

## **A Commentary on the Book of James**

Before we can begin this study, we should, if possible, attempt to determine which of the several James(s) was the author of this epistle. Until I began looking into the matter, it seemed to be a no brainer. It seemed obvious that he was the half-brother of Jesus as determined from those names of the sons of Mary and Joseph, and as indicated in Matthew 13:55. In Matthew 10:2 we learn that the Apostle James was the son of Zebedee. Then in Matthew 10:3, we learn that there was another apostle named James who was the son of Alpheus. It's only peripherally of interest to note that the eleventh named Apostle was named Simon, a Canaanite. What, if anything, he contributed as an Apostle revealed. It's very likely that he was a postulate Jew, and not of the seed of Abraham.

Given that our Lord, of course knowingly, called Judas to be an Apostle could this Canaanite Simon also had some nefarious mission? Could he have been in some relationship with the traitor, that helped him deceive all of the other Apostles during those three years? It's only conjecture flavored by a trace of a sense stemming from the fact that Scripture is silent regarding his apostleship. Nevertheless, we can be assured that he did have some purpose, or else Jesus would not have included him. The end of the 7<sup>th</sup> year that Joshua fought against the Canaanite enemies was around 1450 years earlier. We know that they were not all driven from that land, and that most retained their tribal identity for many centuries. Here God is revealing to us that even after all those years, there was yet a remnant of them in the "Promised Land." Perhaps this may offer some support for my conjecture.

In Matthew 13:55 we read *"Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?"* Those listening to Jesus' preaching in Nazareth viewed Him as a man, and nothing more than the brother of James and the others. As this verse stands alone, if we leave it standing alone, as most of us do, then surely James was of the family of Mary and Joseph. At the risk of further complicating matters even more, both brother and brethren are translations of the same Greek word "adelphos" which means "a brother literally, or figuratively." Those, who maintain that Mary is eternally a virgin, find this definition comforting. They choose to believe that because Joseph was reputedly considerably

older than Mary, that all of her children except Jesus, were his family by an earlier marriage, and therefore Mary was their stepmother. While all of this is interesting, it's a weak argument and not relevant to our immediate quest, which is to determine which James is the author of this epistle.

Then we find in Matthew 27:56 *"..among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children."* This tells us that there were 3 Marys' at the foot of the cross where Jesus died. Earlier there had been a total of 4 Marys, the fourth being Mary the mother of God. Her absence here suggests that John had already taken her away as Jesus had instructed. Putting aside Mary Magdalene, the other 2 each had a son named James. The first mentioned was the Mary whose sons were James and Joses. Mark, in 15:4 calls this James "James the less". In Mark 1:19, we find that James and John, the sons of Zebedee were chosen to become 2 of the 12 Apostles. In Mark 1:16-17, we learn that Jesus saw the brothers Simon (later named Peter), and Andrew, and immediately called them to be His Apostles. In Mark 1:30, we learn that Simon-Peter had a wife. Her mother, who being sick unto death, was healed by Jesus.

So far, there is more confusion than conclusion regarding which James wrote the Epistle. Perhaps a summary of the above findings will lead towards what we seek. Let us start by listing the 4 James (s) and what Scripture tells us about them.

1. James the son of Zebedee. He and his brother John were two of the Apostles. Their mother's name was Salmone. Tradition indicates that she was a sister of Mary the mother of Jesus. This would have made this James a cousin of Jesus. Seventeen years after he became an Apostle, he was martyred by Herod Agrippa. He apparently never sought fame or power, and there seems to be no record of him writing anything.
2. James to son of Alphaeus. He was also called "James the little." It's believed that Matthew was his brother. Tradition suggests their father Alphaeus had been a tax collector, having past that vocation down to Matthew.

3. James the father of Judas the apostle was not Judas Iscariot. In Luke 6:15, it seems that the King James Version translator may have made a translational mistake in calling James the brother of Judas, who was not Iscariot. Some commentators claim this to be a mistake. Notice that “The brother” in the King James Version is in italics, and therefore a filler word used by the translators in an attempt to make the verse more understandable. Absent the “filler,” the phrase in the original Greek would read “...and Judas of James.” The “of James” is surely more indicative of this James having been this Judas’s father instead of his brother. This is the only identifiable reference to this James. Because this James was an apostle, he could not have been one of the half-brothers of the family of Jesus, because none of them considered Him to be anyone more than their “black sheep” half-brother until after Jesus’ resurrection.
  
4. James, the half-brother of Jesus. It was after His resurrection, while yet on earth that James came to believe. We find in 1Corinthians 15:7 “*After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.*” This suggests that for James, this was the special God-provided evidence that his half-brother was in fact the Messiah, the son of God. Even to the apostles, Jesus’ Messiah-ship was somewhat of a surprise. However that was quickly dissolved as they recalled how He had so often claimed to be the Son of God. However, for James, it had to have been an almost a paralyzing shock. To suddenly see this half-brother with whom he had lived for most of 30 years, suddenly appear in His resurrected body, James then knew that He was the Son of God. Then he must have begun remembering all of those years, and how he and his siblings had continually scorned Jesus, continually adding layers of emotional and physical pain to His life.

His guilt must have been most painful when he finally realized that it was not weirdness, but Godliness that set Jesus apart from all other people. All of this fell most heavily on his heart, and that perhaps was at least a significant aspect of what motivated him to write this epistle. I suspect that from that moment on his life was changed to serving Him throughout the rest of eternity. It seems inevitable that he would write the epistle as perhaps the first step of that eternal service. His writings unmistakably cry out as those of a highly developed mature faith, and a well-seasoned understanding of Scripture. How

did he come by such understanding of God's Word and ways? Recall in 1Corinthians 15:7 where we are told that, after His resurrection he spoke first to James, and then to the Apostles.

This is not mentioned in any of the four Gospels. It is Paul who tells of this! What would have been the connection between James and Paul through which this was conveyed? They spent time together sharing some aspects of their personal encounters with the resurrected Jesus. So what is the significance? It is that Paul and James were kindred spirits in one profound way. They both were tutored by Jesus! We know that Jesus spoke to Paul and quite likely tutored him during those early years Paul spent in the desert. This may be evidenced by Paul's extensive scriptural knowledge that went in many ways, way beyond what had already been recorded. His unique revelation regarding the Rapture is evidence of this, as is the fact that Paul wrote 14 of the 27 books and about 1/3 of the entire New Testament text. After all of this, we reach the conclusion that most have believed all along as to who wrote the Epistle of James. However, now we have the proof that supports that assumption.

The verse that says that Jesus saw James and then the Apostles keeps reverberating in my mind. While Scripture speaks several times about His communications with His Apostles and others, nowhere are we informed of that amount of time spent individually with the other Apostles. Could he have been in the upper room for only a few minutes or for overnight, we don't know. How long was He with the Apostles on the beach where He cooked fish and restored Peter's apostleship? Who knows? Likewise, how long did He "speak" to James? James had one advantage over Paul, in terms of how long it was needed to fill each heart with what He wanted them to know. Paul hated Jesus and persecuted all who believed in Him! James had known Him for over 30 years before His resurrection, and also knew much about His later years. Perhaps, because of this, it probably took only a few days to launch James on his life-long journey of intense discipleship that included this Book.

Continuing our examination of verse 1, we see that James calls himself a servant, a dulous, of our Lord. To have in any way mentioned his family relationship would have been an expression of pride, and would be degrading of the Being he now knew to be God Himself and to whom he had committed his life. Notice that he was writing this epistle to the 12 tribes, that is, all of the descendants of Jacob. By this time most of these were scattered in lands outside of Judea. While not addressed to us, it is equally applicable to all who seek to be, or are, of the Bride of Jesus. Were that not so, the letter would have lost its way through antiquity rather than becoming a part of the sacred Cannon, our Holy Bible.

Verse 2 *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;”* What an opening instruction! Taken out of the context that follows, it seems to say, enjoy your temptations. However, a parallel word defining the thought is “adversity,” which, of course is the intent, which is to test your faith. James, is telling us that temptations are good in the sense that dealing with such things which test our faith commitment, strengthens our Christian growth. Job was tested in this manner, but didn’t know it. If you are born-again, you will suffer as did Jesus. The exposures to temptation will strengthen you in dealing with the greater difficulty that will surely follow.

Verses 3, 4 *3 “knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”* Here we see this more clearly explained. Things such as adversities, as well as resisted temptations, test our faith, which in turn builds patience. With patience, we learn to face our problems and to defer, or denying permanently, earthly gratifications. Thus we are able to focus more on the eternal than on the temporal. Only then are we able to really serve God in accordance with His purpose for us. We should always keep in mind that God does not force us into His service, nor into salvation. He has given us the power of volition, the power to choose and pursue implementing our choices. He doesn’t need us in order to accomplish His purpose. He simply blesses us by providing us with the opportunity to join Him in His plan.

