGE: v. 23, 24

A. Comparison of the Word with A Mirror: v. 23

1. A mirror is truthful:

- a. A mirror doesn't flatter.

ILLUS: As a photographer, I often had requests to "take out this blemish." "Can you fix this fault?" A "good" picture is one that flatters. Mirrors don't flatter or lie.

- b. A mirror helps us see ourselves as others do.
- c. A mirror reveals defilements and blemishes.

2. A mirror is useful:

- a. It helps us correct our faults.
- b. It enables us to see that which cannot otherwise be seen (you can't see your own face!).

B. Description of One Who Makes Improper Use of a Mirror:

1. He sees the truth: "beholdeth himself"

- a. Conviction comes, but no action is taken.

ILLUS: Like one sitting under conviction who realizes his sinfulness, his need of Christ...but he puts off any decision till after service when conviction is gone. Then the need is no longer recognized and the person perishes.

b. The need is revealed, then neglected.

ILLUS: You Look into a mirror and see your dirty face. You say, "Isn't that terrible" but do nothing about it and go on about your business.

2. He destroys the value and purpose of the mirror.

- a. A mirror is not just for admiring ones good qualities.
- b. A mirror is designed as an aid to self-improvement.

ILLUS: The "GOSPEL GLASS" is to be used daily for improvement in our lives as Christians.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

III. AN INDUCEMENT TOWARD SELF-DISCIPLINE: v. 25

A. The Word Ought to Produce Results in Life:

1. We ought not to "grow fat" on the Word, it ought to turn spiritual food into energy and activity.
2. We ought not to be "forgetful hearers"
3. A "doer of the work" is commended; a mere "hearer of the Word" is condemned.

B. The Word Produces Discipline and Self-Government:

1. It gives direction and counsel to the needy.
2. It imparts a blessing to those who heed.
3. It gives strength to those performing the deed.
4. It gives insight to those who read.

CONCL: Don't join the "CULT OF WORSHIP" and become stagnant in your service for the Lord. Take to heart the INJUNCTION AGAINST SELF-DECEIT (v. 22) and the ILLUSTRATION ABOUT SELF-KNOWLEDGE (v. 23, 24) and the INDUCEMENT TOWARD SELF-DISCIPLINE (v. 25) ***"Be YE doers of the Word and not hearers only!"***

ILLUS: A church member asked another: "Is the sermon done?", a practical member replied, "No, the preacher is done, but the sermon has to be worked out in our lives." How are YOU doing?

PURE RELIGION



TEXT: James 1:26, 27

THEME: To point out the evidences of true faith in Christ as revealed in a pure life and charity towards others.

INTRO: A. Like so many words, the word "religion" has degenerated to the place where it no longer holds the meaning it once did. As true Christians, we rarely use the word to describe our faith in Christ. However, James gives us his definition of "PURE RELIGION". At first glance this definition may seem inadequate, but upon a closer examination, I am certain you will agree that it is more than adequate.

B. After having dealt with those who are hearers of the Word and not doers of the work, James begins his definition of "PURE RELIGION". Often in defining a term or a doctrine, we begin with a negative consideration.

I. VAIN RELIGION EXAMINED: v. 26

A. In Vain Religion There is Much Show and Sham:

1. Men like to "seem" religious:

ILLUS: The wearing of clerical clothing, in many cases, is an attempt to cloak the unrighteous and to set him apart as "religious". This special garb, no doubt, accomplishes a division between clergy and laity in the minds of men. This is having a "form of godliness" without the power. (Uniforms are designed to set a group of people apart from others, e.g., policemen, military personnel, etc.)

2. This is the sin of Phariseeism: They usurped widow's property, etc.

- a. Christ called all such, "hypocrites" (one wearing a mask)
- b. Christians today are also guilty of this sin

ILLUS: There once was a half-wit with a coat that had many large patches. He explained that each patch stood for the sins of his neighbors. He pointed out each patch and then related the story of someone in his village. One small patch on the back of his coat was explained: "That's my sin and I can't see it".

B. In Vain Religion There is Much Censuring and Vain (Foolish) Speaking: "the unbridled tongue"

1. Some think by making others look bad, they look better.
2. A man with a detracting tongue does not have a truly humble, gracious heart.
(Someone quipped: "A man's religion is not measured by speaking his mind, but by bridling his tongue".)

ILLUS: This verse does not mean we must keep silent when evil is being performed around us; e.g., Carl McIntyre. "*A man who will not use his freedom to defend his freedom does not deserve his freedom.*" Silence can be treasonous.

3. The Jews of James' day were guilty of censuring others; not willing to give Gentile Christians equality.

C. In Vain Religion a Man Deceives His Own Heart:

1. Through inward self-deceit via thoughts, proceeds false zeal.

ILLUS: The hypocrite convinces (deceives) himself that he is truly "religious" and acts accordingly. He says, "I am spiritual" and keeps up the pretension.

2. He blinds his own heart through self-deceit.

II. TRUE RELIGION EXPLAINED: v. 27

A. What God Desires is Not Ritual in Worship but Habits of Purity and Charity:

B. The Nature of True Religion is PURE:

1. Purity of motive: why you do what you do.
2. Purity of personal life.

ILLUS: This does not mean we should live like a hermit, an ascetic or a monk. That would be purity without charity. How can you serve others locked in monastery? What if Christ had been a monk?

a. Actions speak louder than words.

- b. Christ will not receive our "devotions" if we refuse Him our devotion.
- c. True religion consists of purity in a world of impurities.
- d. True religion is that which is pure "before God the Father" rather than before men.

C. The Outworking of True Religion is Charity:

- 1. Helping those less fortunate than oneself is the social aspect of Gospel.
- 2. Widows and orphans are specifically mentioned, but the concept includes all the poor and suffering.

ILLUS: This is not the social-gospel. The main emphasis is NOT social welfare and conversion of society to Christian principles.

- 3. When we realize the love and compassion of Christ to us, we should reciprocate.
- 4. Our love for Him ought to culminate in love for others, and this love should eventuate in action.

ILLUS: The YMCA, Salvation Army, etc. began as Gospel agencies with a burden for saving men's souls by first helping them physically. The problem was an over-emphasis on the social and physical to the detriment and negligence of the spiritual. When the order or priority is reversed, the organization loses its purpose and deteriorates into a purely secular venture. The fact that these organizations were not local church centered and therefore unregulated, caused them to drift.

CONCL: The highest service we can render to friends and neighbors and society is to continue working for the salvation of precious souls. However, one way to win men to the Lord is to show them that you care enough about their physical state to help when possible. Read v. 27 again.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



TEXT: James 2:1-7

THEME: To reveal the sin of partiality and its evil effects on believers.

INTRO: A. The word "catholic" simply means "universal". Therefore, the true "catholic church" is one where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female rich nor poor, aristocrat nor peasant. In the true "catholic church" all are treated equally; all are respected; all are loved; OR SHOULD BE!

NOTE: The term "Roman Catholic Church" is an oxymoron or a contradiction in terms. If it is Roman it cannot be universal! Also it cannot be a "church" since it doesn't fit the biblical description of a "called out assembly of born again believers."

B. James now deals with a situation that existed in his day and that exists today in the church; partiality. Some folks are richer than others, better looking, more talented, of course, but when "in Christ" they are all equal in position. The internal, not the external, should be recognized and become the basis for equal treatment and respect.

I. THE PROBLEM OF PARTIALITY STATED: v. 1

A. Partiality Defined: *"respect of persons"*

NOTE: This is the SIN OF SNOBBERY! *"Have not the faith...with respect of persons."*

B. Partiality and Faith in Christ are Mutually Exclusive:

1. Faith should give spiritual insight so believers no longer judge on the basis of external appearance or position in society.
2. When the Christian is discriminatory, he should expect to be discriminated against.
3. In Christ's glorious presence earthly distinctions ought to disappear; FAITH is the Great Equalizer.

II. THE PRACTICE OF PARTIALITY ILLUSTRATED; v. 2, 3

A. Partiality Illustrated: (One instance of the sin is given)

B. Partiality Practiced: (The value or worth of an individual is often measured by external appearances or appendages)

1. Apparent wealth... *"gold ring," "goodly apparel", "gay clothing"*
2. Standing in Community: Not where he stands in the eyes of God, but in the eyes of man.

ILLUS: If a poor man be a good man he has no less value because he is poor. If rich man be a bad man he has no more value because of his riches. Many rich men are vile and despicable – evil, yet they may be highly honored in the world, e.g. movie stars, sports heroes, musicians, etc. Many humble, poor, heavenly Christians are clothed very poorly, and despised by the world.

C. Note The Contrast in Treatment of Two Types:

ILLUS: In the synagogue the "best" seats were those by the Ark of the Roll of the Law and Table of the Lord, the lower seats were located away from the speaker and the Word, some even on the floor at feet of the wealthy and influential. Today, some preachers avoid preaching that which would be unpalatable to the more faithful and influential families in the Church. (Not so with Nathan or John the Baptist.)

III. THE PERFORMANCE OF PARTIALITY CONDEMNED: v. 4

A. Partiality Creates Divisions, Envy and Strife:

B. Their Motives Are Questioned:

C. This Attitude Produces Superiority: v. 4b *"judges"*

IV. THE PRE-TEST OF PARTIALITY DESTROYED: v. 5, 6a

A. God Sets the Example as Being *"no respecter of persons:"*

B. God Chose the Poor, as a Class, as *"heirs of the Kingdom":* (This does not mean the individually rich or wealthy may not be included)

C. God Chooses on the Basis of Inward, Not Outward Appearance: *"Them that love Him"*

D. Our Choice Seems the Opposite of God's: v. 6a

1. We walk by sight, not by faith.
2. We keep present values in view, not eternities values.

V. THE PITFALLS OF PARTIALITY DISCLOSED: v. 6, 7

A. Common Sense Tells Us Not to Court the Wealthy:

1. As a class, they have been responsible for the persecution of the Church.
2. They have misused their power and influence in the courts against God and good.

B. Self-Respect and Decency Commands Us Not to Court the Rich:

1. The rich have been persecutors and oppressors; the poor have been persecuted and oppressed.
2. This reveals the inconsistency of believers who court those that God has set aside.
3. Should we bow before those who would exploit us? Should we stoop to serve those who look down on us?

C. Our Courtship of the Rich Displays Disloyalty to the Lord: v. 7

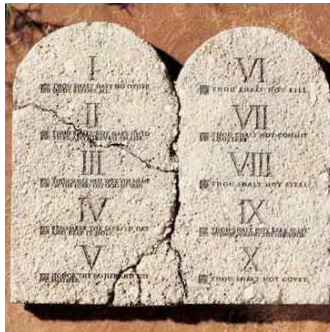
1. These are the class of blasphemers.
2. They have "everything"...they have no need of Christ.
3. They despise His name and all who embrace it.

D. James here uses the rich as only one example of those we are not to court. All blasphemers, infidels, and atheists can be included.

CONCL: Partiality or "respect of persons" ought not to be found in the believer. Christ is our example in this. The rich and poor were equally welcome and invited to receive Him.

Let's make this: "_____ Baptist Catholic Church" where all are welcome. Let's not practice spiritual snobbery. What if God had been a "respector of persons? Where would you and I be? Where would you sit in His eternal home?

CHRISTIANS UNDER THE LAW



TEXT: James 2:8-13

THEME: To show that Christians, while not under the Law, have great responsibilities to the Lord and will respond to these responsibilities - not out of fear, but out of love.

INTRO: A. There are three erroneous views of faith and works in relation to salvation:

1. LEGALISM: Salvation through works or adding something to God's grace and faith: cf. Rom. 3:20
2. GALATIANISM: Saved through faith, but kept by works: cf. Gal. 3:1-3
3. ANTI-NOMIANISM: "Against law" or LAWLESS (Once saved, do as you please - anything goes, no law to govern)

B. James writes against this heresy (James 2:4 Key verse). Instead of being lawless when free from the law of Commandments, we come under a higher law; the law of love and gratitude, the law of liberty - the royal law.

ILLUS: People always desire authority to rule them; they dislike personal responsibility. Examples: Moses and Saul.

I. CHRISTIANS COMMENDED FOR LAW KEEPING: v. 8

A. **"The Royal Law":** The Law Of Love: (Love thy neighbor as thyself).

1. The royal cause comes from the King of Kings, the Prince of Princes.
2. It causes Christians to be in a state of liberty, not bondage; it gives great dignity and honor.
3. It eliminates a contrast between the rich and poor; these distinctions must vanish before the authority of the King.

B. **"According to the Scripture":**

We should not be moved by external appearances in others to determine the degree of respect accorded them, but only by the Scriptures themselves.

C. *"Ye do well..."*

II. CHRISTIANS CONDEMNED FOR LAW BREAKING: v. 9

A. *"Respect of Persons"* Breaks the Royal Law of Love:

Leviticus 19:15-18 *Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour. 16 Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the Lord. 17 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. 18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.* (The Law of Love, is an extension of the Old Testament Law.)

B. That Which They Prided Themselves in, Condemned Them *"convinced of the Law as transgressors."*

1. This law of love and liberty becomes a standard of righteousness.

ILLUS: The Law of liberty is still a law and binding! If I leave and go elsewhere to preach, suppose I tell my wife : "I am your boss, so while I am away you must obey the commandments on this sign I have made."

1. Thou shalt entertain no other husbands beside me.
2. Thou shalt not run around with nor love anyone else more than me.
3. Thou shalt not speak lightly of thy husband or take my name in vain.
4. Thou shalt properly clothe and feed my children.
5. Thou shalt keep thy house clean, and not sweep dirt under the rug...etc, etc.

"Failure to observe these rules will bring severe punishment. I may even divorce you!" This is not the law of love and liberty. This is the law as it applies to a hired servant, not to a wife. My wife loves me, the children, the home, so she doesn't need these commandments. I don't worry while I'm gone.

There is liberty in the law of love, but not irresponsibility. This law, like all laws, exacts obedience, but not out of fear of punishment - only out of love.

2. Knowledge of any law brings conviction. *"By the law came the knowledge of sin."*

ILLUS: I am riding down road doing 70 in a 50 mph zone. Then I see in my rear view mirror a police car; the siren blows - conviction comes (more ways than one).

III. CHRISTIANS CONCERNED WITH THE WHOLE LAW: v. 10, 11

A. Complete Obedience For the Christian is Just As Necessary Under the Law of Love As Under the Old Testament Law:

ILLUS: Some Christians who would shudder at the thought of disobeying in N.T. doctrine never hesitate in disobeying the Great Commission. Some would not steal or murder, but think nothing of slandering, gossiping, holding grudges, causing division, strife, etc.

B. God Says You Are Guilty of Breaking the Whole Law By One Offence: v. 10

1. This doesn't mean that a thief also is also a murderer...but that a transgressor of one part of the law of love disgraces love itself, the key-note and sum total of whole law.
2. All sins are in their severity nor in their effect on others; they are not equal...but all carry the same contempt for the authority of the Lawgiver.
3. If we choose 9 Commandments to keep and one to break, we do our will, not God's.

ILLUS: A GARMENT is torn though only in one place...A CHOIR is spoiled if one voice out of tune...A CIRCLE'S perfect figure is marred by a flaw in any one part of it.

4. All sin is rebellion against God who is love.

QUOTE: "He who obstinately transgresses in one point without violating the others ...omits it only because he is not invited or tempted to do so at that moment."

C. The Author of One Part of the Law is the Author of the Whole: v. 11

1. We pick and choose which parts of the law we are to break based on our evaluation of the law's severity.

ILLUS: V. 11...If we think the consequences of murder are less than that of adultery, we choose murder. A proper view of the law condemns ALL DISOBEDIENCE AS CONTEMPT FOR GOD'S AUTHORITY.

2. All the laws of God are sacred and holy and to break one is to show disrespect for holy things.

ILLUS: Which is less vile...to yell "Crucify Him," to spit in His face, to drive spikes into His hands, OR to disregard and disobey Him? (Like having to choose between spitting on the Bible or the American flag.)

IV. CHRISTIANS CONTROLLED BY THE LAW OF LIBERTY: v. 12, 13

A. The Law of Liberty is More Strict Than the Old Testament Law:

ILLUS: Freedom and liberty brings with it greater responsibility; witness countries controlled by a dictator. The Socialists and Communists want to "do more **for** the people" to gain more control **over** the people.

B. The Law of Liberty Should Govern all Christians:

ILLUS: You are always bound by rules, regulations and restrictions because of loyalties and obligations that you are placed under or place yourself under, e.g. federal aid always brings federal control! When you become a Christian your loyalty is to Christ. We have a responsibility to the One who purchased us with His blood.

