

## The General Epistle of James

- I. The epistle is authored by James, whose identity is difficult to determine.
- A. There were definitely two of the original twelve apostles named James. **MAT 10:2-4.**
  - B. James, the son of Zebedee (and sibling of John) was slain by Herod. **ACT 12:1-2.**
    - 1. Jesus surnamed them *Boanerges* (the sons of thunder). **MAR 3:17.**
    - 2. They were zealous for Christ's honor. **LUK 9:52-54.**
    - 3. They both drank of Jesus' cup of tribulation. **MAR 10:35-39.**
  - C. James, *the Lord's brother*, was an apostle, allowing for the possibility of a third apostle named James. **GAL 1:19.**
  - D. James, the son of Alphaeus, *could* be James, the brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. **MAT 13:55 c/w GAL 1:19.**
    - 1. Jesus' mother (Mary) had a sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas. **JOH 19:25.**
    - 2. *Cleophas* is a name which corresponds with *Alphaeus* (per Strong's Dictionary). This other Mary may have been a sister-in-law to Jesus' mother.
    - 3. A nephew may fall under the category of a parent's children. **1TI 5:4.**
  - E. The historical consensus is that this epistle was written by James, the brother of the Lord.
    - 1. He was obviously an apostle of note. **GAL 1:19.**
    - 2. He was one of the pillars of the Jerusalem church. **GAL 2:9.**
    - 3. He was the presiding elder of the Jerusalem church. **GAL 2:12; ACT 12:17; 15:13.**
  - F. That this James does not introduce himself as an apostle here does not mean that he was not an apostle. Paul did not introduce himself as an apostle in his epistles to the Thessalonians, Philemon or Hebrews.
  - G. Christ's apostles were given thrones of judgment over the twelve tribes of Israel. **MAT 19:28.**
    - 1. Mind that this epistle is conspicuously written to the twelve tribes. **JAM 1:1.**
    - 2. In the O.T., the judge was the final authority. **DEU 17:8-9; 21:5.**
    - 3. The apostles are the final authority for the reformed church under Jesus Christ. **JOH 14:26; 16:13; 1JO 4:6.**
    - 4. It is to their thrones of the spiritual Jerusalem that the tribes of the LORD go up. **PSA 122:4-5.**
    - 5. Believing Gentiles are graft into the *commonwealth of Israel*. **ROM 11:17 c/w EPH 2:12-14.**
      - a. commonwealth: Public welfare; general good or advantage.
      - b. To Israel pertained a number of exclusive blessings which are crowned by Christ. **ROM 9:4-5.**
      - c. Israel's chief advantage was God's word. **ROM 3:1-2.**
      - d. Believers of any nation are thus brought into the *general good or advantage* of Israel under its supreme judges whose words enlighten them about God's saving power in Christ and also judge them. **ACT 3:25-26; 10:34-43; 26:16-20; 15:19-21 c/w 16:4.**
  - G. James was one of the apostles to the circumcision. **GAL 2:9.**
    - 1. His ministry was to the Jews whereas Paul's ministry was to the Gentiles.
    - 2. Therefore, this epistle had particular direction and warning to Jewish people.
    - 3. However, the lessons of this epistle are applicable to the Gentile believer.
      - a. In Christ, God has put no difference between Jew and Gentile. **ACT 15:8-11; GAL 3:27-29.**

- b. They have a common human nature, new birth, Savior, hope, resurrection and future in glory.