This reminds me of Mordecai’s discussions with Esther as found in the Book of Esther 4:14. *For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance*

*arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* While God is not mentioned in this book, it's evident that Mordecai knew our Creator God and knew of His ways. This is evidenced by how certain he was that if Esther did not do this thing the Jews would be saved in some other way. What he is saying is that if you don't do it, God will raise up someone else to fulfill His will. So again it is with all who are called into His service. There is no benefit to the call unless there is volition to obey. In all of this, we must always keep in mind that all that we are, all that we have, and all that we are able to do, is by His blessed grace. His purpose in His dealings with us is to prepare us for our greater service in this life, as well as throughout eternity. The success of patience expressed as "perfect work."

This perfection is perfect and entire (complete), as expressed in our contentment and satisfaction in not wanting anything that God chooses to withhold. Whatever state we are in, rich or poor, sick or healthy, we must be content. Paul expressed this well in Philippians 4:11 where he spoke of wanting nothing from the earthly perspective. This is probably the highest state of grace anyone can achieve. It indicates that whatever afflicts us here is of no consequence because our focus is on the Lord and our spiritual preparation for eternal service. I believe that. Daniel, and his 3 friends, comes to mind, as being among those who had achieved that state.

Verse 5 *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."* None of us can ever have enough of Godly wisdom. As we seek to live in accordance with His will, His wisdom is essential. James tells us that if we will but seek, He will provide it liberally, and covenant to us without reproach.

Verses 6, 7 *6 "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord."* Now we are told of the "fine print," that is the conditions under which God will give us that wisdom. Because of his total surrender to our Lord, God had filled James with precious insights. As noted in verse 5, he says he is confident that God will provide the asked-for wisdom and give it, liberally, holding nothing back. The only precondition associated with this gift has to do with the condition of one's heart and mind. Knowing our own need is the first step. Then

we must seek with an unwavering faith that He will not fail us. We dishonor God and forfeit His guidance if we ask in any way, other than in full unwavering confidence that He will provide all that we ask that is in accordance with His will.

This generosity by God, as it relates to appropriate prayer, is offered several times in other parts of Scripture. Its workings, however are often misunderstood. First, it stands to reason that God will grant only those prayer requests that are in accordance with His will. How could it be otherwise? There never was a prayer that God, because of His foreknowledge, didn't know about at the instant of creation. (See my Christian Musing commentary called "God Will Never Answer Any of Your Prayers") In these verses, James is giving us a Prayer 101 lecture on how to pray effectively. His class is made up entirely of redeemed Christians who seek to grow in the faith. A mature faith is one that has grown to more closely understand God's ways.

Evidence of that greater maturity is expressed by praying prayers that His gifts of wisdom have shown us to be in accordance with His will. Of course, as mortal sinners, it's rare that anyone is in such a high state of wisdom. The most wonderful example of such a rare man was Daniel. Through the blessing of knowing God so well, he could pray with absolute assurance that his prayers would be honored. We see this when he assured Nebuchadnezzar that he could tell him all about his dream even before he prayed for that knowledge.

Verse 8 "*A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.*" James now compares that single-minded, persevering, God-worshipping man, with a double-minded man, one who is unstable in his thoughts and convictions. Most of us fall, to some degree in this category. James' purpose is to show us our weaknesses, to have us acknowledge them, and then to lead us to understand their futility so that we will seek to follow God's perfect way. Paul wrote in Galatians 5:8 "*This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.*" What he is saying is that being willing to be persuaded in ways other than God's way. (being double-minded) does not come from God who called you to Him. To be persuadable is evidence of a will that can sway in other directions. The man who continually seeks God's will cannot be swayed. Solomon, in trying to offer wisdom to his son cautioned him in these matters. Proverbs 24:21, 22 says "...*fear thou the*

*Lord and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change: for their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?"*

Verses 9-11 <sup>9</sup> *"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: <sup>10</sup> but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. <sup>11</sup> For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways."* Here James again speaks of those of "low degree" that is the poor. This is simply an added layer of the condition of those who "count it joy" when they suffer testing and adversities. The poor then are also exalted in their poverty. Complimentary to this thought is found in Psalm 24:21. Also, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches the same thing in a most forceful manner. Then He points out that the rich only enjoy their status for but a short time, as do the flowers and the grass. Their fate awaits the rich as well. This does not preclude the possibility of salvation of the rich, it merely points out that it is much more difficult, as seen in the rich man parable found in Matthew and Luke.

In verse 12 the key to salvation appears to be enduring resistance to temptation as well as adversities. This is implied several times in Scripture. Jesus in Matthew 10:22 tells us plainly and compellingly that *"...he that endureth to the end shall be saved."* Mark 13:13 repeats this promise. Verse 11 tells us that life is short, and just as the flowers and grass die in their time, so does all flesh. The rich man content in his wealth is no less spared as his season ends. His wealth, absent a genuine saving faith, leaves all of this wealth, for it can then do him no good. Looking again at verse 12, we see clearly that those both poor and rich that endureth, that is maintain their "faith and love of the Lord to the end, will receive the Crown of life. Revelation 10:2 also speaks of the Crown of Life: The Martyr's Crown.

As an aside, there are at least 5 different crowns:

1. The Crown of Life (James 1:12, Revelation 2:10)
2. The Crown of rejoicing (1Thessalonians 2:19)
3. The Crown of Righteousness (2Timothy 4:8)
4. The Crown of Glory (1Peter 5:4)
5. The incorruptible Crown (1Corinthians 9:24:27)



Verse 13 *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:”* It is important to know that God is not the Author of temptation or of any form of evil. Most of the world, and even many Christians have difficulty in believing this. The temptations certainly can be of the devil, but for the most part, that they are of our own doing. This reveals James’ keen understanding of God’s way. In terms of God not being a sponsor of sin, sin can develop through God’s giving very difficult commands such as He gave Abraham in Genesis 22, when He commanded him to kill his son Isaac. Of course, He always knows what the outcome will be and never commands any of His redeemed sons to do anything or resist anything that is beyond their power to succeed in dealing with whatever it might be. We can be assured that God does not ever tempt by commanding, suggesting, soliciting or persuading anyone to sin. Jesus taught us how to pray as found in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. That sample prayer included the phrase *“...lead us not into temptation...”* What this means is don’t leave us to pursue our own dangerous ways because these will expose us to the pressures of the enemies of our souls. While Satan will tempt at every opportunity, our evil nature is what we need to guard against the most.

Verse 14: *“but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.* This adds credence to the end sentence of verse 13. We are all dominated by our evil natures when we allow ourselves to be drawn from godly behaviors to our own always tempting lusts, and enticed by our cravings for self-gratification. Proverbs 23:7 also relates to the issue: *“for as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:”*

Verse 15 *“Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”* James here continues embellishing this thought bringing it to its ultimate conclusion. Ezekiel was given the same message as we read Ezekiel 18:4. Understanding verse 15 is vital to our understanding of the nature of each sin. Notice it is the conception of sin, that very first embryonic thought, that brings forth sin. How blessed we are that this thought is not itself a sin. It is the entertainment, or continuance of the thought that causes it to become sin. Through God’s grace, those who are redeemed have the power to cut off and remove that thought before it becomes a sin. Temptation to sin so as to fulfill fleshly desires, surround us

everywhere. If we live at all in this world, and we all must to some degree, sinful temptations are everywhere testing the strength of our faith and of our resistance to sin. Accordingly, we must be ever alert lest we inadvertently succumb to it. The rest of this verse tells of the consequence of letting the sin manifest.

Therefore we need to examine its Bible-wide context. Romans 8:6 gives us a clue. It tells us that *“for to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”* Letting a sinful thought proceed past that first moment is one example of a growing carnal mind. Solomon, in Proverbs 7 had a relevant message to his sons regarding powerful temptations, that even the most well intended noble man can be lured into by a persevering well prepared harlot. It implies that one should run away at the first hint of such temptation before it can obtain any control. Once the sin gains control, all barriers are likely to be cast aside, thus leading to both physical as well as spiritual death. This does not speak of the saved, but those who seek to be righteous in the manner of how the Word was defined during that age.

If it occurs in the professing Christian, it can be strong evidence of his unsaved condition. In the redeemed Christian, it is evidence of a backsliding that will not last long before guilt takes over leading to remorse and to confession, followed by a blessed repentance and restoration of our obedient service to our Master Christ Jesus.

One more wrap up observation. In Matthew 7:15, 16 and in James 3:11 as well as Job 14:4 we learn that “evil thoughts” that is sin, deplete the man, while Romans 7:8 says, *But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence...*” Concupiscence is a translation of the Greek word that also means, and explains that it is “a longing for what is forbidden, desire, lust.” Here now is a dilemma that when understood draws us full circle to the sought for answer. Remember in this verse, it is lust pursued that causes sin. Here in Romans 7:8 we learn that it is sin that causes lust. Therefore, both must be true. Lust is what brings forth the acts of sin as its fruits, and sin as a root brings forth actual lust, as its fruits. Thus again, it’s all what’s in the heart. The propensity to lust lurks in our hearts as the impetus to form the embryo of evil thought.