C. The Gospel is a Law...Though Based on Love and Liberty:

1. It sets forth precepts and commands with rewards and punishments.
2. It proscribes duty as well as provides comfort.
3. Christ is our King to rule as well as our prophet to teach and our priest to intercede.
4. His YOKE is easy, His BURDEN is light.

D. The Law of Liberty Will Judge All: v. 13

CONCL: The difference between the Christian and the unsaved is that the Word and Law of Christ is a "hard saying" to unsaved; to believers, an "easy yoke." The Law has not changed, our hearts have. The Law no longer thunders in the Christian's ear "THOU SHALT NOT"; the commandments, now written on his heart, are no longer "grievous". The Law becomes a law of liberty.

THE OBITUARY OF FAITH



TEXT: James 2:14-20

THEME: To set forth the Scriptural test that distinguishes between profession and possession.

INTRO: A. Someone has said "faith is like calories; you can't see them, but you can see their results." Paul in Romans says a man is justified by faith; James says a man is justified by works.

B. Luther rejected this epistle as a "strawy one" and said that it opposed or contradicted the epistle to the Romans. Yet, they are not contradictory, but complementary. Paul, in Romans, speaks of works meaning the works of the Law and their relation to the obtaining of salvation. James speaks of works as they relate to the outworking of salvation. Paul speaks of faith in its germ form; James speaks of it in its visible form. James means by works what Paul means by faith. James speaks of justification before men; Romans of justification before God. Paul is writing to those who are trying to go to Heaven through Law-keeping. James is writing to those who were orthodox and doctrinally sound, but were dead as far as the expression of their orthodox faith was concerned.

I. FAITH AND ACTION: v. 14

A. Action Must Accompany a Profession of Faith: **"...a man SAY he hath faith"**

1. A mere profession is inadequate:

ILLUS: A person raises his hand in a service, comes forward, and prays...but if there is no renunciation of sin (repentance), habits, associations, attitudes, beliefs or change of life it is useless. A mere profession does not save. Have you ever seen a rocker or rapper wear a suit or tie? Of course not, they wear their badge of rebellion proudly. (The most frustrated man in the world is a bald man with a hippie heart.)

2. Approval of a mere profession is harmful: **"what doth it profit...?"**

- a. It gives a false security to the professor
- b. It brings reproach upon Christ as others observe his life (hypocrite)

ILLUS: True faith is alive. A Chinese native comes to a missionary to present himself for baptism. He is asked if he had ever heard the Gospel. He says, "No" but I have seen it. I knew a man who was an opium smoker and had a violent temper when he became a Christian and his life changed. I want the power that did that for him".

B. Action Will Accompany True Faith:

1. The absence of action indicates an absence of faith.
2. Empty words come from an empty heart. (The outside must match the inside - hair, dress, etc.)

C. Action, Not Words, Save:

1. Can a "profession of faith" save him?: No!
2. He must confess, believe and receive.

Romans 10:9-13 *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

ILLUS: Two people go forward in a meeting. Both express a desire for salvation. Year later, we look at them and say one was real, the other was not. What's the difference? True faith produced a changed life. II Cor. 5:17

II. FAITH IN ACTION: v. 15, 16

A. The Test of True Faith:

ILLUS: Wesley heard of a rich man getting saved and asked, "Was his purse converted?" He did not believe in a religion that cost nothing.

A preacher presented the financial need of the church to the congregation. One man said, "The church is always asking for money." Another said, "When my boy was young, it was costly. He needed shoes, clothes, food, etc. He wore them out fast. The older and stronger he grew, the more money he cost me. Now he is dead and does not cost me anything." If our faith is alive, it will cost; if it is dead, it will not cost anything.

1. Our first responsibility is to the household of faith:

1 John 3:17-18 *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

2. Then to others: (to mission fields, friends, neighbors, community, etc.)

Galatians 6:10 *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

ILLUS: An older lady was out in the cold and shivering. She said to her servant, "Remind me when we get home to send some warm blankets to the poor people." After she got home, surrounded by warmth and luxury, the servant reminded her of the promised blankets, and she replies, "Oh, yes, I remember, but it's nice and warm now." It's sad that we who are in comfort, refuse to help those in need. (True test of faith)

B. Action Meets the Test of True Faith:

ILLUS: Like the little girl in a thunder storm. Her mother said, "Don't be afraid, God will protect you." "Yes, mama, I know, but when the thunder and lightning is so violent, I want someone near me that has skin on."

III. FAITH WITHOUT ACTION: v. 17

A. We Abound in Mouth-Mercy:

ILLUS: Moved by the need presented by a missionary, a man said "I'll pray for you." He could have reached in his pocket and helped financially. We ought not to pray for things we can provide.

B. V. 17 is the OBITUARY OF FAITH, or Its Death Notice, For All Who Claim Faith without Works.

CONCL: The pastor was speaking to one who professed Christ:

1. "Have you been baptized?" "No. The dying thief wasn't baptized and went to Heaven without it."
2. "Are you a church member?"...same response.
3. "Do you partake of the Lord's Supper? ...same response.
4. "Do you tithe?" ..same response.
5. "Do you help the poor?" ...same response.

"Well, my friend, the only difference between you and the dying thief is that he was a dying thief and you a living thief!"

VISIBLE FAITH



TEXT: James 2:18-20

THEME: To show how faith, which is invisible, can be seen by others to prove our regeneration.

INTRO: QUESTION: "Can something invisible be seen?" Faith, though invisible, can be seen in everyday life. When you place money in the bank, you are exhibiting faith and trust. When you buy a product, you have faith in the name

behind it. When you give money to the church, you trust the church to do right. (Don't give money to a bum or derelict on the street, because you can't trust him to do as he says.)

ILLUS: A young man got out of prison and stopped by the parsonage. He needed a place to leave his possessions while taking care of business in town. He left them with us because he felt he could trust a preacher of the Gospel.

An old man stopped by the parsonage. He was hungry and looking for work. He had faith to believe we would help. We didn't have much, but shared what we had. That act of faith prepared him to receive the Gospel. His heart was more receptive.

I. A FAITH THAT WORKS:

A. A Comparison Between Profession and Possession:

1. Profession: vv. 14 & 17.

a. James says "You have made a profession of faith."

ILLUS: In the Methodist Church I said the Apostles Creed each Sunday, and believed it, but I was still unsaved.

b. A profession of faith is invisible indeed.

- 1) One with mere profession CANNOT demonstrate his "faith".
- 2) It is a "faith" which cannot be seen.

ILLUS: This is like the person who refuses to be baptized, join the church, work for the Lord, witness, or come to services. Is he saved? Well, he made a profession. That is all we know for sure.

2. Possession: v. 18

a. James says "***I have works.***"

- 1) Here is faith made visible.
- 2) Here is faith which is demonstrated.

B. The Proof of Possession Over Profession:

1. The "professor" is put on the spot: "***shew me thy faith without thy works.***"

(The word "shew" means "to reveal, bring forth, bring to light, exhibit, display...make visible.")

ILLUS: Here is the story of the origin of The Infidels Club in Scotland. Some men were standing on a corner. A prosperous man went by. "That's the founder of the Infidels Club" said one. "No, he is the deacon of a church" said another. "Well, deacon or not, he is the Club's founder" came the reply. His inconsistent life bore such a false witness for Christ that it undermined the faith of several young men who joined together to found the "Infidel's Club". (There are only two kinds of witnesses for Christ...FOR AND AGAINST. The one who professes Christ without living for Him, is a witness against Him.)

2. The possessor knows he has proof of his faith: "***I will shew thee my faith BY my works.***"

ILLUS: If you are going to make your faith visible then you must PRODUCE! To see if the sun is risen you need not look to the east alone, but to the west for its reflection, and all around for, its light.

If a man would accept your faith, he looks not at your creed, but at your conversation; not at your words, but at your works.

Matthew 5:16 *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

ILLUS: A missionary asked of a new convert, "What argument of mine led you to Christ?" "I could refute them all to my satisfaction but the argument of your life." Christianity is like the measles...it is caught, not taught, from someone else.

II. A FAITH THAT DOESN'T WORK:

A. A Rebuke For Belief: v. 19a

1. To the Jews:

a. They had an intellectual monotheism:

- 1) It is not wrong for Christ commanded it: James 2:19
- 2) But it is insufficient...belief in God is universal. Atheists are simpletons according to the Word..."fools".

ILLUS: A Quaker & an atheist were discussing God: Atheist: "Did you ever see God? Feel God? Hear God? Smell God?" "No!" "Then how can you believe there is a God?" Quaker: "Did thee ever see thy brains? Feel thy brains? Smell thy brains?" "No!" Then dost thee believe thou hast any brains?"

Isaac Newton and an atheist: The atheist saw a beautiful replica of the universe and asked, "Who made it?" Newton replied, "No-one!" The atheist got the message.

2. To all today who **"believe in God"**

- a. "In God we trust" is our nation's motto.
- b. There are very few atheists in our nation, but many are lost nonetheless.

B. A Rebuke for Intellectual Faith:

1. One definition for the word "demon" is "to learn, to know, and to teach". Plato identified a demon in his writings as "one who knows" ...a scientist.
2. Demons believe in God.

a. They recognize Christ as God

Matthew 8:29 *And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*

- b. Theirs is an intellectual knowledge.
- c. This knowledge did not change their outlook, character, attitude or activity.

3. Demons stand in awe of God.

- a. Demons fear Him, but they don't obey Him.
- b. This is the typical problem of belief without behavior.

ILLUS: A discussion at a "demon's conference:" The discussion was opened for suggestions on how best to drag men to hell.

One demon said "Convince them there is no God." Satan replied: "The evidence is too great...REJECTED!"

Another said "Tell them that Christ never existed." Satan said "Christ is a historical figure...REJECTED!"

A really grotesque demon added "Tell them that there is no life after death." The arch-demon stated: "God would be a fool to create man only for earth... REJECTED!"

The most intelligent demon declared "Tell all to believe in God and Christ and that belief in Him saves, but that you can get by just professing faith and go on living in sin as before.

THIS PROPOSAL WAS UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED: This is the "gospel" that says you need to believe but not behave...to profess, but not possess. This is not saving faith.

III. A WORTHLESS FAITH: v. 20

A. James Characterizes the Man With Mere Profession As Evil:

1. The word "vain" means empty or void in the heart.
2. The moral nature, if not filled with the goodness of God, must be filled with evil. Nature despises a vacuum.
3. Rom. 10:10 tells us that belief is of the "heart", not just the head.

ILLUS: James: "Oh, vain man." It takes courage to stand before someone who says he believes in Christ and tell him he is evil and empty of all righteousness, because his profession of faith is not reinforced with the fruits of faith.

B. James Characterizes the Man with a Mere Profession As Spiritually Dead:

1. Not only evil, but dead.

2. Faith must eventuate in works. .

ILLUS: A class of little girls was learning to spell words and illustrate the word with sounds or action...Pig, Dog, etc. They came to the word "love" and one girl hugged and kissed the teacher saying "That's how we spell LOVE at our house." Every confession proves its genuineness by outward manifestation.

CONCL: Two men in row-boat were arguing about faith and works. The man rowing called the oars FAITH and WORKS. He said "If you pull on one alone the boat just goes in circles. When you pull on both the boat moves forward. He that separates faith and works (obedience) is like a one-legged man...he cannot walk.

SUNDAY SAINTS



TEXT: James 2:21-26

THEME: What is the place of works as they relate to salvation by faith?

INTRO: A. James writes against all the "hypocrites in the Church"...all the "Sunday saints" who make great claims concerning their relation with the Lord when in the company of the saints, but whose actions betray their lack of faith on Monday through Saturday; you know, those who give glowing testimonies on Sunday night in a service, but cannot find the courage to give out a tract on Monday at the grocery store!

B. James' thesis here is: "What place do 'works' play in a salvation which is by faith?" He presents the answer to this question by giving two Old Testament illustrations from the lives of two different characters: Abraham and Rahab...

I. WORKS ARE IMPORTANT: v. 21, 22, 25,

A. Abraham and Isaac: v. 21, 22

1. Works here are simply the outworking of faith.

a. Compare Jas. 2:21 with Romans 4:2,3

Romans 4:2-3 *For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*

b. Paul uses Gen. 15:6 - justification before God

Genesis 15:6 *And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

c. James uses Gen 22 - justification before men

d. Paul speaks of salvation begun; James of salvation being perfected.

ILLUS: It was not till Abraham took the knife in his hand and raised it above his son's breast that his faith was "perfected" i.e., the goal of his faith was reached.

e. "Works" here could be defined as "raising the knife with every intention of obedience." cf. v. 21
"Abraham our father"

John 8:39 *They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.*

ILLUS: You cannot be Abraham's children if you do not the works of Abraham. You cannot be God's children if you do not the works of God.

2. Justification here is to "declare righteous" not to make righteous or to save

ILLUS: God declares Abraham righteous on the basis of works here. Forty years before God declared Abraham righteous on the basis of faith. God didn't wait 40 years to make the declaration, but Abraham's act of obedience was the "perfecting" of his faith. The thief on the cross was declared righteous without works, but God knew his heart and if he lived, he would have lived a life of righteousness.

- a. **"Seest thou?"** (Don't you see that faith will work for you as it did for Abraham? "Seeing is believing.")
- b. Faith and works worked together with Abraham. He obeyed because of faith.

ILLUS: A little girl was happy; she got a new beaded necklace. She showed them to her father and he said, "They are beautiful, but I want you to throw them in the fire." It was a great trial! He said "I cannot compel you to do it and I can't tell you why now, but I have never made you do anything to hurt you." The little girl struggled but threw them in fire. The next day her father gave her a more beautiful, valuable gift, just what she had wanted for a long time. Her father said, "I did this to teach you the lesson that sometimes your Heavenly Father will require you to give up and avoid that which you do not see reasons for, but if you trust Him as you did me, you will always find it best."

- c. The "goal" or "perfection" of faith is to be utterly willing to obey God without questioning the Wisdom of His commands.

B. Rahab the Harlot and the Two Spies: v. 25

1. Note the contrasts between Abraham and Rahab:

- a. Abraham was a Jew and Rahab was a Gentile
- b. Abraham was respectable and Rahab was morally repulsive
- c. Abraham was moral and Rahab was very immoral
- d. Abraham was a man and Rahab was a woman
- e. Abraham was a religious man and Rahab was a heathen

2. Note the comparisons:

- a. Both Abraham and Rahab are mentioned in Heb. 11, the "Faith chapter"! (Lot is not!)
- b. Both Abraham and Rahab are *declared* righteous by their works.

II. WORKS ARE INSTRUMENTAL: v. 23

A. To the Fulfillment of Scripture:

ILLUS: This illustration reveals that Abraham didn't merely believe IN GOD as do the demons, but that he BELIEVED GOD. Shows him to be a possessor, not a mere professor.

Hebrews 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

B. To the Vindication of God's Truthfulness:

1. God declared Abraham righteous 40 years before...Abraham's "works" simply prove that God was not deceived.
2. We make God a liar if we say we are justified and do nothing for Him.

C. To the Vindication of God's Faithfulness:

ILLUS: God declared Abraham righteous after Abraham believed His promise concerning his seed through Isaac, though humanly impossible. Therefore, Abraham knew that God had to somehow spare Isaac to be faithful to His promise.

D. To our Relationship With God: ***"called the Friend of God..."***

ILLUS: It is not that Abraham considered God his friend, but that God considered Abraham His friend.

III. WORKS ARE INDISPENSABLE: v. 24, 26

A. A Warning Issued to Hypocrites: v. 24

1. "Ye see"...understand, after the illustration of Abraham that faith **MUST** be followed by works.
2. A warning to hypocrites in the church, i.e., **SUNDAY SAINTS**, who repeat the Creed, and "believe in" the articles of faith, but who are full of the works of darkness.
3. Christ issued more harsh words to hypocrites than to any other group of people.

B. A Principle Set Forth: v. 26

1. Belief without behavior is **FALSE**.
2. Creed without conversation is **PHONY**.
3. Words without works is a **FARCE**.

ILLUS: We must bow our knees to the Lord...the "knee of faith" and the "knee of works." Our life service must be in harmony with our lip-service.

We sing about being "soldiers of the Cross", but many of the "Christian soldiers" I know have been on furlough for a long time, if they are soldiers at all.

CONCL: V. 26:

1. A body cannot live without a spirit!
2. Faith is not living without works!

You cannot see the spirit in man, but you know it exists if the body is walking around. Even a doctor doesn't look for your spirit to determine if you are alive or dead. He looks for visible "signs of life": respiration, heart beat, body warmth. If these are missing, he declares the body lifeless or dead! As a spiritual doctor, I do the same to those who profess faith without possessing faith. Faith which results in works exhibit "the signs of life".