II. The epistle is written to Christians: those who have been joined to Christ as disciples.

**JAM 2:7 c/w ACT 11:26.**

- A. They are assembling brethren who have the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. **JAM 2:1-2.**
  - 1. The word translated *assembly* in v. 2 is *sunagoge* (Strong's G4864), most commonly translated as *synagogue*.
  - 2. Assemblies of Jews for worship and instruction are commonly called *synagogues*.
  - 3. This is therefore an example of the reformed Jewish church. **HEB 9:1-10.**
    - a. Mind how this epistle is devoid of the Levitical ordinances of worship.
    - b. Messiah's coming would *purify the sons of Levi*. **MAL 3:1-6 c/w ACT 6:7.**
    - c. John the Baptist was a Levite. All that are joined to God according to his ordinance are spiritual *sons of Levi*, a spiritual priesthood. **1PE 2:5.**
- B. They are under the oversight of church elders. **JAM 5:14.**
- C. They are brethren in the truth, which could not be said of unbelievers. **JAM 5:19-20.**
- D. It will be helpful to keep in mind that the early Christian movement among the Jews was:
  - 1. numerically large. **ACT 2:41; 4:4; 6:7; 21:20.**
  - 2. not immune to the "bad fish" syndrome of **MAT 13:47-48.**
  - 3. infiltrated by false brethren, including Pharisees. **GAL 2:1-4, 12 c/w ACT 15:1-5.**
    - a. Pharisees were wealth-oriented and exploitative. **MAT 23:14-17; LUK 16:14.**
    - b. False brethren of the Jews would be in the church teaching heresies for financial gain. **2PE 2:1-3 c/w TIT 1:10-11.**
    - c. They sought to buffer ostracism by their own countrymen by "judaizing" the gospel. **GAL 6:12.**

III. James has much to say against the deceitfulness and corrupting influence of riches.

**JAM 1:9-10; 2:1-6; 4:13-16; 5:1-6.**

- A. An indicator of genuine conversion and faith for the Jewish believers was abandoning their traditional notions of redemption with money. **1PE 1:18-19.**
- B. James essentially continues the historic teaching of the Jewish prophets which set in contrast vain trust in riches with vital trust in a Redeemer. **PSA 49:6-17.**
- C. The gospel of wealth versus the gospel of grace was the cause of much grief amongst them. **JAM 4:1-2 c/w 5:6.**
- D. Similar instruction and warnings against covetousness were given to the churches of the Gentiles. **1TI 6:17; REV 3:17.**

IV. An emphasis is given throughout the epistle on the need for patience, particularly in trials.

**JAM 1:3-4; 5:7-11 c/w ROM 12:12.**

- A. Many Hebrew believers underwent a great trial in coming to Christ and therefore had need of patience. **HEB 10:32-36.**
- B. Unless patience is allowed to do its work in us, we will never come to fullness. **JAM 1:4.**

V. James also warns against vain religion, religion that is of no effect, profit or value.

**JAM 1:26; 2:14-20.**

- A. Simply saying we believe is not enough. Believers are to maintain good works. **TIT 3:8.**
- B. James stresses good works as the proof of genuine, profitable faith.

- C. Good works are essential to effective witnessing. **1PE 2:12; MAT 5:16.**
- D. God will not hold guiltless those who take His name in vain. **EXO 20:7.**
- E. Ananias and Sapphira tried a pretence of faith and were slain. **ACT 5:1-11.**
- F. God is dead serious about church and we had best be likewise.

## Chapter 1.

### vs. 1-4.

- A. James opens his epistle with the purpose and desire of godly ministry, that saints would be brought to perfection (fullness) in Christ. **EPH 4:11-13 c/w COL 1:27-29.**
  - 1. Mark it well: the perfecting of man comes not by wealth, education, social reform or genetic engineering. It comes by conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Ultimate Man.
  - 2. As James makes plain, God's methods for perfecting men are not the things that the natural man would choose.
- B. James introduces himself as "...a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ..." (v. 1).
  - 1. Jesus Christ should be honored as the Father is honored. **JOH 5:23.**
  - 2. Those who serve the Son will the Father honor. **JOH 12:26.**
  - 3. Those who deny the Son have not the Father. **1JO 2:23.**
  - 4. James made it clear to anyone who should read his words that he was in the service of the LORD God Who had said, "Kiss the Son..." (**PSA 2:11-12 c/w JOH 5:18**).
- C. James gives greeting to "...the twelve tribes scattered abroad..." (v. 1).
  - 1. This does not bode well for the theory of the "lost ten tribes."
  - 2. Paul described the twelve tribes in his day as *instantly* (urgently) *servng God*. **ACT 26:7.**
  - 3. That the twelve tribes of Israel were scattered abroad is one thing; that ten of them were lost in the mists of history is another.
  - 4. Moses had warned Israel that God would scatter them abroad if they turned away from Him. **DEU 28:63-64.**
    - a. A major scattering of ten tribes occurred when the Assyrian empire was given power over them. **2KI 17:6, 22-24.**
      - (1) God divorced the ten tribes (Israel) but remained in covenant union with Judah. **JER 3:8.**
      - (2) God could not take Israel back into covenant with Himself under the Law after she had been put away and had married to another god. **DEU 24:1-4; JER 3:1.**
      - (3) With the death of "God manifest in the flesh" (Jesus Christ), the dispersed ten tribes could be brought back into covenant with God under a New Testament/Covenant. **ROM 7:1-6.**
    - b. The nation of Judah was later overcome and the people scattered abroad by the Babylonians. **JER 9:16; NEH 1:8.**
      - (1) After seventy years captivity, some of the scattered people returned to Jerusalem and Judah. **EZR 9:8.**
      - (2) Many remained dispersed among the Gentiles. **EST 3:8; JOH 7:35.**
      - (3) Devout Jews from every nation under heaven came to Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost. **ACT 2:5.**
    - c. The last scattering of natural Israel occurred in the 1st C. by Rome. **LUK 21:24.**
      - (1) The first mention in Scripture of a corporate body of people being scattered