Verse 16-21: This speaks of our old sin nature: <sup>16</sup>“Do not err, my beloved brethern. <sup>17</sup> Every good gift and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. <sup>18</sup> Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. <sup>19</sup> Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: <sup>20</sup> for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness’ of God. <sup>21</sup> Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”

Here James turns to another aspect of his multi-facets ministry. He admonishes his brethren that are believers, to not err by imputing their sins and temptations to God. In verse 17, he assures us that every good and perfect gift is from God who is eternally and absolutely unchanging. What is the difference between a good gift and a perfect gift? The redeemed soul sees every such gift as coming from God, and indeed they all do. However the good gift, while coming from God may sometimes be conveyed by false teachers and innately evil men. An example may be in the fact that some can be saved by the good gifts that may inadvertently come from apostate teachers. Some come to the faith by way of the Catholic Church and other false believing denominations in spite of their apostate teachings. The bottom line is that it’s Gods calling and man’s hearing, believing and knowing the truth of God’s Word regarding Jesus that saves.

James then speaks of God as the One who is never changing. His “begat” is as His first fruits. The word “begat” is interesting. As used here it means “to breed faith, by transference, to generate, begat, produce.” What is interesting is that this particular use of the word occurs only here, and nowhere else in Scripture. The word “begat” occurs 42 times in the New Testament. However, every other time the word begat, means “procreate, to regenerate, bare, begat, be born, bring forth, conceive, etc. Here is another testimony revealing how accurate and precise is His inerrant Word. It appears that “a kind of first fruits of his creatures” means the “primary fruits” rather than the chronologically first. Land and animals were created before man on the sixth day.

Verse 19 is perhaps more necessary to live by today, than in any earlier time. It seems that most of mankind is prone to speak out boldly and swiftly before they have even thought through the matter. As noted elsewhere several times, over 100 years ago Mark Twain made the astute

comment that men are forever expressing their feelings believing it to be thinking. That's grown even more extensive today. Most cannot distinguish the difference between feelings and thinking. If they did, they'd be slow to speak and swift to hear, before they made asses of themselves. The world today is full of false teachers, deliberate and convincing liars, and others who speak only half-truths, carefully crafted to lead one along paths fashioned to defraud, damage, and destroy for their evil purposes. Godly wisdom and discernment as well as knowledge and understanding are rapidly disappearing from our culture.

Verse 20: tells us that there ought to be no wrath in a righteous (redeemed) man, except for righteous reasons, and this should be slow in coming, so that it can be seriously considered as to be fully justified. David had a just wrath against Goliath when he heard him blaspheming the Almighty God. According to verse 21, after these things (wherefore) James tells us to stay away from all filthiness and superfluity abundance) of naughtiness. Obviously naughtiness 500 years ago had a meaning much different from what we view it today. It meant "badness, depravity, malignancy, wickedness." This tells us to stay away from filthiness and where an abundance of this "naughtiness" exists. Why not away from all of these things? Then, as now, these sinful ways were everywhere and to fully separate one's self from all of it was impossible. Therefore stay as much as you can from centralness of it. Receive with meekness the engrafted (implanted) word about Jesus which is the only way to salvation.

*Verse 22-27 22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. 26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. 27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."*

Verse 22 contains an admonition of great importance to all believers who are serious about growing in Christian maturity and service to our Lord. Every saved soul receives a commission, that is a ministry, or some form of earthly service in which he or she are obligated to perform. To merely being a hearer avails nothing fruitful, until it is followed by action, otherwise known as good works. By only listening without doing is a formula for self-deception. Feeling expressed in your faith through only hearing, is evidence that the work aspect of salvation has no influence on you. It's evidence that you have been persuaded to have a good opinion of yourself in the hearing-only state. Hearing only can easily lead to having the Bible or the church as objects of devotion instead of the Lord Himself.

Another condition of the hearer-only person is the likelihood that his "faith" is by emotion rather than understanding, theoretical instead of evidenced by obedient, and imagining that intellectual ascent is all that's required. These are not the characteristics of a saved soul. They are just the opposite! Later we will read that faith without works is vain, useless, and dead. That clinches it for the hearer-only professing Christian!

A true redeemed Christian is a doer! Doing is a characteristic of a saved soul. Salvation and the indwelling of God in our heart occur simultaneously. He is our guide and empowers us unto good works. Without Him in one's heart, good works, that is works that satisfy God are impossible. How does He lead us into good works? He leads and guides us to seek a depth of understanding of His inerrant Word, and digging deeper than in our devotional reading. This should be continuous and habitual rather than occasional. This learning prepares us for doing affectually, and in accordance with His will. In verse 23 and 24 James carries his case against the hearer-only man, by characterizing him as one who looks in a mirror and seeing his "natural" face. Because that is the extent of his sight, he goes his way descending even lower than he was, because he even forgets who he was when he was at least a hearer of the Word. The thrust of this mirror analogy is that if he sees anything amiss he sees only what he believes to be superficial blemishes. As one who merely hears the Word, he takes these as unimportant and so he takes no action (work) to remove them. He soon forgets about them. Next James speaks of the perfect law of liberty.

In verse 25 we find the “perfect law” of liberty. The verse begins with “but” thereby signifying a change of focus from the hearer to the doer. What is the “law of liberty”? James speaks of it again in Chapter 2 verse 12. This phrase occurs only here in James. Paul speaks of the essence of this law in several contexts. We would be correct to call the Gospels, and even all of Scripture as the perfect law of liberty (freedom). The perfect law of liberty is that which gives the freedom from eternal damnation. It is the law that gives the power to overcome temptation which then allows us, through our indwelling Holy Spirit, to grow and express our saving faith as the eternal servants of our land. It’s the law of eternal security that tells us that once saved, we are saved forever that nothing can pluck us out of Jesus’ or the Father’s hand. It’s the law promulgated as a result of Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection that satisfied God’s perfect justice so payment for the sins committed by those who believe and accept Him as Lord and Master. Being blessed in this way, we cannot forget as can the hearer only, for these things are embedded in the believer’s soul, and as expressed in his Godly works.

Notice the catch phrase “and continueth therein”. Perseverance is an essential aspect for the successful completion of all things. James here is echoing our Lord’s admonitions to continue, or endureth to the end. In Matthew 10:22 Jesus tells us “...*he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*” In John 6:27 Jesus tells us to “*Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.*” What’s emphasized in these passages is that it is important to end well. It’s not necessarily about salvation, although the Matthew passage, standing alone, has “*endureth to the end*” as an actual pre-condition of salvation. However, we know that once saved salvation cannot be lost. Perseverance in true faith to the end is clear evidence of spiritual salvation. This evidence can be of great comfort to those of the Christian faith who are left behind. Upon salvation our Christian works begin and should continue unabated to the end. These good works are likened to crowns which we lay at Jesus’s feet. Those are crowns that can be lost, or turned from gold to hay or stubble when we fail to endure in our assigned work.

We’ve already mentioned 5 types of crowns, how they are earned, and how they can be taken away. The Matthew 10:22 passage, Jesus speaks of he who endures to the end shall be saved. That statement doesn’t say that only he who endureth is saved. He is telling us that this

endurance to the end is evidential truth certain of salvation. In verse 26 James speaks of the man who seems religious, but can't control his tongue. This is someone who can't keep a tight rein or restrain of his or her harmful words. They don't first think thoroughly about what they say before they say it. Yet they may believe that they speak in accordance with God's will, and therefore sense no need to first chew on it. This is not a characteristic of a saved soul, for their religion (belief system) is in vain. The word religion is mentioned only 5 times, and religious 2 times in the New Testament. It means in Latin, "to bind back, or to rebind man to God". It also relates to the ceremonies and outward observances of faith. Verse 27 speaks to the character quality of saved souls, and how they serve the Lord through serving others. Theirs is a pure religion, undefiled before God and the Father. Notice here that James is speaking first of Jesus as God in some manner that is individuality apart from the Father God.

Here James is expressing Jesus' preeminence in these particular matters. Pure, sincere, genuine religion, as James describes it, is expressed by piety and active obedience by living in real and active concern for others, especially toward the fatherless and widows, just as Jesus so often preached. To "visit" here means to look out for, relieve. It includes all acts of charity such as providing counselling. How different was this as compared with how the Pharisee visited them? Finally, James admonishes them to keep unspotted from the world. To produce unspotted fruit in the pursuit of the assignments God has given to all saved souls is our goal. Unspotted fruit must come from an unspotted servant of God. In order to provide unspotted service, ones indwelling Holy Spirit must not be grieving or being quenched in His efforts to be our guide and helper during our mortal lives.