ARE YOU ALIVE OR DEAD SPIRITUALLY?

TEACHERS AND TONGUES



TEXT: James 3:1, 2

THEME: To show the tremendous responsibility those in positions of leadership in the church have, especially as to what they say and teach.

INTRO: James previously has proceeded from words to works. In the 3rd chapter, he shows the inter-relation between the two. He now deals with **WORDS AS WORKS**, by dealing with the subject: **TEACHERS and TONGUES**. Read the passage substituting the word "teachers" for "masters".

I. THE OBLIGATION OF TEACHERS:

A. The Warning Given: v.1

1. Man, especially the professor of faith, wants to be a teacher rather than a student.
2. Now, it seems, even the novice with a few verses of Scripture thinks he is a "scholar" of the Word, and tries to teach others.

ILLUS: A learned preacher met an illiterate preacher who despised formal education. "You have been to college, but I am thankful that the Lord opened my mouth without any learning." The first preacher said "A similar event took place in Balaam's time when his ass spake, but such things are of rare occurrence in the present day. Perhaps you are one of the rarities?"

3. In James' day an opportunity was given in services for testimonies, apparently some were misusing this freedom.

ILLUS: Some misuse this freedom today, by calling attention to themselves rather than for the purpose of edification of others by calling attention to the Lord. We should be like the ass Christ rode upon, useful so long as He is pre-eminent.

4. James' warning applies especially to those who are not teachable; humility is emphasized. James includes himself. **"My brethren."**

ILLUS: Soon after Paul's conversion, he stated that he was "unworthy to be called an apostle". As he grew in grace, years later he said: "I am the least of all saints". Just before his death he declared: "I am the chief of sinners."

B. The Reason for the Warning:

1. Believers ought not to seek a position of responsibility without first counting the cost.
2. Teachers of the Word will be judged by stricter standards than others:
 - a. For what we teach.
 - b. For how we teach.
3. The more of the Word we know, the more responsible for a saintlier life we are expected to live.
4. The more we teach the written Word, the more like the Living Word we should become.

ILLUS: Leadership entails responsibility. There is no responsibility without accountability; or as someone has said "Don't expect what you don't inspect."

5. This truth is frightening or encouraging depending on how we conduct ourselves.

II. THE OFFENCE OF TEACHERS:

A. The Root of the Offence: v. 2a

1. James reveals our imperfection and includes himself.
2. James declares that the teacher is no better than any other Christian.
3. James points out that, even as believers, we continue to sin.
 - a. His purpose is not to discourage us...

ILLUS: The Devil tried to discourage Martin Luther by reminding him of his fallibility...his sin. He presented Luther with a long list of sins which he was apparently guilty of. Luther said, "You must have forgotten some. Think harder." The Devil thought of more and added them. "Fine, now write with red ink across them all, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from ALL SIN'." The Devil had no reply.

- b. His purpose is to keep us aware of our failings to encourage a better fight.

ILLUS: The difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is the non-Christian is a sinner running after sin; the Christian is a sinner running from sin.

B. The Nature of the offense: v. 2a **"in many things"**

1. The word used is "polla"
3. There are three possible meanings:

a. "polla,,": in many things in context means "in many words".

ILLUS: The more we say, the more likely we are to offend. The most active are the most criticized. People who do nothing never make mistakes.

b. "polla,,": "in many ways"...we don't fail in all things, but in many things.

ILLUS: A man said, "I'm pretty good on the whole, but I get mad sometimes, etc., etc." He was hired to build a fence. The man built the fence with many weaknesses and open places. "Worthless!", the owner said, "It must be perfect". The hired man's reply was "I hear you talk so much about averaging things for the Lord, I thought I would try it with the cattle." A fence weak in one spot is weak in all. It needs strengthening. We need to acknowledge our weaknesses and invite the Lord to strengthen us.

Proverbs 17:27-28 *He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. 28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.*

c. "polla,,": "much, very much, even too much". Not just how much you say, but what you say.

III. THE OBJECT OF TEACHERS:

A. Spiritual Maturity: v. 2b

1. James uses a member that we all use to illustrate imperfection: **"the tongue"**.
2. Words are the expression of the heart and mind.
3. Clean thoughts and clean hearts produce clean speech.
4. We have all sinned with the tongue. Cf. 2:10

ILLUS: We ought to pray for the Lord to direct our FEET for the day, but also to direct our TONGUES. Our tongues are apt to go places our feet wouldn't dream of going.

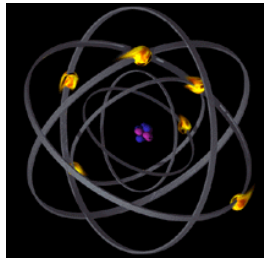
B. Physical Control: v. 2b

1. Control of the physical helps us attain spiritual maturity.
2. The word used for "tongue" is "glossa" and is used for the physical organ as well as for language indicating premeditated thought, not an accidental stumbling, is sin!
3. The action of each member of the body affects the whole.
4. You could substitute any member of the body for the tongue here, but since teaching is in view, "tongue" is correct.

CONCL: A peasant told a monk he circulated an untrue story about a man. The monk's advice was "Make peace with your conscience by filling a bag with chicken feathers. Go to each yard and drop in one feather." He did. He told the monk he had done the penance prescribed. The monk said, "Not yet. Take a bag on rounds again and gather up each feather." "But the wind will have blown them all away" the man said. "Yes," said the monk, "and so it is with gossip. Words are easily dropped, but no matter how hard you try, you can never reclaim them."

The tongue can be used for good or evil purposes. You carry in your mouth a member which entails great responsibility.

LEARNING LESSONS FROM LITTLE THINGS



TEXT: James 3:3-6

THEME: To show the importance of controlling the tongue.

INTRO: A. "Talk is cheap." "Nothing but words." "He's just a talker." "Sticks and stones will break my bones but WORDS will never hurt me." These sayings illustrate the common depreciation of the importance of speech. But nothing is more potent for good or evil in the world than words.

B. The Importance of Words:

1. God SPAKE the universe into existence.
2. Speech differentiates man from the animals.
3. The tongue can incite a riot or spark great heroism.
4. Hitler moved the masses with words; Churchill countered with words.
5. Communism & Islam's most subtle weapon is words (brain washing).
6. God's most powerful force is the "foolishness of preaching"!

NOTE: Yes, WORDS can move men and mobs to deeper depravity or to new heights of heroism or from hell to heaven.

TRANS: James, the master of illustrations, uses 3 little things to depict the power of the tongue.

I. THE BRIDLE THAT CONTROLS A HORSE: v. 3

A. A Horse Seeks to Satisfy its Passions and Appetites:

1. The horse must be directed from without by a logical being.
2. The horse must be restrained to keep from harming himself.

NOTE: A horse will tangle its legs in its reins and break its leg. Someone must regulate its water or it will drink too much. Someone must control its direction and speed or it will hurt itself.

B. A Horse is Controlled through Use of a Bridle:

1. It cannot bridle itself; it is incapable. Just like man in his natural condition.
2. A horse bridled is a horse under control; a tongue restrained is a body under control.

ILLUS: George Mueller wrote beside Ps.37:23, "The steps of a good man..." then he added, "AND THE STOPS" "are ordered by the Lord." We must know when and how to stop our passions. If the tongue is stopped the whole personality will be "bridled."

C. A Horse Constantly Struggles Against Restraint:

1. A horse's nature says "go." The bridle says "stop". (illustrates the 2 Natures)
2. The bridle and burden makes the horse more useful.

LESSON OF THE BRIDLE: The tongue, rightly used, is to the body what the bridle is to the horse.

II. THE RUDDER THAT STEERS A SHIP: v. 4

- A. The "Helm" (wheel) is Coupled to the Rudder:
 1. The rudder is of no value without the steering wheel.
 2. The tongue ought never to be disengaged from the brain.
- B. The "Ships" Represent Man and His Body:
 1. The proper place of a ship is in the water.
 2. The value of a ship is proven in rough water.
- C. The "Fierce Winds" Stand For the Trials of Life:
 1. Winds are needed to drive a sailboat.
 2. Paradox: Winds can help or hinder, depending on the wisdom of the helmsman.
- D. The "Small Helm" Controls the Ship's Direction and Destination:
 1. In context, the helm is our tongue and should steer our body.
 2. Mind the "small" things; little courtesies, little matters of personal attitudes and appearance, little extravagances, little details, and a little tongue!
- E. The "Governor"...Must Be Intelligent and Strong:
 1. The governor of our tongues should be Holy Spirit.

ILLUS: An old man got saved. He prayed, "Lord, You had better direct me or your property is in danger."

LESSON OF THE RUDDER: The tongue of man is to the body what the rudder of the ship is to the ship.

TRANS: The bridle and rudder both speak of control. Now James shows what lack of control of the tongue can do by using...

III. THE SPARK THAT STARTS A RAGING FIRE: v. 5, 6

- A. Fire Is Both the Most Useful and Most Dangerous Element In Nature:
- B. The "Tongue Is a Fire" Out of Control:
 1. Fire can maim, burn, scorch, destroy, inflict pain, damage and kill... like the tongue!
 2. Fire damage is permanent.
 3. One spark can destroy an entire forest: v. 5b.
- C. The **"tongue is s world of iniquity":**
 1. The seed of every sin is in an uncontrolled tongue...murder, lies, envy.
 2. **"a little member"**the tongue has the greatest potential for evil.
 3. **"defileth the whole body"** a wagging tongue makes the whole person useless in the Lord's work.
 4. **"setteth on fire"...**nothing is sacred to the Treacherous Nasty Tongue (TNT!).
 5. **"set on fire of hell"** the origin of gossip, slander, backbiting, slurs, slander, lying, etc. is GEHENNA, garbage dump...refuse pile

ILLUS: Never throw mud, you may miss your target, but you will still have dirty hands.

LESSON OF THE SPARK: The tongue is to the world what the match is to the forest fire.

CONCL: The tongues of the sanctified disciples were motivated by the Holy Spirit from above. The tongues of unsanctified disciples are motivated by the Father of Lies from below.

Learn the Lesson of 3 Little Things: Bridle, Rudder, Spark. Dedicate your tongue to God now. Your body is of no value to Him unless your tongue is yielded to Him. Harness the tongue for God and good, and God and man will be blessed and helped. Unleash the tongue for the devil and evil, and destruction will result.

THE UNTAMEABLE TONGUE



TEXT: James 3:7-9

THEME: To reveal the inadequacy of man concerning the things of a spiritual and moral nature.

INTRO: Man is a creature of contradictions! He can discover the secrets of the universe, but doesn't know he is lost. He can chart the ocean depths and limitless reaches of space, but cannot find his way to Heaven. He can conquer nations and build empires, but he cannot control his own passions and desires. He can send men to the moon, but he cannot cure the common cold. He has harnessed the power of the universe, but he cannot appropriate God's power in his own life. He can control and tame the wild beasts, but he cannot control his own evil and sinful nature.

I. THE SUPERIORITY OF MAN IN THE REALM OF THE NATURAL:

A. God Gave Man Dominion Over the Animal World:

Genesis 9:2 *And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.*

1. One proof against evolution is that animals do not tame other animals.
2. Man lost part of this dominion or control in the fall, but ANY animal can be tamed at least to the extent of control.

B. Man's Superiority over the Natural World is Evidence of the Potential Greatness In Man:

ILLUS: Even the natural man is capable of great achievements in the natural realm. Ex.: Computers, space travel, communication marvels, etc.

C. Man's Animal Nature Tamed By Human Nature:

ILLUS: The most ferocious tiger, the most ravenous vulture, the most deadly poisonous snake, the most repulsive octopus (v.7), can be tamed by man...but not the tongue (v.8).

II. THE INFERIORITY OF MAN IN THE REALM OF SPIRITUAL:

A. It Is Impossible for Man to Tame His Tongue:

1. Due to the nature of man himself; his nature is different than that of an animal and an animal's tongue is incapable of intelligent speech.
2. Man uses force to subdue the animal, but force is insufficient to tame man's tongue.
3. Man's nature must be changed, not the tongue.

- a. God doesn't deal with second-hand goods...it is NEW OR NOTHING with Him.
- b. God knows the only way to MEND our ways is to END our ways.

4. Animals can be forced into subjection... ***"the tongue can no man tame."***

- a. Whipping will not make it mild, and education will not refine it.
- b. Man can train the tongue to say certain things and behave in certain ways, but cannot alter its evil nature.

B. Reasons That Man Cannot Tame His Tongue:

- 1. It is an **"unruly evil"** (ungovernable, unstable, unsettled) having to do with its nature, not only the manifestation of evil.

ILLUS: "UNGOVERNABLE"...Have you ever tried to get hold of tongue with your fingers? It is nearly impossible.

- 2. **"full of deadly poison"**

- a. The word "poison" also means "arrow; we use the tongue to shoot deadly arrows at others.
- b. Some pride themselves on "speaking their mind".

ILLUS: A man said to Wesley, "I pride myself on speaking my mind; that is my talent." Wesley replied, "That is one talent the Lord wouldn't mind you burying."

- c. When you turn your tongue over to Christ, that sack of poison will be turned into a blessing.

III. THE INCONSISTENCY OF MAN IN REALM OF SPEECH: v. 9

A. The Tongue is a Tool Of Hypocrisy:

- 1. **"Therewith bless we God"** ("speak well of")

- a. Christians most always speak well of God, but at times we also murmur and grumble.

ILLUS: A family was at the table for dinner. The father returned thanks, then began to grumble about hard times, bad food, the price of it, the way it was cooked, etc. His little girl interrupted, "Daddy, do you suppose God heard you return thanks?" "Of course." "Did He hear what you said about the bacon and coffee?" "Well, yes." "Then Daddy, which did He believe?"

- b. Christians speak sweetly about God and to God, but speak bitterly of others.

- 2. **"Therewith curse we men"** (call down curses)

- a. To do this we must think ourselves better than others.
- b. If we bless God, let us bless His creatures; God abhors a double standard.

ILLUS: A pastor was overheard cursing and explained thusly: "I swear not as a Pastor, but as a citizen." "But sir, when the citizen goes to perdition, what will become of the Pastor?" Will God judge us in the Prayer Meeting, or in the place of business or on the telephone?

- c. James' point is that an inconsistent speech reveals our insincerity.

B. The Tongue is a Tool of Blasphemy:

- 1. When we curse others made in the likeness of God, we curse God.
- 2. Church attendance, hymn singing and praying places great responsibility on our behavior the rest of the week.

CONCL: A Korean Christian grasped the concept of the sin of the tongue wrongfully used. He testified in prayer meeting that he heard a missionary say every wrong use of the tongue pierced the heart of Jesus. He said "I placed a picture of Christ on wall, and every time I said something displeasing to the Lord, I put a thorn in that picture. Soon, the picture was covered with thorns. Then I realized how He suffers when I misuse my tongue. Now, I have overcome this sin."

Are you thrusting thorns in the heart of Christ with your tongue?

WISDOM...TRUE OR FALSE?



TEXT: James 3:13-16

THEME: James herein shows the two kinds of wisdom and their source.

INTRO: A. ***"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of (true) wisdom."* Prov. 9:10** There are many kinds of wisdom, but there is only one wisdom which comes from God. We often say, "He's a wise guy", meaning that he really doesn't use his head. Our prisons are filled with brilliant men who could have channeled their knowledge and ability into useful and productive activity. Our colleges and universities are filled with worldly-wise men who will end up in hell despite their wisdom.

B. Verses 1-12 deal with the tongue. James now speaks of another aspect of the human personality. The tongue cannot speak good or evil without a command of the mind and permission of the will. The mind is the faculty of the external manifestation of thoughts.

I. WISDOM FROM ABOVE: v. 13

A. Definition of the Word "Wisdom":

1. The Jews recognized wisdom as an attribute of God and later identified it with the Spirit of God.

Proverbs 8:35 *For whoso findeth me (wisdom) findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.*

2. Socrates refused to be called "wise" or "the master of wisdom." He said: "...for God alone was wise;" Socrates then described himself as "Philosophos" "A philosopher, or lover of wisdom."
3. Christ is called "logos" in the Gospel of John. "logos" is "the Word." The primary meaning is "intelligence" also "expression" i.e., the expression of the eternal God in human form so He is more understandable to man.
4. To Christ wisdom was the practical understanding of the mind and will of God and sympathy with it.

B. The Recipients of Wisdom:

1. Those who receive "the Logos"
2. "Wisdom" is never ascribed to anyone other than God or the children of God except in an ironical sense.