is where the men of old Babel were building in defiance of God.

**GEN 11:8-9.**

- (2) It was for the defiance of *the builders* that natural Israel would be set at nought and scattered. **MAT 21:42-44 c/w 1TH 2:14-16.**
5. It was owing to another “scattering abroad” that the gospel reached out into the regions where the scattered tribes of Israel were in the nations. **ACT 8:1-4 c/w ACT 11:19-21.**
6. Jesus Christ is the great Gatherer of His people. **GEN 49:10; JOH 10:15-16; 11:51-52.**
  - a. God's purpose was to “...in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things IN Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on the earth; even in him” (**EPH 1:9-10**).
    - (1) We are living in that dispensation. This is the last age when times are being fulfilled or completed.
    - (2) Since Christ's first coming we have been in *the last days* (**HEB 1:2; ACT 2:16-17**), *the last time* (**1JO 2:18**) and *the end of the world*. (**HEB 9:26; 1CO 10:11**).
  - b. This gathering process was marked by the beginning of Christ's public ministry. **GAL 4:4 c/w MAR 1:15.**
  - c. Jesus Christ's resurrection was a gathering together of His spirit, soul and body.
  - d. The elect are quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ. **EPH 2:5-6.**
  - e. This gathering process includes the assembling of believers as local churches which worship Him and conduct His business. **1CO 5:4 c/w HEB 10:25.**
  - f. This process broadened with the gathering in of elect Gentiles while Israel was *sifted among the nations*, and this is the prophesied raising up of David's fallen tabernacle. **AMO 9:9-12 c/w ACT 15:13-17.**
  - g. This process is perfected at the Second Coming and general resurrection. **MAR 13:26-27 c/w 1TH 4:14-18; 2TH 2:1.**
    - (1) Everything IN Christ, which includes God (**COL 2:9; JOH 14:11**), all the elect (**EPH 1:4**), all spiritual blessings (**EPH 1:3**) and our eternal inheritance (**EPH 1:11**) will be gathered together and never again separated.
    - (2) The heavenly angels will also be part of this gathering. **HEB 12:22-23 REV 7:9-12; 19:10 c/w EPH 3:15.**
    - (3) The scattering effect of sin will then be completely eliminated.
  - h. All of this gathering together in Christ is owing to His agony and death of the cross. Christ endured the judgment of being separated, broken and scattered that we might be *gathered together in one*. **JOH 11:49-52.**
    - (1) His disciples were scattered from Him. **MAT 26:31, 56.**
    - (2) His body was broken. **1CO 11:23-24.**
    - (3) His bones were out of joint. **PSA 22:14.**
    - (4) His blood was shed, separated from His body. **MAT 26:28.**
    - (5) His heart was broken. **PSA 69:20.**
    - (6) He was forsaken of God. **MAT 27:46.**
    - (7) His soul was poured out unto death. **ISA 53:12.**
    - (8) His spirit departed from His body. **LUK 23:46.**
  - i. But Christ came back together in the resurrection and ascended to heaven to be rejoined with His Father.
    - (1) He is the firstfruits of them that sleep and our forerunner to glory. **1CO 15:20; HEB 6:20.**