## Chapter 2

Verses 1-3 *“1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:”*

As the first verse is structured, it is at first difficult to appreciate what the message is conveying. What it is saying is that the brethren (saved souls) should not be expressing their faith in Jesus many way that deviates from His way. His way in this message is to not show favoritism toward one class or position over another. It's what follows which clarifies this interpretation.

In verse 2 James provides an example of how tempting it is to fall into such an attitude. We are naturally impressed by power, prestige, fame, wealth, physical as well as mental prowess and physical beauty. It's human nature to see, some natural sort of superiority in these people as compared to ourselves and others. However, from the spiritual perspective, they are no better than anyone else. They are sinners doomed to eternal damnation as are all who fail to put their faith and trust in Christ Jesus as their Savior, Lord and Master. What is special about many of them is their higher level of pride, and their greater false sense of security that results from having these attributes. James tells us that we should treat them as we would treat any other person. We should not dote on them, or offer them any especially privileged place in your home or church. In doing so, we commit the sin of partiality which James tells us we must avoid.

Verses 4-13

*“4 are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? 5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? 6 But yet have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? 8 If ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: 9 but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. 10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law,*



*and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. 11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. 13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”*

In verse 4, he asks the rhetorical question regarding how God has chosen the poor of the world who are rich in faith, that is, they who love Him. It is for them to be heirs to the kingdom. It is to them who love Him. This does not preclude the rich, even though for them it is much more difficult. Remember, Joseph of Armathea was a rich man who gave his own tomb for Jesus' burial. (He didn't know it, but it was for only three days) In verse 6, James claims that they, the rich “despise” the poor. This is not synonymous with “hate”, as we commonly believe. There are 8 words in the Greek that were translated as “despise”. Here and only here is the Greek word “atimos” used. This has a softer meaning than we normally assign to it. It can mean, “unhonored, dishonored, less honorable.” This comment by James continues the theme of the previous verses. We dishonor the poor when we honor the rich by showing partiality toward them. Then he asks rhetorically, aren't these the same rich who oppress you, and through their power use the laws to further take from you?

It's obvious that James's experience with the rich had not been very good, nor did it get any better. He was known to be James the Just, and was the titular head or overseer of the Christian church of Jerusalem. He was martyred in about 62 AD. According to Josephus, it was through the vengeful plotting of Ananus the chief priest. He brought James before the court of the Sanhedrin where he was found guilty of transgressing the law and was ordered to be stoned to death. Being the oldest of Jesus' half-brothers, he probably was then around 62 or 64 years old. Ananus was deposed after only about 3 months by King Agrippa at the behest of the Pharisees who were highly offended. It's been reasoned on that basis that James was a Pharisee. The Sanhedrin, the seventy, who were the chief judges were not only powerful, but also perhaps relatively young and rich. With the nature of teaching that we find here in this study, it's evident why they chose to and did stone him to death.

Verse 7 poses another rhetorical question. It points out that it is primarily the rich who blaspheme the name of Christ Jesus. If you blaspheme the poor you also blaspheme Jesus. The royal law as in verse 8, requires that you love others as you love yourself. That includes the poor. This is called the Royal law because it was given by the King Jesus. It rules all other laws. (Romans 1:3) James also utilized Leviticus 19:18 which also speak of loving neighbors. In verse 9, James again rails on those who are respecters of personages. He makes the case for the claim that it is clearly sinful.

Committing any one violation of the law is no less condemning then violating them all. If one is suspended over the abyss, and held by a 10-link chain of the Ten Commandments, each link, being one of the 10 commandments, how many must break before they drop into the Abyss? Only one! Verse 10 is a more succinct description of the same point. James knew that no one can go through life free of all sin, except the One. His message is that even if a man committed only one sin during his whole life, his punishment would be the same as for one who had repeatedly violated all 10 of the commandments. In verse 11 the some point is again hammered home. With it comes the implication of how impossible it is to be saved by our own efforts to be obedient.

In verse 12, James introduces another name for the Royal Law. The Royal Law is a law of liberty whereby God's saving grace through Christ allows us to live in liberty, that is freedom from eternal damnation, freedom from the spiritual grip of Satan, freedom to live for Jesus, freedom from the fear losing our salvation, and freedom of any condemnation when we miss the mark, and that is occasionally succumbing to our evil nature. A continuation of the hearer-doer lesson is here expanded. We not only must do, but we must speak as we so do. By the results will all be judged. Both Jesus in John 5:24 and Paul in Romans 8:1 tell us who are saved souls, and that they will never be spiritually judged for their sins. However, Romans 14:1-13 and 2Corinthians 5:9-10 assure us that our own works will be judged and rewarded or punished, in accordance with God's perfect justice. This judgment message gets most disturbing when one learns that if one fails to show mercy, he shall have judgment without mercy. I believe that this tells us that when one fail to show mercy while realizing how much mercy God has shown us, that in our flesh and blood bodies we shall be judged in accordance with the rigor of the law. It

will be pure justice without any mixture of mercy. Genuine mercy emanates from God's character and power. In man, it manifests more widely as compassion. Both however are gifts to us from God. God of course, knows our hearts, so He knows our attitudes which may not be as saintly as our outward profession, beliefs, actions seem to indicate. The main point James is making begs the question, is our will consistent with our professed faith? It's not God's intent to render harsh punishment toward anyone, He is always ready to forgive those who confess their sins in humble remorse. Mercy and compassion in believers rejoice in judgment. This means that knowing and rejoicing in their faith in God's mercy, also rejoices in what they perceive to be His grace prevailing over His punishing justice.

Next in verses 14-26 James provides the most compelling case for the essentialness of works to be found anywhere in Scripture.

Verses 14-26

*"<sup>14</sup> What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? <sup>17</sup> Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. <sup>18</sup> Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. <sup>19</sup> Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. <sup>20</sup> But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? <sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? <sup>22</sup> Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? <sup>23</sup> And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. <sup>24</sup> Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. <sup>25</sup> Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? <sup>26</sup> For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."*

First James poses the question, Can faith save without works? Then he proceeds to demonstrate that it can't, by citing examples of its failure. He speaks in verses 15, 16 about how calloused

those are who show compassion for those in need, but fail to provide any relief in satisfying those needs. (works) Jesus condemned the Pharisees in a similar manner. Hypocritical professors of the faith boast that their faith and compassion alone are sufficient security against judgment. Those who believe that acceptance and belief in what Christ Jesus did on the cross is wholly sufficient in the sense that they need to do nothing, find great proof in the several verses in Scripture which appear to convey that message. Yes, absolutely we are saved by grace alone which is no way is the result of our own effort. It is a pure gift from God. Yet as has been said, grace is never alone. The major thrust of James' epistle is illustrating that fact, and to establish the context of those other verse.

In verse 17, James states his belief bluntly by claiming the faith without works is dead because it's alone. He continues to pound home the point in verse 18 where he is able to prove his faith is genuine by the good works that his faith has caused him to do. Where ever there is true faith, good works are certain to be there to prove the faith. Cause and effect are never far apart, but are quickly recognized. Now comes a shocker for those absent of sufficient scriptural knowledge, and who think they are right with the one Great God because they have some form of belief in Him. James compares them to the demons regarding their knowledge, attitude and belief. They obviously know more than the humans, for they know enough to tremble in fear, because they know their ultimate fate. It is evident that there is not even one atheist among all of the demons, not even a single agnostic. That these unsaved humans know far less is evidence by the fact that they don't even know enough to tremble and to fear their eternal fate.

Also verse 18 expresses James's admonition in a simple, logical, yet very powerful way. Without works, the man is only able to claim he has faith. He has no external evidence. He can claim that the evidence is all in his heart where only he and God can see. The fatal flaw in this argument is found in Jeremiah 17:9 which assures us that "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" That tells us that it's beyond his capacity to know his heart. Because James is stating that without works man is not saved, this man cannot know his heart as compared to the discerning ability of a saved soul. Verse 19 ought to be another shocker for those who are spiritually satisfied as to their salvation, because they believe there is but one true God. They are comfortable regarding their eternal destiny, because they believe in God, that

is that there is but one true God. Great! That a fine thing. However, James reminds us that demons also know and believe in the existence of the true God. Because they are spirits, and have been part of the spiritual world for thousands of years, they most likely know much more about Him than we do. They know enough to tremble, that is they fear greatly because they know their fate. There are no demon atheists or agnostics. Those poor souls who don't tremble because they don't know that they are destined to the same fate, unless that intellectual "faith" they have grows to be a faith evidenced by holy works. An integral part of being saved is the receipt of the indwelling Holy Spirit along with volition to serve Him through various forms of works to which He guides us. True saving faith can be recognized by a changed life. It's God Word, the Holy Bible that brings us to the saving faith, Romans 10:17 makes that clear: "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" Faith is not believing in spite of evidence. A redeeming faith is believing in spite of the inevitably painful consequence. Scripture also gives several examples of non-redeeming manners of works.