C. The Exhibition of Wisdom: v. 13b

1. Again, works are insufficient: (words are necessary)

ILLUS: A visitor to an insane asylum will hear many claims to wisdom and knowledge. When one speaks of these attributes, it is a sure sign he has neither. Proverb: *"A gold vessel does not sound; a brass one does."*

2. ***"Let him show"...*** "to bring to light, to display, to exhibit"

ILLUS: If we tell others to try something that we have found wonderful and helpful, they may hesitate unless they see it work in our lives.

3. We are to be "show-windows"

ILLUS: A country merchant visited NY City and was greatly impressed by the magnificent and spotless show-windows. He returned home and cleaned up his own dirty, unused shop window and made it attractive. He displayed his wares to their best advantage and

his business improved. Christians are "show-windows" and must be attractive, clean and must represent the truth. The tongue and life must show forth what is in the heart.

4. Wisdom related to life:

- a. "Conversation" = words and behavior.
- b. The reaction of Christian to circumstances.

ILLUS: Christians live in a minority. The world is geared to the unsaved. But how else could we demonstrate our God-given wisdom, but through adverse circumstances? Why should God give us wisdom if we were to live without having to make decisions requiring wisdom?

D. The Character of Wisdom:

1. The possession of wisdom is wonderful; the expression of wisdom is difficult.
2. Meekness must temper our words and work and meekness must temper our wisdom.

ILLUS: A missionary to Jamaica asked some little boys about Mt. 5:5. "Who are the meek?" One boy's answer was, "Those who give soft answers to rough questions."

3. "**meekness of wisdom**" speaks of the quality of wisdom which seeks not to glorify self.

ILLUS: The story is told of a saint of God of whom the angels asked which gift he desired. Healing? Power to convert? "No, only that I do well without ever knowing it" was his reply. It was decided that every time his shadow fell behind him it should have power to cure, soothe and comfort. He was never aware of the blessings he bestowed. People even forgot his name and called him "Holy Shadow." How different from some present day leaders whose names almost overshadow the Name of Him whom they preach.

4. "**meekness of wisdom**" is accepting Wisdom's dealings with us without murmuring saying, "Lord, thou dost know best."

II. WISDOM FROM BELOW: v. 14-15

A. The Nature of This Wisdom: v. 14

1. Produces "**bitter envying**": "zeelos"

ILLUS: Zeal has to do with fire. Is fire good or bad? If burning under control in the furnace - good; but if it is out of control and burns the house down - bad.

- a. Every Christian ought to be enthusiastic.

ILLUS: When a Pharisee urged Jesus to check the enthusiasm on the Palm Sunday crowd, He replied, "**If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.**"

- b. Christians and preachers may have knowledge and wisdom and lack enthusiasm. The result is a dry, uninviting presentation.

ILLUS: Abraham Lincoln said, "I do not care for cut and dried sermons. When I hear a man preach, I like to see him act as if he were fighting bumble bees."

- c. But zeal can be very destructive.

ILLUS: The same Greek word for zeal can be translated "jealousy". Jewish Christians were very jealous for their form of religion. Does our fire for God warm others or burn them?

2. Produces "party spirit": factions, divisions

ILLUS: Who is really fracturing the Body of Christ? The Bible believer or the Ecumenicist? The Bible believer seeks only a spiritual unity demanded by the Scriptures. The Ecumenicist seeks organizational unity, forsaking the purity of the Church, amalgamating believer and unbeliever.

3. Produces rationalization for sin:

- a. **"glory not"**...boast of self to the injury of another
- b. **"lie not against the truth"**...the sin of justifying sin.

ILLUS: Annanias and Saphira made believe they gave all.

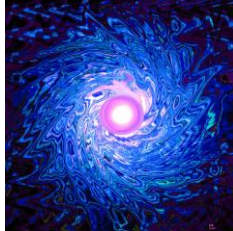
B. The Origin of This Wisdom: v. 15

1. Not of God
2. This is the wisdom of man:
 - a. **"Earthly"**...beginning and ending with man; views everything as having an earthly origin.
 - b. **"Sensual"**...a wisdom that has to do with the senses.
 - c. **"Devilish"**...demon-like or full of demons or evil spirits.

ILLUS: One of the tricks of Satan is to deceive man into believing that wisdom is something that it is not, e.g. the "evolutionist," the "intellectual"

CONCL: V. 16 gives the conclusion of James' remarks regarding wisdom. His theme throughout has been "Actions speak louder than words". So here, he now declares that where the works of darkness are there is envying and strife; there is simply confusion and every evil work.

SOME HAVE IT, SOME DON'T



TEXT: James 3:17, 18

THEME: To show the characteristics of God-given wisdom, as well as the result of it.

INTRO: Up to this point, James has been mainly negative in his exhortation to these Jewish Christians. Now, he gives the positive aspects of the true Christian life in Christ. In chapter 3, he spoke first of the evils of the tongue and then the evils of man's wisdom apart from God. Now, he speaks of the characteristics of those who have God-given wisdom... **"wisdom from above"**.

I. THE NATURE OF GOD-GIVEN WISDOM: v. 17

A. **"first pure"** (hagnos) "chaste, holy"

1. Doesn't refer to the outer manifestations of man, but rather to that quality of heart which determines those outer manifestations.

ILLUS: As faith results in works of faith, so purity results in works of purity.

2. Note that this Divine wisdom results "first" in purity, both logically and chronologically.
3. The Christian life begins with the wisest possible choice, and that choice brings about cleansing or purifying.

ILLUS: In the Old Testament ceremonies, cleansing was always a necessary part of the ritual before approaching God.

4. It is one thing to BE PURE, but another to KEEP PURE. The cleansing process must be continued (the O.T. priests had to wash daily).

ILLUS: In the Old Testament there was a continual cleansing of hands and feet from the defilement of the world. Wouldn't it be nice to only have to clean house one time, ladies?

B. *"then peaceable"*

There is a cunning little proverb
From the land of sunny Spain,
But in northland or in southland,
Is it's meaning true and plain;
Write it deep within your heart,
Neither lose nor lend it—
"Two it takes to make a quarrel;
One can always mend it."

1. Now follows the works of a pure heart.
2. First, it refers to the spirit of tranquility, peace and calm that reigns in a believer's heart.

ILLUS: Peace is one of many commodities money can't buy. Many books have been written on the subject and they sell like wildfire. People desire not only world peace, but personal peace.

Two painters were commissioned to paint a picture of their idea of peace. One painted a beautiful, quiet pastoral scene. The other painted a wild, stormy scene with black clouds, with a raging sea, pounding against a mighty rock. But perched in cleft of a rock was a small, fragile bird absolutely safe and sheltered from the wind and sea...out of all danger. This is most like the "peace of God" in the midst of a storm-tossed world.

3. If we are at peace with ourselves and with God, we should be at peace with others.
4. There should be no hatred in heart of one who is at peace with God.
5. A Christian cannot help others hating him, but he should not hate others.

ILLUS: A young Christian on a crowded bus was being taunted and ridiculed by some young men. Finally, they asked, "Say, preacher, how far is it to Heaven?" Instead of losing his temper, he replied..."One step, will you take it now?"

One woman, after receiving Christ, began to be the object of persecution from her unsaved husband. "When your husband is angry and persecutes you, what do you do?" her friend asked. "I cook the food better, sweep the floor better, and when he speaks harshly, I answer mildly. I try to show him that when I became a Christian, I became a better mother and wife." The husband was later saved. Her "chaste conversation" did what preaching could not.

C. *"gentle"* (epieikees) "yielding" (for leaders)

1. The word speaks of not always insisting on our "rights".

ILLUS: A landlord rented to a widow who always paid her rent. Then she took sick and couldn't pay. He had a LEGAL right to evict her, but it would be MORALLY wrong. If he does not, he is exhibiting the quality James speaks of here.

2. In this word there is always the gracious condescension of a superior to an inferior.

ILLUS: Christ washing the disciple's feet is a good example.

3. The Christian with Divine wisdom will pray for a short memory for wrongs done to him.
4. This word is a road-sign for the Christian life that says "YIELD RIGHT OF WAY".

D. *"easy to be entreated"*: (eyoopathace)

1. It means "easy to be persuaded" - obedient.
2. It means after the arguments have been presented and we have used God-given wisdom to examine them, we should obey, regardless of own presuppositions or pet beliefs.

ILLUS: Let us not be like that church member hurrying to the annual business meeting. Someone asked, "Where are you going?" He said "To the business meeting" "What is to be done?" "I don't know" "Then why go?" "I am going to oppose whatever comes up."

3. Means also "to have trust and confidence in".

ILLUS: After being convinced of the trustworthiness of a person, there ought not to be hesitation to follow their leadership.

E. **"full of mercy":** (elehos) "compassion"

1. We are to share in the griefs and sorrows of others.
2. We are to say and do that which will help alleviate the burdens and problems of others.
3. We are to be compassionate (the aspect of love which DOES rather than IS) toward others as Christ was to us.

ILLUS: You all know the story of the young teen carrying his crippled brother on his back. When asked how he could carry such a heavy burden, he replied, "He's no burden, He's my Brother."

F. **"and good fruits"**

1. James was concerned lest his readers think he was only speaking of WORDS of mercy, instead of WORKS of mercy so he adds this to clarify.
2. When the farmer sows the seed he has the harvest (fruit) always in mind.
3. We ought to be sowing seed where the best crop may be reaped.

G. **"without partiality and hypocrisy"**

1. Partiality is often affected by some outward consideration: appearance, special favor, wealth, etc. (Cf. James 2:1-3)
2. Partiality applies a double standard...to act in behalf of one where you would not act in behalf of another.
3. Both partiality and hypocrisy have to do with consistency.

ILLUS: Spurgeon illustrated hypocrisy: He said a man owned an orchard and some tasted apples that dropped outside the fence and they were "sour." The farmer explained that he purchased those for the boys to discourage them from stealing. "If you come inside the fence, you'll find the sweetest apples around. (Like some Christians; sweet inside, bitter outside and vice-versa.)"

II. THE RESULTS OF GOD-GIVEN WISDOM: v. 18

A. This Verse is Parallel With Verse 16:

B. Here is End Result of the "Fruit" of Verse 17:

1. V. 17 is the seed.
2. V. 18 is the fruit.

C. Those Who Have Divine Wisdom Are "Righteous":

1. The ancient Greeks distinguished between "law-abiding" and "righteous".
2. One who did not harm others for fear of punishment was "law-abiding" and one who did right regardless of fear of punishment was "righteous".

ILLUS: A righteous man is one who does good, even when no-one is looking. He comes to church when he would like to stay home and loaf, or go for a joyride; who is patient when he feels like "letting off steam".

3. The main lesson of this verse is that we who are peacemakers, in our desire to see peace reign must not forget that righteousness should not be sacrificed:

- a. It is not to be "peace at any price."
- b. For the sake of peace do not compromise with evil.
- c. Peace must always be the product of righteous judgment.
- d. We are never to sacrifice righteousness for peace.

ILLUS: Paul said, "Live at peace with all men...as much as is possible." It was not possible with him; he spent much time in prison. (A column is strong if it stands straight, but if it leans, it can bear little weight.)

CONCL: Here, then, are the characteristics of those who are righteous and who have God-given wisdom. How do you measure up to this holy standard? "Some have it—some don't!"



TEXT: James 4:1,2

THEME: To condemn the selfishness acts of Christians towards one another and to reveal the only true source of real blessing and stature.

INTRO.: A. Should Christians go to war? What about WWII? Christian Americans on one side and Christian Germans and Japanese on the other – killing one another!!! How far should a Christian's patriotism extend? When should he stop fighting FOR his country and start fighting AGAINST IT?

B. What if our government began to be controlled by an anti-God dictatorship? Where would your allegiance be? Would you engage in guerilla movements to overthrow the existing leadership? Using our country's origins as an example, believers fought to get out from under the oppression of Europe and gain religious freedom and personal liberty. The N.T. writers lived under Roman totalitarianism, but did not take up arms against it, even when it persecuted the church. But that is not our subject.

C. But this is: James addresses it in these first verses of chapter four. Isn't it silly for anyone who loves his country to fight on the side of those who want to destroy it? This is the situation among Christians at times. While all Christians have the same allegiance and the same goals, there is division, strife, envy, lust, wars and fighting among them.

I. A REALISTIC LOOK AT THE SITUATION: v.1

A. James Deals Sternly With These Rebellious Christians:

1. Note especially the lack of identification with them on James' part; there is no "my brethren" here.
2. He speaks as if he is outside the circle of the disturbance and the fighters: "among you"

B. James Asks a Question:

1. "From whence...?"
 - a. Here, in question form is revealed the actual situation that existed: "wars and fightings"
 - b. Here, the hostilities and contentions are noted.
2. "Wars and fightings..."

- a. Wars may be against outside forces (groups), but not so here.
- b. Fightings here are contentions within.

3. "Among you..."

- a. They were hostile to one another.
- b. They were hostile to other groups of believers.

ILLUS.: Denominational or party spirit wars are not new, they are as old as the Apostolic church. Note that James does not condemn the existence of various Christian groups, but the fact that they war among themselves.

Spurgeon likened our Christian denominations to the various rooms in the Ark. The important common fact is that all believers are in the same ark. But suppose the tenants on the ark began to invade each others living quarters and started to war? The whole ark would be in danger of sinking. Wars harm everyone. We are all different and perhaps God allows various Christian groups to show that though all are different, we must all love one another. We do not love nor compromise false doctrine, but we can love those who are genuinely saved who may embrace that doctrine.

C. James Answers His Own Question:

- 1. He recognized that it is not the external differences that cause the friction , but rather that they begin within.
 - a. The word "lusts" connotes the inward desires of the flesh being indulged.
 - b. The passions of the flesh are at war with the new nature.
 - c. Satan works on us from within our evil natures and we give expression to these desires through our bodies ("members").

NOTE: We must restrain or bridle our passions. Before I was saved my speech was interspersed with profanity. Yet, I was able to control my tongue when in the presence of ladies or my parents. Let us remember we are always in the presences of the Lord in the person of the Holy Spirit and restrain our old man and his passions. If an unsaved person can exercise control in a given area, how much more a person in whom dwells the Holy Spirit of God?!

II. A LOOK AT THE RESULTS OF THE SITUATION: v.2

A. Desire is Not Possession:

- 1. "Ye lust and have not..."
 - a. Lust means setting our hearts on a person or thing without controlling the desire.
 - b. The thing desired and the means of procuring it determine whether or not it is sinful.

ILLUS.: To desire a new car is not sinful unless: a. It deprives you or others of necessities, b. It is desired for the wrong reasons, c. It cannot be procured through the means at hand, 4. It is secured by unlawful or unjust dealings.

- c. "have not" – merely desiring a thing will not always get it for you.

- 2. "Ye kill and...cannot obtain..."
 - a. "Kill" means to destroy.
 - b. This is not necessarily actual murder of other believers, but destroyers of other's reputations and character.
 - c. "Ye cannot obtain" – you will never receive the desires of your heart and be satisfied by destroying others.

- 3. "Ye fight and war, yet ye have not..."
 - a. These wrong attitudes and selfish desires cause divisions and stifles.
 - b. You may survive these battles, but you will still be devoid of that which you fought for.

CONCL.: Why do we not have? Because "(we) ask not" of the Lord. So we fight over what we want! He alone can provide the desires of our hearts. He alone can offer the peace & contentment we sought for using the world's methods.

CHOOSE FRIENDS CAREFULLY



TEXT: James 4:3,4

THEME: To show the powerlessness of the worldly Christian's prayer life and his relationship to God.

INTRO: A. There is a growing tendency everywhere to merge good and evil; to avoid thinking in terms of black and white and instead placing everything in the fuzzy, twilight zone of "gray".

B. Today, Christians look, think, sound and even act like the worldlings. The church has become a part of the world instead of merely being "in the world". The church has become so "worldly" and the world so "churchy", that in many cases, it is difficult to tell the difference. This is the cause of the ineffectiveness and powerlessness of both the Church and the Christian alike.

I. THE WORLDLY CHRISTIAN IS POWERLESS IN PRAYER: v. 3

A. God Denies the Carnal Christian's Requests for His Own Good:

1. The worldly-oriented Christian seeks things which are harmful to his spiritual well-being.
2. If contentious (as in v. 1, 2) he may ask for things to harm others and make himself more bitter.
3. If materially-minded he may seek only that which profits him materially to his own detriment.

ILLUS: King Midas asked for the golden touch. He received it but soon desired to get rid of the gift. You can't eat gold!