- (2) He is the guarantee that all things in Him will be *gathered together in one*.
- D. James begins with how to properly respond to stress, which all believers face. **vs. 2-4.**
1. Until we are fully delivered from the general curse of Adam, we will groan in pain. **ROM 8:22-23 c/w REV 22:3.**
  2. James speaks of temptations that are to be received with joy and borne *patiently*.
    - a. Our tendency is to react to such temptations with *passion, panic* or *paralysis*.
    - b. Our attitude has much to do with our success or failure as maturing believers.
  3. tempt: I. To try, make trial of, put to the test or proof; to try the quality, worth, or truth of.  
II. To try to attract, to entice (a person) to do evil; to present attractions to the passions or frailties of; to allure or incite to evil with the prospect of some pleasure or advantage.
  4. There are three basic categories of temptations:
    - a. enticements to sin through lusts of the flesh. **JAM 1:14.**
    - b. provocations of God. **1CO 10:9; MAT 4:7.**
    - c. trial by testing or afflictions.  
**GEN 22:1 c/w HEB 11:17; DEU 8:2-3; GAL 4:13-14.**
      - (1) This kind of temptation may be counted *a joy* to fall into and is what James is obviously addressing by virtue of v. 3, "...the trying of your faith..."
      - (2) The other two should be counted *a fear* to fall into. **HEB 10:31.**
  5. Such temptations as James is considering are *divers*.
    - a. divers: Different or not alike in character or quality; not of the same kind.
    - b. Some of the Jewish Christians were sick. **JAM 5:13-14.**
    - c. Some had suffered reproach for their faith. **HEB 10:33.**
    - d. Some had suffered financial loss. **HEB 10:34.**
    - e. Some had been oppressed. **JAM 2:6.**
    - f. Some had been defrauded. **JAM 5:4 c/w 1CO 6:8.**
    - g. Some had suffered legal injustices. **JAM 5:6.**
    - h. Health issues, money issues, persecution, oppression, fraud, injustices: these remain our *divers* temptations!
    - i. **(PSA 34:19)** Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.
  6. Mind the expression, "...fall into..." (v. 2).
    - a. There are temptations we may *fall into* because of our faith or the everyday course of life in a broken world. **ACT 20:19, 22; LUK 10:30; 2KI 13:14.**
    - b. There are other temptations we may *fall into* because of poor judgment on our own part. **PRO 19:3; 1TI 6:9.**
    - c. Suffice it to say that the only proper rejoicing when poor judgment causes us to fall into temptation is after repentance. **2CO 7:9.**
    - d. Mind also that "fall into" is not "dive into." We are not justified in continually forbidding ourselves that which God has given us to enjoy under color of attaining a higher spirituality and so put ourselves into a temptation by a false affliction.
      - (1) Paul condemns such false religious asceticism. **COL 2:20-23.**
      - (2) Such unnatural proscriptions are of the wrong spirit! **1TI 4:1-3.**
      - (3) Deliberate restrictions of blessed natural pleasures are only to be temporary. **1CO 7:5.**
  7. Peter likewise refers to these temptations as cause for rejoicing. **1PE 1:5-9.**
    - a. They are indeed *divers*: "...manifold temptations..." **(1PE 1:6).**
    - b. They may be necessary: "if need be..." **(1PE 1:6).**