- Works of the Law (Galatians 2:16)
- Works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19)
- Wicked works (Colossians 1:21)
- Dead works (Hebrews 9:14)

#### Verses 21-26

*21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."*

Continuing his describing the value and power of good works, James in verse 21 makes note of how Abraham was justified (saved) by obedience and unyielding faith when he offered Isaac on the altar. Justification however, is not a process, but instead is an act. It's not what the sinner does, but what God does for and through the sinner. When James speaks of works as evidence of one's faith, his is echoing Jesus' words when He said that one recognizes trees by their fruit

(works) (Matthew 7:15-20, 12:33-37) In verse 22 we find that it was faith wrought with his works.

There are 7 Greek words that are translated as wrought. The one used here and only here, according to Strong's, can mean, "to testify further, jointly, i.e.: unite in added evidence, bare witness," Thus we can see that faith, wrought that is, testified further as added evidence " with his works. Matthew Poole has, an insightful observation regarding this difficult verse:

*Seest thou how faith wrought with his works? he doth not say, works wrought with his faith, as he should have said, if he had intended their concurrence in justification; but faith wrought with his works, i.e. his faith was not idle, but effectual in producing good works, it being the office and business of faith to respect Christ for sanctification, as well as righteousness, Acts xxvi 18. And by works was faith made perfect; either 1. Faith by producing good works is itself encouraged, heightened, improved; and so not made perfect by any communication of the perfection of works to it, but by being stirred up and exercised as to the internal strength and power of it. Or rather, 2. Faith is made perfect by works declaratively, inasmuch as works evidence and manifest the perfection and strength of faith. Faith is the cause, and the works are the effects; but the cause is not perfected by the effect, only its perfection is demonstrated by it, as good fruit doth not make a tree good, but show that it is so. See 2Cor.xii9.*

In verse 23 James says that by the mighty work Abraham did on Calvary, we can see why righteousness was imparted to him. God calls him His friend, because of the absoluteness of his faith.

Verse 24 is the conclusion we should draw from the compelling case James has made for works being a necessary component of a saving faith.

Verse 25: Having used Abraham as an example of how one could be justified by works and his righteousness, thereby demonstrated, he now turns to Rahab as another example. This is an even more compelling example because, she was a gentile, she was a prostitute, and she was a comparatively minor person in the Old Testament. How greatly rewarding is our living God! She was the mother of Boaz and therefore of the bloodline that led directly to Christ Jesus. Thus James summarizes the whole chapter by simply stating the fact that faith without works is dead, that is meaningless, useless, powerless, lifeless, counterfeit and an imposter. We might express

that fact in another way, one that perhaps reveals the fundamental cause and effect for this tragedy. It is faith with submission in obedience to Jesus as Lord and Master. From that submission flows both the desire to do works, but also the God-given assignment of works that He wants us to do, and for which we are best suited. We who are redeemed can only grieve for those millions of souls who are complacent in their useless faith. Praying for them and witnessing to them is all we can do, and what we must do as one element of our works.

Before we leave this chapter, there is another very disturbing aspect of this theme that ought to be addressed. That is the absolute statement of the fact that without works there is no salvation. The problem is how do we reconcile this with the belief that an unsaved soul, on their death bed, minutes before they die are saved if they but then claim the truth of Jesus? Where are the works that James tells us must exist? Is there any scriptural basis for believing in such a death-bed salvation? There may be. At least we want there to be. Let's start with Matthew 17:20 *"And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."*

This is a very difficult verse to understand unto itself, let alone to apply it here. No faith is capable of literally moving a mountain. Therefore the mountain is a figurative expression regarding how even a tiny faith in Jesus can accomplish great things. How that last minute turning to Jesus be evidence of salvation? Can that question be answered in the affirmative without any reservations? There are several verses in Scripture where simply professing belief in Jesus brings about salvation. They don't speak of any time frame or any works. However, because works are omitted from these verses does not mean that they can stand alone as doctrine. James provides this context in which they must be understood. The Book of James is part of the sacred cannon, therefore its words cannot be ignored, but must be accepted as the context in which these verses must be made complete. As far as the death-bed redemption as here characterized, I can't find anything in Scripture that gives much comfort to the premise. No doubt the emotional aspect of the situation when our loved ones are involved, can lead to desperate rationalities. If there was sufficient ability in the dying person to comprehend, digest, assimilate, penetrate the heart and thereby conclude that the witnessing was fruitful, salvation

would happen. It would however, depend on how Jesus saw these things effect the heart. It might be that the quality and thoroughness of the described process could suffice as the works. The thief on the cross is often used to show that the ingredients that are required can be oblivious quickly. However, he had not lost his ability to reason and understand, and recognize who Jesus was. This brought about all that was needed for his salvation. While not verbally expressed, it was in his heart where James could see it. By merely saying the right words on one's death bed is not by itself evidence of salvation.



## Chapter 3

This chapter is devoted to the most powerful organ in our body. It can be a most potent force of good such as in prayer, praise and leadership, yet it is unmatched as a facilitator as well as a conveyor of great evil, such as for lies, deceit, and manipulation. We might consider it as the world's smallest, yet biggest trouble maker. James through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, felt compelled, as part of his ministry, to express his God-given knowledge regarding this bane of all humanity. Already in Chapter 1 James touched on related problems such in 1:10 *"be swift to hear, slow to speak."* In 1:26 he calls upon believers to know that one who doesn't bridle his tongue is not truly religious.

### Verses 1-18

*"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. 2For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body. 3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. 4 Behold also the ships, which through they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindeleth! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. 7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8 but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. 11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. 13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. 14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. 15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. 16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. 17 But*

*the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”*

Verse 1 cautions that there should not be many within the Body who become masters (teachers). That's because people in leadership and in teaching are in positions of greater accountability and responsibility, and therefore must exercise special care in applying their God-given duties (works). Only those whom God has called to these manners of service should provide these functions. Among those teachers, whom God has not called for that purpose, there are likely to be some who cannot control their tongues and their desire to exert sinful control over others.

Referring to verse 2, we are all sinners and therefore we should not be too critical of other men's actions, having so many of our own failings. As usual it's mostly a tongue issue. With proper control of the tongue, that is to govern it, so that it speaks what and when it should, is a characteristic of the perfect man, at least in that sense. That perfection also involves the control of the eyes, ears, hands, i.e. the whole body. Dr. Missler, after he went into the full time ministry “business”. Found that the integrity of Christians was considerably lower than was that of the high level secular business community with whom he had associated for many years before. The incidences of slander and libel were higher in the Christian business arena.

Next in verse 3-5 James provides a series of examples of how the application of a very small thing can provide full control over huge things. First he cites the bridle in a horse's mouth and what it can do. Then he points out how the little helm can turn a big ship. Finally he reminds us of how very potent and devastating even a tiny fire can be. (As with Smokey the Bear fires) Through verse 6, James tells us that the tongue is itself a fire. Based on what the tongue can, and often does control, millions can be destroyed in many ways, especially through wars. Remember that the tongues of only 3 men, Stalin, Mao, and Hitler orchestrated over 100,000,000 deaths. I've read that just from Hitler's use of his tongue, that is his words which are recorded in Mein Kampf, the ratio between how many died because of him and the number of words in his book was 125 to one. The tongue could send nuclear bombs to destroy the entire world, if God allowed it. Fiery words can defile a home, a church, a school room or even a government.

Proverbs 26:20-21 observes that *Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. 21 As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.*” The bottom line of all of this is that the tongue is not the originator of evil or good. It is the heart which chooses the evil, and controls the tongue in order to fulfill its desires.

In verses 7 and 8 James points out that man has great mastery over all animals. However, if man’s tongue is unruly, short of God’s involvement, it cannot be tamed. That’s because no man can tame his own heart or the hearts of another’s, of which is the fountainhead of all unruliness. Only God, who calls all to the faith through their belief in the work of Christ Jesus on the cross, can tame the heart. Isaiah 7:5-7 saw the foreshadow of this glorious gift. What flows from the heart and fashioned into word by the tongue reflects the condition of the heart as to whether it is good or bad.

Here the emphasis is on the bad which can produce any number of variations of verbal venom. Then verses 9-11 point to the dichotomy, the dual use of the tongue as it blesses God, and also curses God and man whom God made after His own image. It’s not right that this be so. It should be like a water fountain in that it cannot issue both sweet and bitter water. James follows that in verse 12 with a similar analogy regarding a fig tree, and then a fountain that can’t provide both fresh and salt water. The tongue, in proper use, can be like a blessed tree providing shade and bearing good fruit. Words of the tongue can encourage and help shelter others. *“The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.”* Proverbs 10:21.