B. God Denies Requests Because of the Carnal Christian's Motive:

1. The verb "to ask" here is used in the middle voice, which means "to ask for one's own self".
 - a. To ask selfishly is to ask "amiss"
 - b. Selfishness is childish

ILLUS: Abe Lincoln was with his two boys and they are crying. A neighbor asks, "What's the matter?" Abe replies, "The same thing that is wrong with the whole world. I have three pieces of candy and each boy wants two."

- c. Personal pronouns are in the language of the immature child: "I", "ME", "MY", "MINE".

2. ***"That ye may consume it on your lusts"***

ILLUS: It is like a child asking for money. He does not ask for clothes nor for nourishing food but for sweets or toys. You say, "That's only natural." That the point! Selfishness is a product of the old nature.

- a. Not that God be glorified, but that self be indulged.
- b. The word "consume"... means "to waste, squander". It would be immoral for God to give us something to squander on own selfish lusts to our harm.

SUMMARY POINT: Are you powerless in prayer? Perhaps you are worldly and selfish. Why not confess it as sin and beseech God for souls instead of self.

II. THE WORLDLY CHRISTIAN IS THE ENEMY OF GOD:

A. James Rebukes Them by Picturing Them as an Unfaithful Spouse: v. 4a

ILLUS: In the Old Testament, Israel is pictured as the unfaithful wife of Jehovah: *Jer. 3:20 "...as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel."* In the New Testament, the Church is spoken of as the Lamb's Bride. Worldliness always represents unfaithfulness to God.

2 Corinthians 11:2 *For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

1. Christians are to be faithful to one husband...to be as a **"chaste virgin to Christ"**.

ILLUS: The ermine known by pure white fur coat. Kings wear ermine as a symbol of honor and purity. The ermine takes great pride in his white coat. He protects it against soiling at any cost. Hunters take advantage of this characteristic and smear filth at entrance of the den when the ermine is away. When dogs chase an ermine to his place of refuge and he finds it unclean, he refuses to enter so as not to soil his white coat. He preserves the purity of his white fur at the price of his life. It is better to surrender his life than to be spoiled by uncleanness. Christians should learn this lesson from the ermine.

Purity and chastity are dearer to the truly wise Christian than the pleasures of life which soil and are unclean.

2. Some who would not think of being unfaithful to their earthly husband/wife are adulterers with God.
3. We must guard our chastity at any price.

QUOTE: "If you find self loving any pleasure better than prayer, any book more than the Bible, your home more than the house of God, your table more than the Lord's Table, any person more than Christ - take alarm." Thomas Guthrie.

B. James Pictures Them as at Odds with God: v. 4b

1. **"Know ye not...?"** The word used for "know" is not to know by experience, but by reflection.

ILLUS: You do not taste poison to find out its effects. We are "to abstain from all APPEARANCE of evil."

2. James asks, "Have you lost your sense of values?" Friendship with the world is enmity with God.
 - a. James equates the two with the word "is"
 - b. We today have lost our sense of values

C. Portrays Them as God's Enemy: v. 4c

1. This does not mean "rubbing shoulders" with the world, but falling in love with it.

ILLUS: We don't need to smoke to be smoky.

2. Our affections cannot be divided between the world and God.

ILLUS: How many legs does your dog have, Mr. Jones?" "Why, four." "Exactly! Have you ever seen your dog trying to trod more than one path at a time with his 4 legs? Yet, people with only 2 legs try to follow 2 or more paths at one time; Christ and world - God and mammon."

- a. The word "friendship" here means "to have common interests and concerns."

ILLUS: Many of the Christian's interests are the same as those of world. "Be not conformed (squeezed into the mold of) this world..."

- b. The word "world" is "kosmos" or all that is alienated from God...this evil satanic system. The world and God are mutually exclusive.

ILLUS: Like the bank robber who considered his stealing O.K. because he gave a tenth to the church. You can't have God and the world! Backsliders are people who let the world crowd out Christ; they become enemies of God.

- c. The word "is" speaks of declaring oneself"...his friendship with the world speaks for him.

CONCL: Yes, we must choose our friends carefully. To choose the world is to exclude God. There can be no peaceful coexistence.

Amos 3:3 *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*

Would you have power in prayer? Place God first...self and pleasures last.
Would you be His friend? Keep yourself pure and unspotted from the world? cf. 2:23

CONTRARY SPIRITS



TEXT: James 4:5, 6

THEME: To show the conflict between the old and new natures; the desires and products of each.

INTRO: A. The lion and tiger are the most fierce of natural enemies. They CANNOT get along peacefully! But a trainer, in control, can MAKE them perform together. They illustrate the old and new natures of the Christian.

Romans 8:8-17 *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. 10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

B. James here amplifies Paul's teaching in Romans concerning the old and new nature and the desires and products of each.

I. MAN'S SPIRIT PRODUCES ENVY: v. 5

A. The Word for "Spirit" is the Same for Man's Spirit or for God's Spirit: "pneuma"

1. The meaning is determined by contextual usage.
2. This context here seems to favor man's spirit.
 - a. James has just been speaking of fleshly appetites.
 - b. He has spoken of friendship with world.

NOTE: V.5 is not a direct quotation from Scripture, but a general teaching.

B. The Scriptures Mean What They Say:

1. **"Do ye think (suppose, imagine)...?"** (Do you, with finite wisdom, challenge God's Revelation?)

ILLUS: Someone has stated: "The greatest tragedy of modern Christendom is that it puts its seal of approval on those whom the Scriptures condemn as sinful "people."

2. Man desires to become the judge of the Book, instead of the Book being his judge; the "higher-critics," so-called.
3. When man measures himself by his own standards, he always appears much better.

ILLUS: A little boy announced, "I am as tall as Goliath. I am nine-feet tall." His mother asked, "What makes you say that?" "Well, I made a little ruler of my own and measured myself with it, and I am just 9 feet tall."

C. **"the spirit that dwelleth in us..."** (or is settled within"):

1. It is our spirit within our body that causes us to sin.
2. The body itself cannot sin apart from the prompting of the will, the spirit of man, which is the life of the body.
3. Quarreling, fighting, pleasure-seeking and friendship with the world all stem from our old nature or **"the spirit that dwelleth in us."**

D. **"Envy"** is Singled Out as the Natural Product of Our Old Nature:

1. We **"lust(eth) to envy.."** we long for what others have.
2. "Envy" is the passion of selfish desire that produces jealousy toward others.

QUOTE: Socrates: "Envy is the daughter of pride, the author of murder and revenge, the beginner of secret sedition and the perpetual tormentor of virtue." It was envy that murdered Abel and shed the first human blood; it was envy that plotted against Joseph; it was even envy that crucified Christ.

3. We cannot help being the OBJECTS of envy, but let us not be its SUBJECTS.

ILLUS: History speaks of a statue erected to honor the celebrated athlete, Theogenes. His closest rival was envious of his position, so each night under cover of darkness, he attempted to throw down the great statue. One night he succeeded, but the statue fell on him and crushed him to death. Such generally is the end of the man who allows himself to be carried away by envy.

II. GOD'S SPIRIT PRODUCES GRACE: v. 6

A. Envy is the Blight of Man; Grace the Gift of God:

1. Contrast: envy seeks that which belongs to another; grace gives that which belongs to self, which is not deserved.
2. Envy brings famine; grace brings a bounty. **"He giveth more grace."** (i.e., a generous supply)

ILLUS: A rich man sent an anonymous gift of \$35.00 to a poor man with a note which read: "This is yours, use it wisely, more to follow." Always the same: "more to follow". That is like grace of God, there is always more to follow. We cannot exhaust it. So, why envy others, since there is such abundance at the Source?

3. In times of battles with sin and temptation, or when assailed through the weakness of the flesh, then more freely does His grace flow. **"Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds."**
4. His grace keeps us safe.

ILLUS: Two men were arguing about the believer's security. The first man said "We are like a man in a boat, we are safe, as long as we don't jump out. The second man said, "I took my son in my boat one time, and as I realized the danger of falling or jumping out and I held him fast. He was safe." The first man said, "He could have wiggled out of his coat and jumped overboard in spite of you." The second man replied, "No, you misunderstood if you thought I was holding his coat? I was holding HIM."

B. Pride Thwarts God's Desire: v. 6b

ILLUS: If you come with a cup full of self, you cannot be filled with divine grace, but if you come empty, then God's grace will have something in which to flow.

1. Pride as set forth in God's Word is possibly the greatest of all sins.
 - a. Pride came between Satan and God.
 - b. Pride came between Adam and God.
 - c. Pride comes between sinners and God.

Prov. 16:5 Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.

C. Humility Helps God's Plan: v. 6c

1. Humility is the opposite of pride.
2. Humility is an awareness of your own insignificance and God's importance.

QUOTE: "The true way to be humble is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself, but to stand at your real height against some higher nature that will show you what the real smallness of your greatest greatness is." Phillips Brooks.

CONCL: This passage reveals the underlying causes of all the problems James has dealt with thus far. We are not willing to let go of selfish desires stemming from the "old man" and to allow God to take complete control by the "new man".

What about it Christian?

JAMES' 10 COMMANDMENTS



TEXT: James 4:7-11a

THEME: To reveal what the Lord expects of the New Testament Believer under grace, as James relates it.

INTRO: Perhaps, you are under the impression that Commandments are for Old Testament believers only. James here gives a series of 10 Commandments for the New Testament believer. Let us give close attention to them even as did the orthodox Jew the Old Testament Commandments.

I. CONDITIONS FOR COMMUNION: v. 7, 8a

A. "*Submit yourselves to God*" (I) v. 7

1. "*Submit yourselves*" = in the plural because no-one is exempt; James addresses the proud and humble alike.
2. The word for "*submit*" is in the passive voice; the only one of these "10 Commandments" not in the active voice.
 - a. This does not mean we are to go to sleep.
 - b. Instead we place ourselves under His complete control so we can win the battle against Satan...like an army under its officers command.

QUOTE: Martin Luther "The Devil held a banquet for his emissaries to report their activities. The first said, "I let loose wild beasts on a caravan of Christians and left their bones bleaching in the hot sun." "So what?" said Satan "Their souls will still be saved." The second blurted out, "I drove strong winds against a ship-load of Christians and now the sharks bellies are full." "So what?" Satan asked. Their souls will still be saved." The third demon said, "For 10 yrs. I tried to get a Christian to go to sleep. I finally succeeded and left him that way." Satan shouted and the night stars of hell sang for joy. One of Satan's tricks is to convince us that submission to God means a spiritual stupor. It is in reality a battle.

3. If we would walk with God in sweet communion, we must submit to His authority and obey His Commandments.
4. Submission is the first of James' 10 Commandments.

- a. Submission means accepting God's will instead of trying to impose our will.

ILLUS: The sheep were drinking at a well in Nazareth. When filled, the shepherds called and the sheep followed their own shepherd. A stranger asked, "Do they always follow their own shepherd?" "Yes, except if they are sick. Then they will follow anyone." If the Christian is healthy, he will only follow God's leading,

- b. Submission means accepting God's providence as the best provision for our lives.

B. **"resist the devil" (II) v. 7**

1. Godly lives are characterized by conflicts with sin.
2. Satan desires the opposite; he wants us to submit to him, and resist God.
3. This commandment asserts the reality of Satan.
4. Resisting means to be always ready for his attacks and to consciously repel him when he comes.

ILLUS: I attended a faith (fake) healing meeting and saw demon possessed people and felt Satan's presence; I claimed this verse.

5. Result: He will **"flee from you"**.

C. **"Draw nigh to God": (III) v. 8a.**

1. The third condition for communion with God is to **"draw nigh"**.
 - a. The stronger we repel the devil, the closer we are to God.
 - b. Resisting the devil and drawing nigh to God are conscious, active efforts.
2. The finite and infinite can commune with each other.

ILLUS: TV and the internet makes the invisible visible. Someone across the U.S. or around the world can communicate with us. That is like God Who is so far away, yet so very near, if we will **"draw nigh"**. Of course, you must be a "receiver" - your spirit must have been quickened or made alive.

3. This verb is in the imperative first aorist in Greek and refers to an act distinct in history, i.e., once for all.

ILLUS: A skeptical physician said to his Christian patient: "I don't understand 'saving faith. I believe in God and in Christ and have no doubts, yet I am not saved. Why?" His patient replied, "Well, a week ago I believed you were a skillful physician. I believed that if I was sick and put myself in your hands, I would be healed. I trusted you! I have been taking some mysterious stuff out of a bottle. I don't know what it is. I can't understand it, but I am trusting you. When a person comes to Jesus and says Christianity is full of mysteries. I cannot understand them, but I believe Thou art trustworthy and trust Thee...that is faith. My faith in you did not heal me. The medicine or remedy did. But faith took the remedy" Faith 'draws nigh' to God and takes the remedy of Christ's shed blood."

4. Result: **"He will draw nigh to you"**

II. CONDITIONS FOR CONFESSION: v. 8b

A. **"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners": (IV)**

1. This is the fulfillment of a type in Ex. 30:19-21 where the priest is commanded to wash his hands before approaching God.

Exodus 30:19-21 For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: 20 When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord: 21 So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.

2. This speaks of confession.
3. The Greek word is one from which we get our word "catharsis" meaning to cleanse, purge, or excrete.
4. **"Hands"** are only the members which commit the sin which originates in the heart, thus Commandment #5.

B. **"purify your hearts, ye double minded" (V)**

1. Clean hands alone do not guarantee a holy life.

Matthew 15:19-20 *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.*

2. James here calls for a consecration of the heart as well as the hands.
3. It is not enough to confess the sin of the hands unless you are willing in your heart to forsake it.
4. James calls them **"double-minded"** meaning people with two souls or lives, i.e., schizophrenic Christians...split-personalities.

ILLUS: One who "keeps his hands clean" because others can see them, but is not "pure in heart" because the heart is not visible is like the sculptor who carefully carved a statue including its back parts though its back would always be against the wall and never be seen. He was asked why he went to so much trouble. "God will always be looking at it," was his reply. The heart is at the back of our outward life before men, and God is always watching.

III. CONDITIONS FOR CONTRITION: v. 9 (Earnest Repentance)

A. **"Be Afflicted" (VI)** v. 9

1. This suggests recognizing sin as a tremendous burden.
2. Repentance will bring about this awareness.

ILLUS: A blacksmith of medieval times was taken prisoner, thrown in a dungeon and chained to the wall. He examined the chain for a weak link, then he realized the chain was his own workmanship and it had been his boast that no one could break the chain he forged. We are "afflicted" when aware that we are bound by a chain of our own making and realize the futility of trying to break it.

3. Repentance involves a sense of sin, sorrow for sin and severance from sin by the power of God.

ILLUS: Since we forged our own chain, it is only right that we bear the burden, BUT Christ bore it for us!

4. Repentance is not penance.

ILLUS: Some children were reading a Roman Catholic version of the Bible. Repentance was translated penance. The Pastor asked if they knew the difference. One little girl said, "Judas did penance and went out and hanged himself. Peter repented and wept bitterly!"

B. **"mourn" (VII)** v. 9

1. Repentance should manifest itself outwardly as well as produce inward grief thus the word "mourn".
2. Mourning means "to lament with a grief which cannot be hid".

ILLUS: When there was a death in the family Europeans wore black bands on their arms or hats. The women wore black dresses.

3. Mourning for the Christian means that we show to the outside world our inner sorrow for sin.
4. Those who mourn seek comfort. Christ said, **"Come unto Me..."**
5. Mourning implies death. For the believer, it is awareness that we are "dead in trespasses and sins".
6. This mourning is not to continue. When sin is confessed and sorrowed for, then there is hope.

ILLUS: If you lost a loved one, you would mourn till you realized there was hope for a new life...then mourning ceases. So with sin and repentance; you must realize that God renews.

C. **"weep: (VIII)** v. 9

1. Weeping is the external manifestation of inner sorrow and mourning.

ILLUS: When sinners respond to the invitation these days, rather than tears in their eyes, there is a smile on their lips, or gum in their mouth. What a sad commentary on day we live in.

2. Someone defined tears as the safety valve of the heart when too much pressure is laid there.
3. Tears, too, are spoken of in the aorist imperfect tense, indicating **they are only temporary.**

ILLUS.: When our 39 year old son died, our hearts were broken. Then we ran across the song "It won't rain always." The lyrics really helped us through this tearful time. It goes something like this:

"Someone has said that in this life...some rain is bound to fall,
And each one sheds **a tear**...and trouble troubles us all.
But the hurt won't hurt forever...and **the tears** are bound to dry.
And it won't rain always...the clouds will soon be gone,
The sun that goes in hiding...has been there all along.
And it won't rain always,...God's promises are true.
The sun's gonna shine in His own good time
And He will see you through."