- (1) We are not well-suited for unalloyed joy, ease and exaltation in this life.
- (2) These afflictions save us from undue exaltation and from independence from God and His grace. **GEN 32:32 c/w 2CO 12:7-10.**
- c. They do produce heaviness (**1PE 1:6**) but not a heaviness without hope, purpose or end.
  - (1) They are "...for a season..." and relatively light. **2CO 4:17.**
  - (2) The sufferings of hell and the lake of fire are neither temporary nor light. **REV 14:11; 20:10, 15.**
  - (3) These facts alone are cause for rejoicing!
- d. We should therefore rejoice in divers temptations because:
  - (1) we deserve eternal torment, not temporary affliction!
  - (2) eternal life is secured for us by God and not imperiled by our present troubles. It is well with our souls. **1PE 1:5.**
  - (3) we have opportunity to partake in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. **PHIL 3:10.**
  - (4) momentary affliction is nothing compared with eternal glory. **ROM 8:18.**
  - (5) our faith is being tried in order to purify it for Christ's glory. **1PE 1:7.**
  - (6) our reward is great in heaven. **LUK 6:22-23.**
  - (7) it provides opportunity to know our foundation and depth. **MAT 7:24-25; LUK 8:13-15.**
  - (8) it gives God occasion to reprove Satan. **JOB 2:3.**
  - (9) it provides opportunity for the encouragement of others' faith. **PHIL 1:12-14.**
  - (10) "...the trying of your faith worketh patience" (v. 3).
- e. A faith that collapses under pressure is not a strong faith. **PRO 24:10.**
- 8. If we know the purpose for the temptation / trial of faith is to work patience in us to bring us to completion, we can count it all joy. **vs. 3-4.**
  - a. patience: The suffering or enduring (of pain, trouble, or evil) with calmness and composure; the quality or capacity of so suffering or enduring.
  - b. Mind the phrase, "...knowing this..." (v. 3). This is not speculation.
    - (1) It is known by revelation. God has declared His purpose for such trials. **DEU 8:2-3, 16; PSA 119:67, 71, 75; JOH 15:2.**
    - (2) It is known by revelation that trials are designed to work patience, experience and hope which "...maketh not ashamed..." (**ROM 5:3-5 c/w PHIL 1:20**).
    - (3) If we have done good and yet undergo such trials, we need not be asking ourselves, "Why does this have to happen to me?" We should know better.
  - c. The trial works patience by giving us an occasion to continue in our faith despite the pressure to deny it.
  - d. We would never know patience if we had no troubles!
  - e. Patient saints keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus rather than abandoning them under pressure. **REV 14:12.**
  - f. True patience is continuing in *well doing*. **ROM 2:7.**
    - (1) That one is to patiently *continue* in well doing implies that a trial neither initiates nor terminates the well doing.
    - (2) The trial may indeed be *because* of well doing. **1PE 2:19.**
    - (3) This kind of patience is commendable and stands in opposition to suffering patiently when buffeted for our faults. **1PE 2:20.**

- g. It is in this patient continuance that we have the assurance that we are the children of God bound for eternal glory. **COL 1:21-23; 1JO 2:19.**
- 9. Patience has its perfect (fully accomplished) work when we are "...perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (v. 4).
  - a. We are thus when we stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. **COL 4:12.**
    - (1) We are doing whatsoever the Lord commands *without murmuring*. **PHIL 2:14.**
    - (2) We are "...blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke..." (**PHIL 2:15**).
  - b. Mind that the goal is the *perfect man*, i.e., the fully formed, mature believer.
    - (1) The perfect man offends not in word. **JAM 3:2.**
    - (2) How often do we fail by immediately reacting to pressure with offensive words!
    - (3) (**JAM 1:19**) Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:
    - (4) If we would let patience have her perfect work, our mouth is a good place to let her start. And this means a reform of the heart. **MAT 12:34.**
  - c. This work will go until the coming of the Lord. **JAM 5:7.**
  - d. The man who brings forth fruit with patience is in contrast to the man brings forth no fruit unto perfection. **LUK 8:14-15.**
  - e. When you emerge from under the pressure with the same faith, only improved, patience is having her perfect work.
- 10. Thus, our response to stress is to be one of joy and patience.
- 11. If we respond to trials with bitterness, murmuring, rebellion or desertion, this reveals that faith is very weak or even false.
- 12. (**IPE 5:10**) But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.
- 13. (**JOB 23:10**) But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.
- 14. (**JAM 1:12**) Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

**vs. 5-8.**

- A. Having encouraged the believers to expect and bear patiently the pressures that might challenge their steadfastness of faith, James points them to *wisdom*.
  - 1. wisdom: Capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct; soundness of judgment in the choice of means and ends; sometimes, less strictly, sound sense, esp. in practical affairs.
  - 2. Obviously, strength is needed to bear something. **NEH 4:10; ROM 15:1.**
  - 3. Wisdom accords with and increases strength. **PRO 24:5; ECC 7:19.**
  - 4. Those who are filled with God's wisdom are thus "...Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;" (**COL 1:9-11**).
  - 5. The wicked rich who might well be clinging to old notions that material wealth is a security against trouble were missing the reality. **JAM 5:1-6 c/w PSA 73:3-12.**
    - a. The rich think their wealth is their defence. **PRO 18:11.**
    - b. They are seldom short of "friends." **PRO 14:20.**
    - c. They can buy judgment. **MIC 3:8-12.**