*“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”* Psalm 1: 1-3

Tongues of delight come only from God through our hearts daily communication with Him. Verse 13 calls out to the truly wise, to a good conversation (behavior, lifestyle) after having shown the diseases of the tongue, James now attempts to show how these might be removed.

These are his good works which are necessary aspects of a good heart, and a humble grateful attitude, because of all that God has provided. However, as verse 14 tells us, if you are bitter with (zealous) envy, coupled with the inevitably related strife in your heart, the best you can do is to not lie about it, nor take glory in any of this, as if you had anything but foolish wisdom. That is because soon it will be seen for what it is, all to your great shame. The wisdom here claimed as in verse 15 is not godly wisdom, but sensual, natural, and the opposite of spiritual wisdom. Its origin is apart from, and opposed to, the new nature given to us from God.

It's a perverted wisdom provided and promoted by Satan. In verse 16 James completes this treatise on the evil aspects of the heart by indicating how envy and strife lead to confusion. It's worldly wisdom offered by Satan that produces trouble. Wrong thinking results in wrong living. Wrong wisdom endorses rather than condemns envy and pride. Satan loves confusion and delights in disorder, instability and unruliness. This leads to the breakdown of families, societies, and nations. With envy and pride being the seeds, the poisonous plants that result, provide, what to Satan is the sweetest aroma, that is the burning of souls in hell. Notice how would-be-despots love confusion. They use it to achieve control through promises of stability and order, which they do deliver, but at the price of freedom, liberty and godly pursuits.

Next James turns to discussing godly wisdom, that is the wisdom that comes from above, and what a glorious list of blessings it provides! Verse 17 tells us that the purity of heavenly wisdom is instrumental in giving us peace, is gentle and easy to be entreated, that is to be persuaded and come into compliance with His will. It also fills us with mercy and good fruits without partiality and hypocrisy. That very well sums up what Scripture in general describes as the works of the redeemed soul! In this context James 1:17 tells us that every good gift is from above, Philippians 3:20 tell us that our citizenship is in heaven; John 14:16 tells us that our real home is in heaven; and we are told in Colossians 3:1-4 that our primary affection is focused above,

What are the evidences of heavenly wisdom? To elaborate on what this verse tells us, we can define purity as meaning free from defilement. Its worldliness that makes a person a spiritual adulterer, as we will learn in James 4:4 and 4:8, true wisdom provides a godly peace by the assurance of salvation. God's peace is based on holiness, not compromise (Isaiah 32:17) Man's

wisdom leads to competition, rivalry and war. This is all too evident as we recognize the state of the world today and the fact history has recorded over 12,000 wars. There is a godly gentleness that experiences itself as moderation without compromise and gentleness without weakness. Then there is singleness of mind wherein commitments are honored no matter how difficult. This is the evidence of integrity, attribute that has all but disappeared in this manifesting evil society. It makes one trustworthy in all one's dealings. The last verse in this chapter speaks to the fruits of righteousness. We reap what we sow. Discord is unlikely among the like-minded righteous.

## **Chapter 4**

In this chapter, James continues to demonstrate God's attitude toward lust and all of its associated evils. Then he teaches us the way it should be. This is most relevant, for the mature truly redeemed soul.

#### Verses 1-17

*“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. 4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. 5 Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? 6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. 11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. 12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? 13 Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. 16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. 17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”*

Wars come from lust and her sister envy. Its wars of every kind. In the redeemed Christian it is a war within the sanctifying process where ones carnal evil nature is constantly seeking to undermine the work of your soul/spirit which the indwelling Holy Spirit facilitates. His mission is to bring one to the higher levels of godly behavior and spiritual perfection. These sins cause

wars within the family, as well as within the church, the community, the nation and between nations. The lusts not only seek carnal pleasures, but also as over-eager desire for riches, power and worldly greatness. The word hedonism comes from the Greek word for lust. Hedonism is the belief that pleasure is the primary good in life. In verse 2 we learn that these carnal desires are never satiated, so such men can never find satisfaction or peace. If they would instead seek the Lord and His ways, these desires would no longer plague them, because they would no longer even want to seek them.

Asking God in sincere faithful prayer will sanctify you by redirecting your desires toward godly ways. Verse 3 tells us that we may pray a good prayer, but it is spoiled because it is focused on asking God to satisfy our desires and lusts which are never in accordance with God's will. Have you noticed that selfish people are not happy people? It's because selfishness is insatiable. Nothing is ever enough to fully satisfy their lusts and covetous ways. Verse 4 speaks of adultery primarily in the spiritual sense. Any manner of worldliness, such as being friends with God's enemies, diminishes our level of godliness. Worldliness is at enmity with godliness, therefore any willful, unnecessary association expresses our friendship with the enemies of God. We are married to Christ therefore being friendly with the world is likened to adultery.

In verse 5 James asks the redeemed whether they think that Scripture lies or serves no purpose. That is a very provocative question to ask a believer, yet the evidence of their actions often gives it creditability. It's not the indwelling Holy Spirit that facilitates lusts envies. It's our own spirit influenced by our evil nature that does the lusting. We might say that our indwelling Holy Spirit "lusts against envy." It's the activities of the old sinful nature that grieves Him (Romans 8:6, 7) We may consider all earthly lusts as emanating from envy. While we have been given the power to resist sin, (lust, envy) our old nature, prompted often by the devil, can cause severe though temporary backsliding. I don't believe that a redeemed Christian can remain backslid for a long period of time. If such a thing appears to be occurring, then one should reevaluate what may have been only presumed redemption. As we read verse 6 it becomes evident that "he," although not capitalized is the Holy Spirit, because it speaks of Him who is the One who provides more grace. God resisteth (arranges Himself against) the rich, but provides grace to the humble. Why is there so much railing against the rich throughout much of Scripture?

It has nothing to do with their wealth, but how they got it, and what they do with it that is the whole problem. God favors the humble because true humbleness is by definition, absent any pride or envy, but instead filled with sincere expressed gratitude for whatever God has provided. Therefore, as verse 7 tells us, that we should submit ourselves to God, and not the devil. It's interesting that if we resist him, he will flee from us. If we examine this situation, it makes sense that he would do so. Those who resist are redeemed souls. Therefore, he knows that he cannot take their souls. All he can do is to render them impotent in serving our Lord by bringing about confusion and diversion. He runs from those who resist him because there are multitude of poor souls that he can capture through false prophets and his own repertoire of religions which he guided his human agents to create and to then perpetuate.

In verse 8 he calls on the double-minded to see God in faith implying that they should become single minded. If they do, then He will come manifesting His grace to them. James asks them to wash their hands and purify their hearts. Washing of hands is symbolic of ridding themselves of carnal sin, and earthly lifestyles, and at the same time doing so with their hearts. In essence, it is the reformation of both the outer and inner man. By definition, a double-minded person is a hypocrite, for how else can he believe, live and operate in 2 ways at the same time? We should recall how Jesus repeatedly called the scribes, lawyers and Pharisees hypocrites because of the dual manner in which they treated others.

To a non-believer, verse 9 is enough to cause one to run away from Scripture. It sounds like a party pooper way of life, one in which any laughter is, and should be avoided, and where pointless mourning should take its place. Of course, that's not what it means. Be afflicted means humble yourself for your sins, and "mourn" with inward sorrow of the heart, because of them. Weeping reveal your grief visibly as it pertains to your evil thoughts and deeds. "Let your laughter", that is your rejoicing that came from sinful (carnal behavior) be turned through guilt into mourning and a changed lifestyle. The same goes for any "joy" observed in the same manner. None of this is a laughing matter for those who seek salvation, as well as those who seek perfection in the faith. Verse 10 tells us that we should humble ourselves, that is submit totally to our Lord and Master Christ Jesus. Your humbleness will cause Him to lift you up to



receive the ultimate joy derived from obedience and service. Psalm 51:17 makes clear, that “... *a broken spirit: and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*” James is speaking to those who formerly lifted themselves through pride and emulation. Through humility, we gain the truest of exaltation. In the sight of the Lord, true humility resides in the heart, and God is the great and only infallible searcher of hearts.

Verse 11 is another admonition related to the conduct of believers. We are not to speak evil of a brother, that is to gossip, mumber or slander, or undeservingly judge them. Deserving judgment as such is only for the purpose of reproof, that is admonition where there is a clear breach of the law. Any other form of judgment indicates a judgment of the law which obviously is wrong. By condemning that which the law allows is condemning the law itself, something none of us should ever do. If we do so, we are indicating that the law is not right, so we, in effect choose to modify the law. As verse 12 tells us, there is but one law giver, the Creator God, so how can anyone righteously judge against it? What sorry miserable creatures we are when we so elevate ourselves. Because God is able to create and destroy, the safest place we can possibly be is right where God wants us to be.