4. This is a reversal of our former position (v. 8c); the world only gives pleasure and joy to those who are members of it.

a. The Christian laughs at what he formerly scorned, and scorns what he formerly laughed at.

ILLUS: A very practical man confessed, "I have too much religion or too little; I must either give up what I have or get more. I have too much religion to let me enjoy worldly life and too much worldliness to let me enjoy religion."

- b. This doesn't mean Christians are not to be full of joy or cease to laugh.
- c. Christians are simply to be dead to the world and alive to Christ.

ILLUS: Two fashionable girls were converted to Christ and received an invitation to a Ball. They sent a note saying "We have to refuse the invitation. It is not possible to be with you, for we are dead! We died with Christ a week ago, so we cannot come." They were dead to the pleasures of this world, and alive to the greater and more lasting pleasures of God. This is the Christian's portion.

IV. CONDITIONS FOR CORRECTION: v. 10, 11

A. "Humble yourselves" (IX) v. 10

- 1. To be elevated in God's sight is to stoop to service without boasting.
- 2. To keep all the previous "Commandments" is praiseworthy, but we can become "puffed-up" over our own accomplishments; so beware.

ILLUS: A Native in Africa wanted to buy a pair of shoes that "squeaked" so everyone would notice him when he walked up and down the aisles in the church. No humility there.

3. Humility is "God's elevator". v. 10b

B. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren" (X) v. 11a

- 1. Those who are victorious and elevated in God's sight may easily sin in this manner.
- 2. It is always easy when standing on mountain tops, to look down at everyone else; like the Pharisee who said "I am not like this lowly publican."
- 3. The truly humble Christian will weigh carefully his word as well as his actions.

CONCL: Under the O.T. Law, 8 out of the 10 of Commandments were negative. Under grace, 8 out of 10 are positive. The Christian life is not a series of "Thou shalt nots", but a life of "Thou shalts". God is interested in what we do, not only in what we don't do.

ORDER IN THE COURT



TEXT: James 4:11, 12

THEME: To point out where the responsibility for judging lies and to show the results of its misuse.

INTRO: A. A traveler saw a man hoeing his garden while sitting in a rocking chair. He immediately began to laugh and taunt the man for what was obviously the height of laziness. Then he happened to notice the crutches lying on the ground beside the chair. We must be cautious of a critical spirit or of judging hastily. Judging is the prerogative of God, not man, and problems and embarrassment always result when this order is reversed:

1. This sort of judging is not only warned against, but we are commanded to abstain from doing so.
2. Sound reasons are then given for the command.

B. Christians with critical tongues set themselves up as judges: v. 11b One whose nature is characterized by criticism of others obviously feels superior to those he criticizes. This critical speaking and judging destroys the victim and the judge. It robs people of joy and happiness and it tears down our testimony for the Lord. "Speaking evil" carries the idea of "speaking flippantly without the exercise of the faculty of reason. To "judge" means to condemn. Suppose God as the only true Judge dealt with us as we like to deal with fellow Christians.

I. JUDGING RESULTS IN A CRITICAL SPIRIT:

A. Viewing Everything to See Its Faults:

ILLUS: There is a fable of man who was cursed with the power of seeing other humans, not in the beauty of flesh and blood but as skeletons. Much of the sorrow of the world comes from the fact that too many of us have this miserable faculty and strip off every worthy charm and beauty of men to find and expose some ugly trait or weakness underneath.

B. It Includes Finding Fault with God's Order of Things:

ILLUS.: There is an order in creation, in life, government, in the home, in church, within the family.

1. The word "law" here could be Christ's law of love.

John 13:34-35 *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

- a. We obviously violate this law when speaking evil of and condemning others.
- b. Someone said "When we constantly transgress against a certain law, the natural thing is for us to attack the law itself, because it forbids what we like to do."

ILLUS: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said in a civil court: "I will march regardless of the courts or the law. The laws are unjust." Is that our attitude concerning the royal law of love?

2. The "law" here could be the moral law that tells us we must treat neighbors as we wish to be treated.
 - a. We ought not to speak evil and condemn others unless we wish to be so treated.
 - b. When we transgress God's laws, we are condemning Him for branding as sin that which pleases us.

C. We Then Become a Judge of God's Law Instead of Doing What the Law Demands of Us: v. 11b

1. God's laws are not here for us to condemn and criticize, but to obey.

ILLUS: The prisoner behind bars nearly always complains of the injustice of the law, never of his disobedience of the law.

2. Not only are we to do what the law commands, but we are to leave undone what the law forbids.

ILLUS: The law consists of "Thou shalt nots" along with "Thou shalts".

II. JUDGING IS REALLY A PREROGATIVE OF DEITY: v. 12

A. Those Who Set Themselves Up as Judges are Trying to Usurp God's Authority as Lawgiver and Judge:

1. It is as if James is asking (in 12b), "what are you trying to be... gods?"
2. Since God alone is the Lawgiver (the Originator of the standard), how can we be judges?

ILLUS: Today the philosophy is "if you don't like a law, it is O.K. to break it." To do this is to say that man makes the law, so man can break the law. The problem is, man is not the source of law and order, but God is. (Rom. 13:1)

3. Man wants to be God's judge instead of God being the judge of man.

ILLUS: LIFE Magazine had an issue with an article on the Bible. Here, infidels sit as judges of the Bible. They claim man originated the Law of Moses, not God. Their conclusion is correct if man made the law, then man can break the law. The Bible just becomes a collection of codes of conduct, not an infallible and holy standard.

B. These "Judges" Will Be Ultimately Judged:

1. There is One ***"who is able to save and destroy"***.
2. The One who gave the infallible, inflexible standard demands obedience.
 - a. Man is incapable of 100% obedience.
 - b. Christ as our substitute was obedient and fulfilled Law for man.
 - c. Those who accept His finished work are saved from His righteous wrath and terrible justice.
 - d. He will "destroy" all others.
3. This doesn't mean man cannot use his powers of reasoning and exercise a degree of judgment.

ILLUS: A lawyer asked an experienced juror, "Who influences you most; the lawyers, witnesses or the judge?" The juror said "I make up my own mind. I am not influenced by any of these! I just look at the one on trial and say, 'If he hasn't done anything wrong, why is he here?' And I bring them all in guilty." Some Christians are like this; without knowledge of all the facts, they judge.

4. Those who are always critical are like the dog that licked the sores of poor Lazarus...merely content to lick the sore spots of their fellow Christians.

CONCL: James closes with the question "Who are we to judge another?" We don't know all the facts, circumstances, etc. as God does. Let us be extremely careful lest we try to do God's job for Him.

PRACTICAL ATHEISM



TEXT: James 4:13-17

THEME: To show the responsibility we have of including God in all our plans and then sharing our blessings with others.

INTRO: The title of this message is applicable even to believers. James is writing to Jewish-Christian merchants who are saved, but who do not include God in all their plans. They are believers and had bid God entrance in their spiritual worship, but bar Him from their personal and business lives. They feel that they can "go it alone", not realizing that all they have, or can hope to have, they owe to Him.

I. A MISPLACED DEPENDENCE: v. 13

A. Dependence On Circumstances: **"we will go..."**

1. **"Go to now"** i.e., transportation has been arranged, the camels are loaded with merchandise.
 - a. Reasoning: If we have done things before and gone places before without God, this time is no exception.

ILLUS: This is like the reasoning of the rich man who built barns to store his past increase. God said, "Thou fool, THIS NIGHT..." it will be different.

- b. Desire: To progress in business, to launch out to a new place, to begin again.
2. **"continue there a year"** The conditions are favorable for good business. (Like Jonah the ship was ready to take him from obedience and God's will - circumstances.)

B. Dependence on Ability: **"we will go..."**

1. **"buy and sell..."**
 - a. Motive: to make a profit.
 - b. Let God take care of profits; when you leave Him out, even your profits will bring misery and unhappiness.
2. **"get gain..."** As we toil and labor, we forget that increase cannot come from anyone but God ultimately.

II. A MISCALCULATED DESTINY: v. 14

A. Ignorance of the Future: 14a

1. To speak of **"tomorrow"** is deception.
 - a. Tomorrow WILL COME, but conditions change.

ILLUS: "Tomorrow" has robbed the world of many noble deeds, the church of great works, the Savior of millions of souls. It was Pharaoh who said during the plague of frogs – "tomorrow."

- b. Tomorrow may be too late.

ILLUS: "You can take a day off, but you can't put it back." Blessed is the man, who, at the close of the day, can look upon his work as finished and anticipate tomorrow as bringing nothing with it but that which belongs to it. TODAY God speaks to us of our duty. Today is the time for salvation and good works. All duties, sorrows, privileges, trials, joys – everything we have, we have today.

- c. Tomorrow is shrouded in uncertainties.
 - 1) We can recall the past, but cannot foresee the future.
 - 2) Ignorance of the future is a school of humility & a challenge to depend on God.

QUOTE: Augustine said: "God will not suffer man to have knowledge of things to come: for if he had prescience of his prosperity, he would be careless: if he had an understanding of his adversity, he would be senseless."

B. Ignorance of Life: 14b

1. Life is unexplainable; man is more than physical elements.
2. Man's life is temporary on earth; forever in eternity.

ILLUS: Life is time, and the purpose of time is to prepare for eternity. We are here to prepare for eternity and not primarily to amass wealth and have a "good time."

- a. James speaks of "your" life as temporary; not his own; his was a redeemed life.
- b. There was substance to James' life; it was not as a "vapor".

ILLUS: The life of the unsaved is as a "vapor". A rich man was dying. A little girl asked, "Daddy, are you going away?" "Yes, dear, you won't see me anymore." "Have you got a nice house and lots of friends there?" she asked. There was silence, then he gulped a reply, "What a fool I've been! I have built a great business here, but I shall be a pauper there." Success without God makes only temporary friends, but makes eternity bleak.

III. A MIS-STATED DETERMINATION: v. 15

A. Man, Working Independently of God is In Error

B. Man, Working Dependently Upon God is Blessed With A Divine Partner in Every Venture:

QUOTE: Thomas Fuller: "Lord, when in writing I have the occasion to insert these passages, 'God willing' or 'God lending me life', etc. I observe, Lord, that I can scarcely hold my hand from encircling these words in a parenthesis, as if they were not essential to the sentence, but may as well be left out as put in. Whereas, indeed, they are not only of the commission at large, but so of the quorum that without them all the rest is nothing; wherefore hereafter, I will write those words fully and fairly, without any enclosure about them. Let critics censure it for bad grammar; I am sure it is good divinity." (An abbreviation for "Lord willing" is "D.V." or Divine volition.)

IV. A MISAPPLIED DUTY: v. 16, 17

A. The Evil of Boasting: v. 16

1. To plan without God is bad enough, but then to boast in our success is worse.

ILLUS: There is a legend about a pocket watch that envied Big Ben in London. "I wish I could be up there, and then I could serve the multitudes" the little pocket watch said. Magically the watch was drawn up to tower. Its owner said, "Where are you, little watch. I cannot see you." Nor could anyone else. *Its elevation was its annihilation.* It may have been proud to have reached such heights, but that height destroyed usefulness to itself and others.

2. We all tend to boast "what WE have done".

B. The Sin of Not Doing: v. 17

1. This verse is vitally connected with the foregoing.
3. The merchant thought he made his money without God, so he could use it for his own selfish means.

ILLUS: For one who is able, not to DO good is evil, even though he may say he is compassionate. It is not enough to "feel for others", but we must feel in the right place viz, the pocketbook!

4. It is not only sin to do wrong, but it is sin to lose an opportunity to do good.

CONCL: What chaos follows when the architect and contractor have different sets of plans. It is the same with the Christian life. God is the Architect and man is the contractor. Include God in your plans. Share your blessings with others.

**"GOLD AS A GOD"
or
"THE SHORT VIEW OF LIFE"**



TEXT: James 5:1-3c

THEME: To show the transitory and temporary nature and pleasures of wealth and the results of a misplaced trust in riches.

INTRO: A. An Arab once lost his way in the desert and was in danger of dying from hunger. At last he found some cisterns out of which the camels usually drink and a little bag lying nearby. "Ah, here are some dates or nuts," he said; "let me refresh myself." He opened the bag, but inside were only gold coins and precious stones, and what good were they to a man dying of hunger in a desert?

B. Was this man rich or poor? He was rich, yet poor. His riches had lost their value. Thus it will be for the poor soul who has accumulated great wealth in this world, but has not laid up "treasures in Heaven". James here writes to the unsaved, ungodly, rich men of his day. He never uses the term "brethren" until v. 7. In v. 1 we have RICH MEN REBUKED; v. 2 RICHES ROTTING; v. 3 RICHES REVERSED. He opens with...

I. THE WARNING TO THE WEALTHY: v. 1

A. The Day of Judgment Did Come to These Men:

1. James wrote to these Jerusalem rich men in c43 A.D.
2. 20+ years later (70 A.D.) Jerusalem was leveled by Titus, and their wealth was taken from them.
 - a. How did James know? He was writing under inspiration.
 - b. Christ prophesied this catastrophe in the Gospels.

Luke 19:43 *For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side...*

Luke 21:24 *And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

B. The Day of Judgment is Coming:

1. All who ignore God in their dealings will give an account some day.

ILLUS: A blasphemous, irreligious farmer boasted that he had "plowed, planted, cultivated, reaped and hauled the harvest into barns, ALL ON SUNDAY!" He said that he had more bushels per acre than his "Christian" neighbors. A friend to he whom spoke said, "God does not always settle His accounts in October."

2. These rich men had taken "the short view of life".
 - a. They counted worthy only what they could see.
 - b. They placed all their emphasis on amassing wealth.

C. The Day of Judgment Will Bring "Miseries":

1. The word "miseries" means "hardships, sufferings, distresses."
2. To enjoy riches and ease of life now does not spell hope for the future.

Luke 6:24-25 *But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. 25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.*

3. The ungodly rich who make no preparation for hereafter will experience the "misereries" of an eternal hell.

ILLUS: The word "hereafter" speaks volumes; to prepare for "here" and neglect "after" is a monumental tragedy.

II. THE WANING VALUE OF WEALTH: v. 2

A. "your riches are corrupted":

1. Like the Arab in the above introduction who found riches valueless.
2. Hoarded riches are "corrupted" i.e., valueless.

ILLUS: Money makes three speeches: 1. Hold me tightly...I will close your eyes and ears to all else. 2. Spend me for self indulgence and I will make your body fat and your soul lean. 3. Give me away, invest me and I will return streams of spiritual revenue to your soul. Use your wealth to supply the needs of others.

3. Unused wealth is an end in itself and valueless wealth must be exchanged for something of value before it is no longer valuable.

NOTE: Money "saved" in a bank is only "paper wealth" – it isn't doing anyone any good. It is O.K. to save something for emergencies, but it is wasted money when it sits in a bank vault and accomplishes nothing. When you die it will become someone else's wealth. Christians should not leave their estate to unsaved loved ones to waste. As someone has said: *"Do your giving while you're living, then you're knowing where it's going."*

B. "your garments are moth-eaten":

1. Speaking of the abundance of garments these rich men were hoarding.
2. They had so many garments, they could not use them.

ILLUS: In James' day wealth was measured by Arabs in the desert by how much gold, silver and garments they could carry with them.

Luke 16:19 *There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:*

3. It is not sinful to buy clothes, but to buy that which you will not use is a waste.
4. It is not sinful to dress nice, but to overdo it is excess.
5. The Christian should dress as nice as possible; be clean and attractive, but not to extremes.

ILLUS: A Christian woman admitted, "I used to spend 45 minutes in front of my mirror every morning, but I did not have 5 minutes for reading the Word or prayer." Today she is happier for she puts the Lord first, and still does not neglect the proper care of her body.

6. Time has a grudge against garments; they wear out when used, and waste away when not used.

III. THE WITNESS AGAINST THE WEALTHY: v. 3

A. Rusty Silver and Gold:

1. Gold and silver do not rust! What is meant?
2. We are not to trust in perishables.
3. Also, what we think are "gold and silver" may not be. "All that glitters is not gold".

ILLUS: This is to say that what we thought would bring happiness and security will one day prove insufficient. Like King Midas; everything he touched turned to gold – even his food and clothing.

4. "Gold and silver" is symbolic of wealth in general.

B. Tarnished Witnesses: v. 3b

1. These once priceless possessions stand for a tarnished testimony of their insufficiency.

ILLUS: A man is not rich according to what he has, but according to what he is and does.