- d. They can buy the best of anything and hire the best for anything.
  - e. But their riches profit not in the day of wrath. **PRO 11:4 c/w 2CH 16:12.**
    - (1) How many wealthy people would have given their entire fortune for deliverance from sickness or death?
    - (2) If all a man has is material wealth in such times, he has not much.
  - f. Money is a defence but it pales in comparison to wisdom. **ECC 7:12; PRO 16:16.**
  - g. How many have had wealth but no wisdom?! It is well said that *a fool and his money are soon parted*. **PRO 20:21; 13:11.**
6. Wisdom, not wealth, brings life to its fullest potential. **PRO 4:7-13.**
- a. As the believer grows in God's wisdom, he sees the bigger picture of the divers temptations of this world into which he falls: the patient perfecting of his faith to be rewarded at Christ's coming. **1PE 1:7.**
  - b. He sees Jesus Christ "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (**COL 3:3**) as the supreme model of living godly, suffering patiently and winning.
  - c. He learns to "Rejoice in the Lord always..." (**PHIL 4:4**) and so builds strength since "...the joy of the LORD is your strength" (**NEH 8:10**).
  - d. He is increasingly able to be a good example to the less wise, harmlessly. **JAM 3:13; MAT 10:16.**
  - e. It is the *faithful* and *wise* servant that excels. **MAT 24:45.**
- B. Mind some observations about v. 5.
1. Some believers may lack wisdom but it is not necessarily an irremediable condition.
  2. There is a resource of wisdom available: God. **JAM 1:17.**
    - a. God has recorded this wisdom in the Scriptures. **PSA 19:7.**
    - b. The Scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation. **2TI 3:15.**
  3. God is ready and willing to give this wisdom indiscriminately and *liberally* (bountifully, freely, generously). **1KI 3:5-13 c/w PSA 84:11; PSA 81:10.**
  4. This wisdom is given upon asking, a conditional giving. **MAT 7:7 c/w JAM 4:2.**
  5. God is not going to be upset because you have had to ask for wisdom. **JER 33:2-3.**
  6. This wisdom SHALL be given because God is faithful (**JAM 1:17**) but:
    - a. there are qualifications. **vs. 6-8.**
    - b. it is not implied that it happens all at once. **PRO 4:18.**
  7. When under pressure, pray for wisdom, get into God's word and hear it preached.
    - a. You will find the words of comfort and hope you need to bear up under trial.
      - (1) Maybe you have suffered a great injustice for doing good but you remember how Joseph held faithful until God exalted him. **GEN 45:5-8 c/w ISA 66:5.**
      - (2) Perhaps God allowed a tragedy in your life but you remember Job's resolve under pressure to trust God and he was eventually exalted. **JOB 13:15; JOB 42:12 c/w JAM 5:11.**
    - b. The Lord Jesus in His agonies clung to God's words and commended His spirit in trust to the Father. **ACT 2:25-28; LUK 23:46.**
  8. This heavenly wisdom consists of elements that make for a settled soul and a robust church. **JAM 3:17.**
- C. Only those who *ask in faith without any wavering* will receive this wisdom. **vs. 6-8 c/w MAR 11:23-24; 1JO 5:14-15.**
1. If one does not believe in God's existence, he is worse off than a devil (**JAM 2:19**) and wasting his time. **HEB 11:6.**
    - a. Creation, revelation, reason and experience confirm God's existence. **ROM 1:18-20.**