Verse 13 is a command to those who are rash enough, or stupid enough to think that they function strictly by their own will. Notice they say they will and do these things as if theirs is the only will involved. They should be saying in prayer, let us go and do those things as God has said. Everything we want or plan to do when spoken of, or planned in the heart should be prefaced by “God willing”, because we cannot know what alternative direction God has already chosen for us. James continues verse 14 along the same track, telling us that we don’t know how God has planned our future. He reminds us how short and tenuous our lives are. We are here today, and gone tomorrow. These words from Job reveal how well his ordeals brought him understanding of the message of this verse.

Job 7:6 *“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and are spent without hope.”*

Job 7:9 *“As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more”*

Job 8:9 *“(for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow:)”*

Job 9:25 *“Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good.”*

We tend to boast of whole years when we don't even have control of our days. In Psalm 90:12 God tells us to count our days. Verse 15 tells us, as noted above, that we should have a constant attitude in our hearts and minds of a real acknowledgment that everything depends on God's willingness to carry us through any plans that we chose to originate. *“If the Lord will, we should live”*, well expresses the fact that not only is the fulfillment of our will under His control, but also our very lives and their length are subject to His will. Notice how in Ephesians 5:17 God wants us to know His will: *“wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”* Furthermore, Paul in Colossians 1:9 prays for his flock (and all of mankind) that they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Romans 12:2 urges us not to conform to the world but to be transformed by renewing of our minds (an ongoing process), so that we may prove what is good, acceptable and perfect will of God. To prove is to experience what the will of God is. There are many other scriptural evidences of all of the truths that James is here teaching.

Verse 17 is a tough one for all of us. The “therefore” leaves us no excuses for not doing good works whenever God presents us with opportunities to do so. Who can honestly say that they have never forsaken or ran from such opportunities? None! More often our petty personal priorities get in our way, along with fear of involvement that will continue compromising our lifestyle. It's our nature to rationalize and not consider such behavior as sinful. 2Peter 2:21 tells us *“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”* While the context of this is different, it is not without relevance in James' message. Ignorance of Scripture and thus the importance God places on His instructions is probably also a major impediment to obedience. The reading, studying and understanding are 3 different things, that last being the only way of knowing what God want us to know.

## Chapter 5

The final chapter focuses on the rich in an attempt to bless them with an awareness of their unique and spiritually dangerous condition. It's strange, but true that the rich are more selfish than others. Oh, there are extremely wealthy men like Gates and Soros who gift much, but never enough to make a noticeable dent in their total wealth. Also, look to where their "generosity" goes. For the most part, the rich are not of God, their "gifts" necessarily go to aide Satan. There's no third alternative. The list of those rich who give to spread Christian knowledge and ways to promote the saving of souls is very short. Those who read and take to heart what James here offers, will find it just what they need to break the rich man curse and be saved.

Verses 1-20

*"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. <sup>2</sup> Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup> Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. <sup>4</sup> Behold, the hire of laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. <sup>5</sup> Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup> Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. <sup>7</sup> Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. <sup>8</sup> Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. <sup>9</sup> Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. <sup>10</sup> Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. <sup>11</sup> Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. <sup>12</sup> But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. <sup>13</sup> Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sign psalms. <sup>14</sup> Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if*

*he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. 17 Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. 19 Brethern, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”*

In verse 1 James seems to be addressing all rich people as being hopelessly condemned to eternal damnation. This is not his purpose, because he knew that being rich by itself was not synonymous with damnation. Job, David, Joseph, Philemon, Joseph of Aramethea, Lidia, and many other redeemed souls had been rich. It's how the riches influence their hearts that is the problem. There is nothing in Scripture that prohibits wealth, as evidenced also by Abraham. With these words, James is trying to shock the unsaved rich into recognizing their fate if they do not come to their senses regarding the fleeting power of their wealth. All private property is someone's wealth. Jesus in some of His parables, expressed His respect for private property. What is condemned is the illegal and sinful means of acquisition, and the frivolous unrighteous, selfish and sinful purposes for which it is used. Again, it is obvious that wealth unto itself is amoral. It is intrinsically neither good nor bad, just as were the stones that killed Steven, the first martyr.

Wealth more often than not, is a spiritual handicap because its ownership can bring about all forms of sinful ungodly temptations and behavior. For those whom his is addressing, the wicked wealthy, their wealth, as all wealth, is perishable and inevitable so one day they will be parted from it. Certainly its ownership is related to their eternal spiritual condition. Many of their riches were in the form of fine clothing, which could, and did get moth eaten. The same nature of deterioration would happen to their hoarding of grains, oils and other perishables. It's not as though their goods were turning over as was normal business practice, but much was being hoarded, as is evidenced by the story of the man who needed a larger storehouse. There is nothing wrong with storing (saving) for a rainy day, or seeking to leave sustenance for one's

family or for others who be in need in later days. Again it's all in the heart. Whether good or bad, depends on the purpose, for what the heart seeks for it.

Next, in verses 2 and 3, James gives examples of the effects of a greedy heart. Corrupt riches mean those ill-gotten, that is not honestly earned. Moth-eaten may be taken literally, or as symbolic of how worthless they will become. For many, especially the rich, moth-eaten garments are thrown away, not fit for keeping. As symbolic of destruction, it can apply to the purification of wine, grain, oil or anything subject to spoilage. Even gold and silver can canker, that is corrode or burn. We usually don't think in those terms about silver and gold. However, silver is quick to tarnish, that to oxidize on its surface. Polishing slowly removes the silver. However, they both melt fairly easily. So what? Well, it's very likely that their gold and silver were not simply balk silver but instead fine jewelry vessels and utensils. The skillful integral work in fashioning these often enhanced their value far more than the intrinsic value of the metal content. Even that can greatly diminish through fire. Recall what happened to the gold vessels and ornaments in the temple when it was destroyed in 70Ad. The word "rust" as used here can also be translated as "poison or venom". In the context used here, these may also be quite appropriate of what gold and silver can be for the rich.

In verse 5 James points out that these rich even steal the value of the reapers efforts by not paying them their worth, as expressed by the phrase "you kept back by fraud." The true God hears the cries of the defrauded, and His patience will not long slumber. The word "waton" in the Greek means "living voluptuously, in luxury, in a state of pleasure", that is giving up themselves to all available carnal pleasures on earth with not a thought of their eternal condition. "As in a day of slaughter." What does that mean? Absent more detailed knowledge of the culture it's difficult to be sure. A logical possibility could be that they looked forward to the several feasts of Israel where thousands of animals were slaughtered in temple sacrifice. These vast number of animals had to be purchased somewhere, and who were better equipped to supply them, but the very rich? It's not that they had any religious interests in the feasts, but providing the sacrificial needs was probably a very profitable and reliable means of converting flocks into gold and other pleasures producing valuables.

As I write this, I am reminded of something not relevant to the rich, but could be to the exploiting of the poor. Something I have read about the Quakers. Tell a Quaker what you need, and he will show you how to do without it. In verse 6 James tells us that exploitation of poor by the evil rich goes beyond the theft of their just wages. At their whim and pleasure they used their wealth in the making and seeing to the enforcement of discriminating laws which greatly added to the plight of the poor. Effectively this in itself resulted in the death of many. James here accuses them of being responsible and thereby killing the just. Because they were poor does not mean they were justified in the spiritual sense. The word “just” also applies to being simply equitable of character or act, that is being fair in their dealings, as compared to the rich. How can the poor resist?

The rich are able to bribe and intimidate, and therefore “own” those in government for their own interests. The poor have no such power. Look around and become aware of how government operates today. The topic is far too complex to do it justice here. It suffices to say that those forces of evil have continued to infiltrate and putrefy our government for many generations. Today, as they say it’s all over but the shouting. All of the forces such as riots, pestilence, disease, starvation, and massive destruction could happen at any moment. Just wait and see what happens when the government is no longer able to take enough from those who produce, to support the now about 50% of the entire population who don’t work and demand government support. We might make note that given that James was stoned to death in about 62AD, it was only about 6 years later when Rome came and took the wealth of the rich and began the siege of Jerusalem which was destroyed in 70AD. This confiscation of people’s wealth is another way in which the wealth of the rich is often lost.

In verse 7 James turns to the “brethren” that is the redeemed Christians, urging them to be patient unto the return of Christ Jesus. James likens that patience to that of the farmer who waits for the spring and fall rains to bring his crops to fruition. The spring rain brought forth the wheat, while the fall rain nurtured the barley growth. Their patience was the product of their experience in knowing how the rain and fruitfulness were connected. “Be patient therefore” refers to the previous verse. This then suggests that His coming will set all things right through His just punishment of those who have afflicted them. Believers of that day were concerned that His

coming was eminent. Yet nearly 2000 years have gone by and we still wait in the belief that His coming is eminent. While this is true because God's truth says so, it was structured that way for a more encompassing reason. Of what matter is it to the redeemed souls that He comes here for us, or that we go to Him. For all of these many years, every soul prior to this current generation has gone to Him. Think of how many of these went to Him fully prepared because of this belief.