2. When the books are opened in Judgment, will the ledger witness your love for material over spiritual things?

C. A Fiery Reminder: v. 3c

1. The memory of your former aspirations, ambitions and associations will burn within your soul.
2. Part of the torments of hell will be the burning reminder of the neglect of spiritual things.

CONCL: Believers, too, will be tried by fire at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and their works will be tested to see if they will endure or be consumed. Take the LONG VIEW OF LIFE and "lay up treasures in Heaven", not earth.

THE DAY OF SLAUGHTER IS COMING



TEXT: James 5:3c-6

THEME: To show the folly of trusting in riches and of exploiting others to get gain, for the day of accounting is coming!

INTRO: A. The communists/socialists rant and rave about how the "capitalist" exploits or takes advantage of the "worker". Of course, what he does not say is how much worse off the worker is under communism. The Muslims speak loudly of the superiority of Islam over Christianity, but fail to reveal how poorly people are treated under their "peaceful religion." They also neglect to speak of the fact that there are primarily only two classes of people in Islamic nations, the very rich and the very poor.

B. In the so-called "classless society" or "People's Paradise" the class distinctions are much more noticeable than under our form of government. There are only the very rich and the very poor, and the rich exploit the poor tremendously. James wrote about this kind of exploitation and its ultimate results here...

I. THE UNJUST DEALINGS OF THE EMPLOYERS: v. 3c, 4a

A. Ill-Gotten Gain for Retirement: v. 3c

1. Here is their excuse for hoarding wealth.
2. It is bad enough to be miserly, but to rationalize it is worse.

B. Gain Through Oppression: v. 4a

1. These Jews were violating Old Testament Law

Deuteronomy 24:14-15 *Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: 15 At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.*

2. The employer must not oppress or take advantage of the employee and vice-versa.

ILLUS: An employee is entitled to decent wage. The employer is entitled to a good day's work from his employee and a reasonable profit.

3. These employers are obviously not in "bankruptcy" (*"who have reaped ...your fields".*)

- a. They did not fail to pay because had no profit, but because they were greedy.
- b. The problem of the rich capitalist here is not one of economics, but of morality.
- c. The capitalist and laborer must each recognize the worth of the other.

ILLUS: The capitalist with a field and laborers owns a burden. The laborer without a field to cultivate is out of work. Both are necessary.

C. Gain Through Fraud: v. 4a

1. Making a profit by misrepresenting the original bargain.

- a. Not to pay is fraud. *"Owe no man anything."*
- b. To be late in paying is fraud.

2. This is also spoken of in the Old Testament Law

Leviticus 19:13 *Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.*

II. THE UNRELENTING CRIES OF THE EMPLOYEE: v. 4b

A. The Witness Against the Wicked Employers:

1. James continues his use of courtroom language.
2. He calls the oppressed laborers to the witness stand along with the tarnished wealth of their employers. v. 3

B. The Witness Shall Have a Hearing:

1. The wicked employers will hear their testimony.
2. The Lord of Hosts shall listen to their case: v. 4b.

III. THE UNCONCERNED ATTITUDE OF THE EXPLOITERS: v. 5, 6

A. They Were Parasitic: v. 5

1. Their riches were obtained at the expense of others, without compensation.
2. Rather than making a "reasonable profit," their profits were not really their own for they were owed to their employees.

B. They Were Self-indulgent (intemperate): v. 5

ILLUS: While in Rome I visited the palace of Nero. He liked to live sumptuously. In the main dining area was something resembling a well. The guide said that Nero and guests ate so much they could not hold it anymore, so they would expel what they ate at the well and then return to their tables to continue to gorge themselves. Nero oppressed thousands of people so he and his friends could live such a self-indulgent life.

1. *"Ye have lived in pleasures on the earth"*...past tense...verb indicates completed past. Scene now in day of judgment.

ILLUS: Like the man in the restaurant who always orders the best in the house. He enjoys himself but when the bill is presented he says, "I hadn't counted on that." He is either he is a fool or he is a criminal.

2. *"pleasure"*: living luxuriously or in high style, reveling in, delighting in.
3. *"been wanton"*: sexually loose, unrestrained, reckless, ignoring justice, decency, morality, etc.

C. They Were Insensitive:

1. **"Nourished your hearts":** their self-indulgence rendered them senseless and insensitive (Lk.21:34).
2. **"Day of slaughter":** they were oblivious that they were being fattened for the kill.

ILLUS: A boy led pigs to the slaughterhouse by dropping beans along the way. That is Satan's technique, i.e., fatten a man's wallet and heart to make it devoid of the spiritual realities and dangers just ahead. There will be many fat and well-to-do people appearing before the Judge because through the lusts of the flesh they became senseless and deaf to the call of the Savior.

D. They Were Inhuman:

1. **"Ye have condemned":** the word "condemned" implies a trial, but with a predetermined verdict.
 - a. They needed "justification" for their evil deeds so they set up "kangaroo courts".
 - b. They sought relief from their own guilt by involving others.

ILLUS: A dictator does not need court, but will set them up to relieve himself of his own guilt and responsibility.

2. **"Ye have... killed":** i.e., carried out the decisions of the puppet courts.
 - a. There is no sense keeping the enemy alive.
 - b. They are always a potential threat.
 - c. The oppressors do not realize the "day of slaughter" and judgment is coming for them, too.

ILLUS: "The devil helps the thief every day but one day God helps the policeman."

3. **"he doth not resist you":** he cannot, he is dead.
 - a. The scene is the present, after the condemnation and "legal murder".
 - b. The oppressed probably resisted while he was living and consequently was killed,
 - c. But **"he being dead, yet speaketh"**.

CONCL: Here then is a practical and timely situation that reveals God's hatred of persecution of one class by another, or of undue exploitation of one individual or group over another. Let us make the parallel application in the spiritual realm in not taking advantage of our "inferiors" or "looking down our noses" at those less fortunate than we; for we too, must someday give an account at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

PROP UP YOUR HEARTS



TEXT: James 5:7-9

THEME: To encourage the believer toward long-suffering.

INTRO: A. A poor man was forced to carry a load of sticks long distances and grew tired and discouraged. He said, "I am sick and tired of this. I wish death would come to relieve me." Instantly, Death slipped up beside Him. "Here am I, what do you want of me?" The poor man quickly replied, "I want you to help me put this load of sticks back on my back again." We are all prone to think we are being oppressed and exploited and that our load of sticks is heavier than all others. We yearn for a change.

B. James has just uttered a biting denunciation against the ungodly sinner who exploits and oppresses the righteous. But he now has some comforting words for the suffering saints...

I. LONGSUFFERING TOWARD THE EXPLOITING SINNER: v. 7

A. A Word of Comfort to the Suffering Saint: **"Be patient, therefore brethren..."**

1. The word "patient" means "longsuffering" or "to suffer long."
2. Patience relates to THINGS, longsuffering to PEOPLE. (Be longsuffering to those exploiting sinners.)

ILLUS: This teaching is in keeping with Christ's teaching on the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:38-45 *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. 41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. 42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. 43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

B. A Word of Comfort for Those Unjustly Treated:

1. The word "patient" means "a long holding out of the mind before it gives room to action or passion".

ILLUS: A Christian soldier came off guard duty tired, cold & wet. He knelt down to pray and a sinner struck him on the side of head with a boot. He kept on praying. The next morning the sinner's boots were by bunk and were beautifully polished. The Christian's reply was a "soft answer". The boot throwing sinner got saved.

2 Timothy 4:2 *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*

2. Longsuffering is also an attribute of God:
 - a. Not "patience"
 - b. Since *things* cannot affect God, he has no need to exercise patience. He has no patience with evil but is longsuffering with evildoers.

II. LONGSUFFERING TOWARD THE EXPECTED SAVIOR:

A. The Coming of the Lord Should Encourage Longsuffering on the Part of the Saint: v. 7

1. The doctrine of the Second Coming is always most precious to those under persecution.
2. The "Parousia" or Second Coming, has 2 meanings...
 - a. It means the Second Advent an event yet future.
 - b. It means "presence" as contrasted with absence.

B. The Coming of the Lord is Likened to a Farmer's Anticipation:

1. He plants seed and sees nothing happening for a "long" period of time.
2. After the plant appears, he must wait another "long" period before it bears fruit.
3. During the season of growth, he must wait a "long" time for right conditions to produce fruit.

ILLUS: Actually, is it so "long"? In comparison with the time this process has been taking place is in reality not so "long". The psychology of expectancy has the ability to make time appear longer than actual.

The Second Coming affects not only you and I but the entire universe. Time, for God, is merely an accommodation for finite man. Shall we, as slaves of time, squeeze God into our limitations? Be longsuffering. At least **4,000 years** elapsed before Christ's First Advent.

C. The Coming of the Lord Should Keep Us Going: v. 8

1. Word "**stablish**" means to "prop up" or "strengthen."

2. It means "to stand erect in the light of discouragement".
3. The word "**hearts**" is used for our emotions and usually trip us up...rely on "Thus saith the Lord..." instead.
4. The Word says "**The coming of the Lord draweth nigh,**" speaking of the imminence of the event.
5. Our hearts will be "propped up" if we live in constant expectation of His coming.

D. The Coming of the Lord Should Sober Us: v. 9b

1. It is the Great Judge who "**standeth before the door**"
2. He is weighing and evaluating our thoughts, words, and deeds in all our dealings; but especially with our brethren.

III. LONGSUFFERING TOWARD THE EXACTING SAINT: v. 9

A. Some of Our "Brethren" Try Our Longsuffering:

1. We often think of our troubles as coming from outside the church.

ILLUS: Our nation's defense system has been based on the premise that any attack must come from without our borders, but today there is great threat from within. That is why we have formed a Dept. of Homeland Security.

2. Too often Satan is allowed to get a foothold within the church.

ILLUS: More churches are split and closed because of internal strife and division and contention than for any other reason! SAD!

3. It is easier to be longsuffering to the unsaved than to the saint.

ILLUS: We expect more from the saved, but how many times do WE fall short of others expectations of us?

B. Some of Our "Brethren" Will Be Our Downfall:

1. "**Judge not, lest ye also be judged...**"
2. Don't let the faults of other Christians be your stumbling block!
3. The word "**grudge**" can mean "to harbor hostility."

ILLUS: One church was calling a new Pastor. There were very few negative votes. Someone said, "Let's make it unanimous" But one old cantankerous Christian spoke up..."One thing you might as well know...there will never be anything unanimous in this church as long as I am in it." Some will always find something to murmur and complain about.

4. Christ "**standeth before the door**" listening to everything that goes on in hearts and churches.

ILLUS: He is listening to the heart beats, not just the words. We cannot fool this Judge with hypocritical words. When there is bitterness, strife and murmuring, the heart beats faster and can be detected.

CONCL: Our greatest need, my greatest need, is "longsuffering" toward sinners, toward the Savior and toward the saints of God.

PUT TO THE TEST



TEXT: James 5:10-12

THEME: To reveal how the Christian should react to the persecution and pressures of this evil world.

INTRO: The way we react to people and circumstances in this life tells the world the depth of our spirituality. James here writes to encourage those being persecuted to react favorably - to be patient, longsuffering - ending affliction as other outstanding men of faith have done. He beseeches them not to "reply in kind", not to "revile again" or to offend in deed or in word. We are to be like a sponge that does not resist pressure, but springs back when pressure is released.

I. EXAMPLES REVEALING ENDURANCE: v. 10, 11

A. The Perseverance of the Prophets: v. 10

1. The Prophet's message was usually unpopular.
 - a. He pointed out sin.
 - b. He called for repentance.
 - c. He declared judgment on those rejecting God's Word as He revealed it through them.
2. The Prophet's persecution was usually due to the message, not the messenger.

ILLUS.: But since the message is so closely identified with the messenger, often the messenger (like Jeremiah) was persecuted.

3. The Prophets have endured "**suffering affliction**"
 - a. This is the pressure and sometimes the physical violence done to prophets.

Matthew 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

- b. This concept can mean "to receive or to suffer an IMPRESSION from without."
4. The Prophets endured patiently:
 - a. Here again the word means "longsuffering".
 - b. This is a "reaction" to the "action" of the world.

ILLUS: Beekeepers in the East do not wear protective clothing. The secret is that they are passive, deliberate in their movements, and make no effort to protect themselves. A westerner in the presence of bees is nervous, restless, combative, and scared, he chases the bees, swats at them, runs away and gets stung.

The Christian should be like the Easterner and not arm self with weapons to fight back, but when reviled "revile not again". Instead of feeling the stings, we should taste the honey.

5. The Prophets are our example:
 - a. These men are worthy of imitation.
 - b. We are to imitate their qualities.
6. The Prophets have earned our praise: v. 11a

- a. Endurance is the quality that is most admired.
- b. Endurance suggests the ability to carry a great load for a long time.

ILLUS: An ant was carrying a long piece of straw – like a man carrying a telegraph pole. Then he came to a crack in the cement. He tried several ways to bear the burden across this great crevice. Finally he pushed the straw over the chasm and used it as a bridge and then pulled it across.

Every burden of the Christian life carried faithfully will one day become a bridge to carry us. Someday someone will say “Blessed is he who endured.”

B. The Patience of Job:

1. Job is the outstanding example of patience under affliction.
2. Job is only mentioned by James, no other N.T. writer.
3. Job received a blessing from the Lord after endurance ***“have seen the end of the Lord”***.
4. Job endured the bigotry and stupidity of his friends.
5. Job experienced God’s pity and mercy as well as times of extreme affliction.

ILLUS: A son said to his sculptor father, “Father, why do you waste so much of the stone?”

“It is, he said, with accents mild,
By strokes and heavy blows,
That as the marble wastes, my child
the more the statue grows.”

If God is using the chisel on you, He is merely fashioning something more noble, more beautiful.

II. ENDURANCE REVEALED THROUGH EXAMPLE: v. 12

A. Reasons for Prohibiting Swearing:

1. Impatience in time of affliction may betray even a godly man into speaking unadvisedly.

ILLUS: Job’s wife encouraged Job to “curse God and die”.

2. Impatience can tempt a man to even take God’s name in vain.

B. The Kind of Swearing Prohibited:

1. Does this forbid the taking of an oath?

ILLUS: Many sects and well-meaning Christians refuse to take an oath even under law in court because of this passage. If you have a problem doing so, simply “affirm to tell the truth...”

- a. Paul took an oath calling God as his witness in Rom. 1:9

Romans 1:9 *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;*

- b. Old Testament prophets often called God as the witness to their messages and ministries.
- c. God Himself swore by Himself in Heb. 6:13

Hebrews 6:13 *For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,*

2. This passage simply forbids profane swearing or “swearing in vain”.

- a. The 3rd Commandment issued a decree against swearing and twice used the words “in vain”:

Exodus 20:7 *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

- b. We are not to call on anyone or anything as a witness to our words or actions HABITUALLY or “in vain”.

ILLUS.: One of the present day forms of blasphemy we hear from unbelievers and believers alike are the words: "Oh, my God!" or the euphemisms "Oh, my goodness" (There is none good but God!), "Oh, my word" (Jesus is the Word), "Oh, my gosh" etc. Christians need to be especially careful in their speech. Now in text messaging on phones or on the computer we have even invented an abbreviation: "OMG!"

Christians use other euphemisms, e.g., "darn" (damn), "heck" (hell), "Judas Priest" (Jesus Christ), "gosh" (God), "shoot" (s---).

Colossians 4:6 *Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*

c. Such repetitious affirmations of truth harms the user and degrades him.

- 1) An affirmation involves possibility of a falsehood.
- 2) If at all times we spoke the truth, there is no need for the taking of oaths.

ILLUS: Lying is bad enough, but swearing that the lie is the truth is a double lie and will be doubly punished. It is so in court. The punishment for lying "under oath" (perjury) is greater.

C. The Earnestness of the Prohibition:

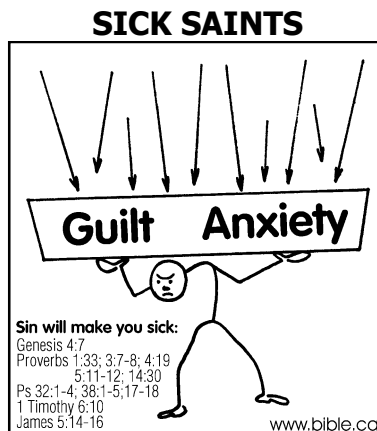
1. **"above all..."** In other words, this is important.
2. **"swear not..."** Don't sin in this way, even in your affliction.

D. How to Enforce This Prohibition:

1. Always tell the truth. **"Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay."**
2. Never speak "in vain".

CONCL: It can be a very difficult thing for a Christian not to lie. We are in danger of living in such a way that our whole life is a lie before the world. By our words, we acknowledge Christ as Lord of our lives, but by our inconsistent lives, we bring a reproach upon Him. Sometimes "a little white lie" seems expedient, but a lie is a lie. A half-truth is a whole lie.

To affirm one's faith, and not confirm it by the resultant works of faith, is being worse than an infidel. It is taking the name of the Lord in vain! It is hypocrisy!



TEXT: James 5:13, 14

THEME: To show the responsibility of each Christian to use every spiritual and physical resource available for good spiritual and physical health.

INTRO: James is an extremely practical book and so it is no surprise that James tells us exactly what to do in certain circumstances. In this portion of God's Word James deals with a specific sickness and the possible cure. Some questions are asked and then answered very specifically in this passage.

I. WHEN SUFFERING PERSECUTION... PRAY: v. 13

A. The Question is Asked: ***"Is any among you afflicted?"***

1. The word carries the concept "to suffer evil blows from the outside world."
2. This suffering is not the result of personal sin, but the result of our contacts with an evil world.

B. The Answer is Given: ***"Let him pray."***

1. Prayer is a turning to God with the recognition that He alone can help us.
2. This doesn't mean we only pray in time of persecution, but especially then.

II. WHEN ENJOYING BLESSINGS...SING : v. 13

A. The Question Asked: ***"Is Any Merry?"***

1. The word "merry" has to do with the well-being of the soul and the disposition of the mind.
2. This is the inner peace God gives in spite of affliction and persecution.

ILLUS: The Bible never promised favorable outward conditions or circumstances, but inner tranquility and peace of heart.

B. The Answer Given: ***"Let him sing Psalms."***

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

1. Singing is the expression of our thanksgiving in music and is of definite therapeutic value.
2. A Christian who refuses to sing is usually grumpy and miserable.

III. WHEN ENDURING SICKNESS...SEEK HELP: v. 14

A. The Question Asked: ***"Is any sick?"***

1. The word means "without strength".
2. Christians get sick!
 - a. Some say otherwise or they say that all sickness is directly sin related.
 - b. The Charismatics claim Christ liberated us from sickness; but if so, why not death? Sin causes both sickness and death in the world.

B. The Answer Given: (They are not to pray as those "afflicted" in v. 13.)

1. They are to call for ***"the elders of Church"***.
 - a. "Elders" are specifically pastors.

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

1 Peter 5:1-2 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

- b. Some say the elders may include other officers of the church (deacons) .
- c. This passage does not teach that we are to call for professional "healers" but the leaders of the LOCAL CHURCH.
- d. Note that the sick person does the calling or inviting, not the other way around..

ILLUS: It is the responsibility of the pastor and deacons to visit and minister to the sick, but they must know about the sickness and be welcome in the home.

2. Call them in for spiritual help:

- a. The leaders would be the most logical to call for this ministry.
- b. Prayer is vital in case of illness, for God alone can heal, though he may use means to do so.

3. Call them in for physical-help:

- a. **"Anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord..."**
- b. There are two words in Greek for the English word "anoint".

1. **"Chrio"** - Sacred or symbolic anointing; to anoint as in act of consecration. "Christos" (Christ) is the "Anointed One"

Acts 10:38 *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

2. **"Aleipho"** – a secular word, meaning to oil or rub

Luke 7:38 *And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.*

Luke 7:46 *My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.*

ILLUS: The athletes of Greece used to rub their bodies with oil to prepare them for gymnastic events. Metaphorically the word meant "to stimulate, to encourage" through the application of oil.

- c. James uses the word "aleipho" meaning, "to rub". This rubbing was used for medicinal and therapeutic purposes, not for religious or sacred anointing.
 1. This "anointing" is not a religious rite or sacrament.
 2. We never speak of "anointing" a machine with oil. Neither can we use the verb here as "anoint". It has no religious or sacred meaning. It refers to application of oil for the relief of physical pain.

ILLUS: In James day it was oil: today it may be an anti-biotic, an operation, a drug, or any other means for alleviating pain or physical weakness.

- d. The oil is not symbolic; it is simply medicinal.

ILLUS: The good Samaritan was not a doctor, yet he used oil to relieve the suffering of the one he found on the roadside battered and beaten.

Luke 10:33-34 *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*

- e. We are to render physical as well as spiritual help to the suffering.

ILLUS: The whole concept of medical missionaries stems from this passage in James.

- f. God expects us to use every physical resource as well as every spiritual means at our command.

ILLUS: It is like the person who shuts himself in a dark room and says, "I am not going to use the sun for light or heat. I want God to reveal Himself supernaturally by making a little sun for me in this room." As someone said: "Let us not seek manna from heaven, if we can get bread from the bakery."

- g. God wants us to do all things "in the name of the Lord."

Colossians 3:17 *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

h. James here simply carries through his doctrine of faith coupled with works using physical and spiritual help for someone in need.

CONCL: Pastors and deacons are not to run around like a Catholic priest with a little bottle of oil or "holy water" in their pockets or making the "sign of the cross" on the forehead of a sick or dying person as a magical cure-all or for the remission of sins. Rather, each Christian is to do all possible; both praying for and helping physically those in need.

WHEN SIN CAUSES SICKNESS



TEXT: James 5:15, 16

THEME: To show the relationship of sin to sickness and the means of physical and spiritual health.

INTRO: Sickness strikes most all of us at times. Sometimes it is due to neglect of good health habits. Other times to a breakdown of some body organ or exposure to a communicable disease. There are times, however, when sickness is the direct result of sin in our life. The diagnosis must be "sin-sickness". The only remedy for this type of "disease" is set before us in this passage.

I. THE PRAYER OF FAITH: v. 15

A. The Origin of the Prayer:

1. Note that it does not originate with the one who is sick.

ILLUS: Modern "Faith Healers", so called, insist that the one who is sick must have the faith and blames the sufferer with a lack of faith when the person is not healed.

- a. Christ healed both saint and sinner alike.
- b. Christ chided His disciples for THEIR lack of faith in healing a demon-possessed child in Mt. 17.

2. Note the responsibility placed on the "elders" or officers of the church to be Spirit-led men and men of prayer.

B. The Nature of the Prayer:

1. "The Prayer of Faith" is spoken of because the action taken (rubbing with oil) and the offered prayer were both done in "the name of the Lord".
2. When praying in the name of the Lord, we are submitting to His will and therefore we can exhibit confidence or faith.

C. The Results of the Prayer: (and the rubbing)

1. Physical Health: if God has further work for His servant, He will ***"save the sick"***.

- a. As with Paul in Phil. 1:20ff.

Philippians 1:20-25 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith...

b. **"save the sick"** i.e., saves him from death.

2. Spiritual Health: It is apparent that this particular Christian has been engaged in continuing sinful activity.

- a. All sickness is not the result of personal sins, though indirectly all sickness is a result of sin.
- b. However, some sickness is the result of specific sin.
- c. It does seem that some Christians habitually sin without sickness, whereas others pay for their sin with physical, emotional or psychological sickness..
- d. A recognition of the reason for sickness when due to sin is necessary.

ILLUS: If you find yourself sick as a result of sin in your life, do not hesitate to admit it and call for the type of help mentioned here.

e. Forgiveness here is based upon acknowledgment of the source of the sickness.

II. THE CONFESSION OF FAULTS: v. 16

- A. Confession is Necessary
- B. Confession is to be Mutual

ILLUS: This is not a "one-way street" as in the Roman Catholic Church. This passage is used by Catholicism for their sacrament of Extreme Unction.

- C. Confession is a Part of the Prayer Session
- D. Confession Helps the Healing Process

III. THE PRAY-ER'S FOUNDATION:

A. His Limitations for Effectiveness:

1. **"the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man"** (the Greek word here is "energeo") This is the word from which our words "energy" and "energized" are derived.
2. The energized prayer **"availeth much..."**
 - a. God must energize our prayers for them to be effective.
 - b. To receive this energizing, we must pray in accord with His sovereign will.

ILLUS: Let us be content to allow God to energize our prayers in accord with His perfect desire for us.

B. His Qualification for Effectiveness:

1. **"Righteous man"**...one made righteous by God Himself.
2. Only the "righteous", or saved, have any claim to answered prayer.
3. This prerequisite also has to do with the degree of our conformity to the Righteous One, i.e., our daily life in Him.

ILLUS: One living in sin unconfessed has no right to expect his prayer life to be effective or energized by God.

4. Those living pleasing lives to the Lord are living in His will and can pray in His will expecting Him to answer. His prayers will **"avail much."**

CONCL: Open, habitual, unconfessed sin can and does bring about sickness in the life of believers. Paul says that some even "sleep" or die. When sick, do not always feel "guilty" but do "examine" yourself to see if this is a possibility

(chastisement). If so, confess and forsake the sin and call for help from those on "higher ground". Don't be like the man who continues to eat harmful foods after a health warning or one who continues to smoke when a death notice is written in bold letters on the package!

BACKSLIDERS BEWARE



TEXT: James 5:19, 20

THEME: The ministry of reconciliation and reclamation is the duty of every steadfast saint to every backsliding saint.

INTRO: A. James has spoken over and over in this epistle of the dual responsibility of every believer to have faith and to manifest that faith in good works. Likewise at the end of this practical letter, James reminds us of our duty to the Lord.

B. He has spoken in previous verses of sin and sickness in the life of believers and now enlarges upon this theme by pointing out our responsibilities to any backslider. We are to do all we can to help one who has slipped his spiritual moorings to return to Christ and His service.

I. A SLIPPING SAINT: V. 19a

A. The Person Identified:

1. A Christian brother **"brethren"**
2. One of the congregation **"any of you"**

B. The Problem Identified:

1. One who has strayed or wandered **"do err"**

ILLUS: There are 5 Greek words for "err." This word is the one we get from our word "planet". They "wander" around the sky. James says there are not only planets in the solar system but in the ecclesiastical or church system as well.

2. A deviate in doctrine **"from the truth"**

- a. Christ said He was the "Truth".
- b. This means all He was and taught.
- c. His teaching of truth is found in the Word.
- d. Generally, one who deviates in doctrine soon deviates in life.

3. The reason for straying may be inward or outward.

- a. The verb allows for either or both ideas.
- b. When the verb is in the passive aorist it indicates willful disobedience.
- c. When the verb is in middle voice it means something influenced by outside forces.

II. A STEADFAST SAINT: v. 19b **"and one convert him..."**

A. This Does Not Mean Some "Super-Spiritual" Saint:

B. This Does Not Mean Only a Pastor, Deacon, Etc.:

C. It Means Any Born-Again Christian in Fellowship With the Lord.

1. The word translated "one" indicates "anyone" among the brethren.
2. The "lay Christian" has more responsibility than he or she is usually aware of or likes to admit.

III. A SATISFYING SERVICE: v. 19b, 20

A. A Ministry of Reconciliation:

1. **"Convert"** i.e., to return one to the old path...not a new, "new-birth."
2. It simply involves helping one another back to spiritual health.

B. A Ministry Of Reclamation:

1. A life is being wasted for the Lord.
2. You seek to make that life useful again.
3. Only God can do a work in the heart, but He uses us as instruments to accomplish His purpose.

C. The Results of This (Two-Fold) Ministry:

1. The backslider will once again be useful.
2. The sinner will be saved from death:
 - a. In context this seems to speak of physical death brought about by sin and subsequent sickness.
 - b. Also "death" is God's punitive action against sin and so one who goes astray without being reclaimed may be punished by God...even with death!

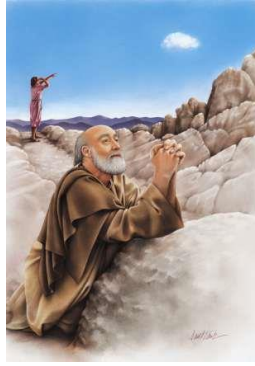
ILLUS: BACKSLIDERS BEWARE!!! Be sure your sin will find you out. There "is a sin unto death". Are you backsliding? Have you been sick recently? As a result of sin? You had better get your life straightened out or God may remove you from the land of the living.

3. The sinner's sins shall be "covered":

- a. He will stop doing them and so they will not be seen by others.
- b. God will forgive them.
- c. The steadfast saint's ministry to the slipping saint will result in the satisfying service of hiding from view sins that would bring reproach on the Savior.

CONCL: God has allowed you and I to have a part in this precious ministry of reconciliation and reclamation. There are slipping and sinning saints I cannot reach...but you can! Do it for Him and for their good and for your future reward.

THE RAINMAKER



TEXT: James 5:17, 18

THEME: To reveal the power of prayer in the hands of a righteous servant of God.

INTRO: Who or what is "The Rainmaker"? In the portion before us we have the answer. Elijah prayed to God that it would not rain and then that it would rain, and his prayers were answered. We could say that Elijah was "The Rainmaker" because of his faith and initiation of the action. We might say that the Prayer of Elijah was "The Rainmaker," or we could say that God Himself was the one responsible. Actually all three answers are correct, for with any of the three missing, the story would be incomplete and impossible.

I. ELIJAH'S IMPERFECT POSITION: v. 17

- A. Merely a Man: **"Elias was a man..."**
 - 1. But a "righteous" man.
 - 2. But a man in touch with God ("energized").
- B. Much Like Other Men : **"subject to like passions..."**
 - 1. Not a god with supernatural powers.
 - 2. But a man with supernatural help.
- C. Mostly Like You and Me **"as we are..."**
 - 1. We have the same physical qualities.

ILLUS: Do we throw the water away because it travels through rusty pipes? No! Neither can we discard the message because the messenger is imperfect. Some like to point out the preacher's failings, but remember Elijah ran in fear from Jezebel. He was just a mere man, but a man of God nonetheless.

- 2. We have the same God.
- 3. We have the same potential.

II. ELIJAH'S IMPRECATORY PRAYER: V. 17

NOTE: The word imprecatory means to call down from heaven something bad or harmful. *Encarta Dictionary*

- A. His Action: **"he prayed"**
 - 1. He went to God FIRST as a man of prayer.
 - 2. We usually go to God LAST at our extremity.
- B. His Attitude: **"earnestly"**
 - 1. He had a specific request.
 - 2. He had deep-rooted desires.

C. His Ambition: **"that it might not rain"**

1. To teach respect for his position as prophet.
2. To teach reverence for God.
3. To bring judgment upon God's enemies.

ILLUS: Specifically Jezebel and Ahab, representing idolatry and immorality and the worship of the false gods Ashtaroth and Baal.

4. To elicit dependence upon God.

D. His Answer: **"and it rained not..."**

1. God answers specifically.
2. God answers in spite of Elijah's imperfections. (God considers it blasphemy when someone boasts that God is using them because of their moral goodness or spiritual qualifications.)

ILLUS: In Acts 14 men called Barnabas, Jupiter and Paul, Mercury – two heathen gods. Paul & Barnabas rebuked them.

Acts 14:15 *And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:*

III. ELIJAH'S IMPLAUSIBLE PERSUASION: v. 17

A. His Faith Was Based on the Will of God:

1. He was acting in **"the name of the Lord"**.
2. He was praying the **"prayer of faith"**.
3. He was **"righteous"** in God's sight.
4. He was **"energized"** by God in prayer.

- a. God undoubtedly instructed Elijah that He would accomplish this.
- b. God certainly put it in his heart to pray this way, thus his words

1 Kings 17:1 *And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.*

B. His Persuasion Was Based on God's Power:

1. Not on his own imperfections and inabilities.
2. Not on the "laws of nature".
3. It was based on his knowledge of God's purpose

Luke 9:52-56 *And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. 53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. 54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? 55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. 56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.*

IV. ELIJAH'S IMPLICIT PERSEVERENCE: v. 17b, 18

A. Elijah Didn't Waver:

1. He waited on God.
 - a. God set the time limit, not Elijah v. 17
 - b. When God's purpose was accomplished, he moved.

B. Elijah Didn't Want:

1. He was blessed by God during the famine

1 Kings 17:4 *And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.*

1 Kings 17:13 *And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.*

C. Elijah Didn't Wander:

1. He was where he was supposed to be when he was needed.
2. He did not stray spiritually **"He prayed again..."**
 - a. This doesn't mean he ONLY prayed at this time, but for this specific request.
 - b. His faith was still strong. Apparently he only prayed ONCE for rain to cease and only ONCE for rain to commence.

D. Elijah Watched:

1 Kings 18:42 *So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,*

1 Kings 18:45 *And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.*

CONCL: Elijah's faithfulness in prayer ought to encourage us to do likewise. Prayer DOES change things, move God to action, harnesses the power and energy of God for us. God heals and strengthens through prayer.

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