It's a tragic thing to come into His presence unprepared, whether it be by death or by rapture. Because of His love and desire for our best interest, this belief exists, or should exist in every heart, unto blessed preparedness. Verse 8 calls for patience, just as a farmer must be patient until the time appointed for the first fruits of his efforts. It's for His coming for which we must be patient and prepared whether we go to Him, or He comes for us. Our hearts are to remain steadfast in our faith and in our holiness. The secret to patience is that the wait is worth it. "Grudge not" can also be translated as groan not in envy of others. Here James is critical of the down-trodden poor, because they too often rail with envy toward one another and will be justly punished. Jesus is the judge, who will judge everyone. We should note the impatience with one another is suggestive of impatience with God as well.

In verse 10 James uses the God-ordained prophets as examples of sufferers without cause. As we read of the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, and Hosea and most others to whom we have been introduced, we see the relevance of them as examples of long suffering and patience. Their suffering was not only brought about by the rich and by the non-believers, but also by professors of the faith. In spite of all persecutions, James, in verse 11, tells us that those who endure are happy. That is why we too should endure. Job is a classic example of one who endured long suffering and ended up happy and well rewarded. As Dr. Misler makes note, faith is not believing despite the evidence, it is obeying in spite of the consequences. Also impatience in a Christian is powerful weapon in Satan's hands. The Lord is very pitiful, that means full of tender mercy. Thus, the verse speaks of the Lord's tender mercies.

Matthew Poole added some clarity to this when he pointed out that in the Greek, the bowel is the seat of compassion in which we first feel a stirring when strong affections are working within us. These would be considered the most tender and movable affections such as a mother toward her

children. Verse 12 is one of the most well-known biblical verses. Apparently, the Jews of that day were prone to swear to things quite readily, often before they knew the facts relevant to the situation. James was addressing this kind of covenanting, not all covenants. There were many instances in both the Old Testament and New Testament where it was lawful and most appropriate. It's the oaths that are rash, vain and without just cause that he rails against. A simple yes or no should be enough, because it expresses our best understanding of the situation at that time. To respond with an oath may carry a higher level of certainty than is justified by what we actually know. Notice the issue of oaths is readily associated with what we have been told about the unbridled tongue.

Verse 13 asks whether or not at times you feel afflicted, that is suffering difficult circumstances? If so, pray. Prayer is the strongest medicine. It can bring about the grace of God that can either heal or give us the power to endure. God can turn afflictions into triumphs and weakness into strength. On the other hand, if all goes well, and you are happy, sing the psalms, thus showing gratitude and glorify Him. In verse 14, James brings to mind all ancient and apparently powerful procedures for physical healing. It was the gathering of elders in prayer for the one who was sick. This is sometimes applied even today. I have been blessed this way several times by those who come to my Bible studies. In some cases the specific acute affliction did recede. In all cases for all people, it is God's mercy in action. However, it's the way for all of the redeemed, prayers of gratitude need to be expressed continuously throughout every day.

What is prayer in faith of which verse 15 speaks? It's the prayer uttered by those who know God and have faith that He will hear and respond to their prayers. Its prayer offered when one knows the will of God. Who can know His will? It's those pure of heart who single-mindedly pray and rely on Him. We know that Daniel had such a pure faithful heart. The ointment mentioned in the previous verse was probably palliative, and at the very least, short-term and ceremonial. Faithful prayer was the primary element. Notice it's the elders who pray, but God who raise him up. Very often sin is the cause of a sickness. If God had caused it as punishment, through the power of such prayer, this faith will cause God to take away both the cause and the effect thereby healing the soul as well as the body. The relevance and power of prayer has been for many centuries the focus of a number of the expositors whose writing have been preserved. Among



those was a 4<sup>th</sup> century man known as John of Antioch. His faith, biblical understanding and the power of his tongue were so outstanding that they called him Chrysostom (golden mouthed). Here I believe, is one of his commentaries.

*“The potency of prayer has subdued the strength of fire, it has bridled the rage of lions, hushed anarchy to rest, extinguished wars, appeased the elements, expelled demons, burst the chains of death, expanded the fates of heaven, assuaged diseases, dispelled frauds, rescued cities from destruction, stayed the sun in its course, and arrested the progress of the thunderbolt. There is (in it) an all-sufficient panoply, a treasure undiminished, a mine which is never exhausted, a sky unobscured by clouds, a heaven unruffled by the storm. It is the root, the fountain, the mother of a thousand blessings!”*

If you but notice, he has gone through much of biblically recorded history to make his point, such as the fiery furnace, the lion’s den and similar events.

In verse 17, James expands his trestus on prayer by urging us to confess of our faults to one another so that our prayers for others can have a specificity, and thereby provide an efficient focus such, as that prescribed in the previous verse. Notice its faults rather than sins we are to audibly confess to one another. Are faults the same as sins in this context? Not at all. There are about 11 Greek words that are translated as faults with meanings similar to how we today define as faults. The word used here, and only here, is from the Greek word which according to Strong’s doesn’t even include the word fault. His definition is “to chance near, i.e.: fall in with; meet with” On this basis, we may conclude that the faults involved may be expression of some form of backsliding, diminishing of faith, or struggling with the presence of a pre-sin temptation brought about by worldly forces. Of course, a recognition of this, and being willing to share an acknowledgment speaks well of the troubled-soul who with the prayers of these brethren elders, is called righteous. It’s the fervent prayers of the righteous that is effectual in dealing with the faults of both body and soul.

Verse 17 speaks of Elisa (Elijah) as being subject to passions not unlike those for whom this epistle was written. This then must also include us today. God used Elijah mightily and in many ways through which He had His will achieved. In expressing this similarity, it is implied that,

while righteous, he was not perfect, but subject to the same weakness we all share, that is to the passions of the natural body, as well as the mind and soul. In praying earnestly, he prayed fervently as also with the prayers discussed in verse 16. They seem also to be “prayers of faith” as spoken in verse 15. He prayed that there would be no rain for 3 ½ years. Might we not consider this 3 ½ years as a local tribulation, and from the devastation wrought, was much like the 3 ½ year Great Tribulation which will soon be a worldwide terminating event. We find this in the Old Testament 1Kings 17:1 chronology of events regarding Elijah. There it speaks of only 3 years, but the clause is added, “but according to my word.” This removes any question of a biblical error here. While the Old Testament taught of the drought beginning, there is no other mention of it as ending. We only learn in the New Testament that it was Elijah who prayed for the ending of the draught. We learn this here in Luke 4:25 where Jesus speaks specifically of the duration of the drought. The details of how Elijah went about seeking for the return of rain is found in 1Kings 18:41-45.

Now, with verses 19 and 20 we come to the end of this much revealing precious epistle. His final recorded insights. He first speaks of how to deal with those brothers who in some manner err, from the truth, that is the God revealed Gospel of Christ Jesus, and all which it implies. Then finally he refers to our dealings with unsaved souls. Any saved and so dedicated soul can be an instrument in the restoration of brethren who have backslid and strayed from the truth, as represented by their ungodly ways. This conversion can be sought through an authority such as by a pastor, or simply by the love and concern of a brother. Success is found only through single-minded intense prayer of faith coupled with a knowledge of God’s Word being sufficient to appeal with love, to the backslid person’s logic and conscience. The last statement, verse 20 is sort of a final blessed pinnacle of all of James’s revealed biblical insights. Here James speaks of conversion of unsaved souls, and through this can be hidden many sins! Whose sins? Hide them from whom, and for what benefit? Surely, they cannot be hidden from God. Proverbs 10:12 adds some insight: *“Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sins.”* We see here that its love that covers! Whose love? Only God’s love has such power to hide, that is to forgive so that sins are remembered no more. This is not something new to the biblically conversant Christian. However, the way James expresses it is most poignant. Hiding and forgiving as dealt with here are essentially synonymous. At first reading some may conclude that he who seek these

conversions is the beneficiary. He is, but not in this context. He benefits from having added a crown at the feet of Jesus.

What follows, seems to be a good way of ending this commentary. It's something Dr. Missler assembled to help those who claim to be, or want to be, God's people can examine themselves regarding this matter.

*“Am I becoming more and more patient in the testings of life?*

*Do I play with temptation or resist it from the start?*

*Do I find joy in obeying the Word of God, or do I merely study and learn it?*

*Are there any prejudices that shackle me?*

*Am I able to control my tongue?*

*Am I a peacemaker or a trouble-maker? Do people come to me for spiritual wisdom?*

*Do I make plans without considering the will of God?*

*Am I selfish when it comes to money? Am I unfaithful in the paying of my bills?*

*Do I naturally depend on prayer when I find myself in some kind of trouble?*

*Am I the kind of person others seek for prayer support?*

*What is my attitude toward the wandering brother? Do I criticize and gossip, or do I seek to restore him in love?*

March 11, 2015  
April 3, 2015

May 24, 2016