- b. If you are weak in the knowledge of the proofs of God's existence, this does not mean that you are denying His existence. Make inquiry of someone who knows these proofs and familiarize yourself with them.
2. waverer: One who wavers; one who is undecided or vacillates in opinion or choice; one who falters in allegiance....
- a. The Greek underlying “nothing wavering” (v. 6) is translated “doubting nothing” in **ACT 10:20**.
- b. Doubting is the antithesis of believing. **ROM 14:22-23**.
- c. When Israel out of fear and self-interest doubted that God would honor His promise to give them Canaan, they were charged with *unbelief* and *despising the reward*. **PSA 106:24**.
- (1) If you doubt that God is going to give you wisdom according to His promise when you ask and study, you are essentially despising the reward of wisdom.
- (2) Don't then be surprised if wisdom eludes you (**PRO 14:6 c/w 2TI 3:7**): “For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord” (v. 7).
- (3) Don't then be surprised if you do not process a trial of faith correctly and so abandon the faith under pressure. **MAT 13:20-21**.
3. The waverer is described as a “...double minded man...” (v. 8).
- a. double-minded: Having two 'minds'; undecided or wavering in mind.
- b. He can't decide if God is or is not, whether God will honor His promises or not, whether submission to His will is worth it or not.
- c. He is unlike Abraham who in the face of the impossible “...staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith...” (**ROM 4:17-21**).
- d. Underlying this condition is a heart in need of purification: there is a sin problem that needs to be addressed. **JAM 4:7-8**.
- e. The double minded man is *unstable in all his ways*, and the unstable man will *not excel*. **GEN 49:4**.
- (1) The instability will manifest itself in every facet of his Christian experience.
- (2) He will be as shifting as “...a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (v. 6), “...given to change...” (**PRO 24:21**).
- (3) He will not be a compass but a weathervane. **EPH 4:14 c/w 2CO 11:3-4**.
- (4) Satan beguiles unstable souls. **2PE 2:14**.
4. This speaks to the importance of being established / stablished in the faith. **ACT 16:5; COL 2:7; JAM 5:8**.
- a. There come various times when we are called upon to cease from *halting between two opinions*. **1KI 18:21**.
- b. establish: To render stable or firm....To confirm, settle (what is weak or wavering).
- c. Satan will do everything possible to con you into not trusting God to honor His word.
- (1) Counter those tempting doubts with “It is written...” as did Jesus. **MAT 4:4**.
- (2) “God said it; I believe it; that settles it!”
- d. We are to strive to be *steadfast* and *unmoveable* (**1CO 15:58**) in our faith in God because He is faithful that promised. **HEB 10:23**.
- e. It is in continued steadfastness that we are assured of being partakers of Christ. **HEB 3:14**.

vs. 9-11.

- A. These verses set forth the practical outworking of **LUK 1:52**, the denial of class superiority or privilege among the true servants of God. Set forth here are the *rich poor* and the *poor rich*.
1. The “brother of low degree” is a poor man by virtue of his contrast with “the rich.” (c/w **1CH 17:17**). Mind, though, that he is “a BROTHER.”
  2. Rich and poor are “...altogether lighter than vanity...” (**PSA 62:9-10**).
  3. One has not more holiness or claim on God because of riches or poverty.
    - a. There is no respect of persons with God. **ROM 2:11**.
    - b. Partiality in judgment must not be shown to rich or poor. **LEV 19:15**.
    - c. God is no more partial to rich or poor than is the grave.
      - (1) “Pale death, with impartial step, knocks at the poor man's cottage and the palaces of kings.” (Horace, *Odes*, 1, 4)
      - (2) *Mors sceptrum ligonibus aequat* / Death blends the sceptre with the spade.
      - (3) (**LUK 16:22**) And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;
  4. The obverse is also true: in Christ, one has no *less* holiness or claim on God because of poverty or riches.
- B. These verses counter the “gain is godliness” error which is the perverse disputing of corrupt, truth-less men. **1TI 6:5-6**.
- C. The Jewish Christians were decidedly astray in this area, showing partiality to the rich. **JAM 2:1-5**.
1. One reason men do this is because of hopes of personal advantage. **JUDE 1:16**.
  2. Another reason for this is that “gain is godliness” error: the assumption that material prosperity implies one's superior spirituality and therefore preeminence among the saints.
    - a. Were not Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David and Solomon all men of high degree? Yes, but what about those others that are noted in **HEB 11:37-38**?
    - b. This equating of riches with godliness was so pervasive in the Jewish culture that Christ's disciples were once amazed that it was not truly so. **MAR 10:23-26**.
    - c. The “righteous” Pharisees deemed gold greater than God's temple. **MAT 23:16**.
  3. The irony is that they were *despising the poor* among themselves in deference to the very people who were their own chief oppressors. **JAM 2:6, 14-16**.
    - a. The Corinthians were by their profligacy *shaming* the “have nots.” **1CO 11:22**.
    - b. (**PRO 17:5**) Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.
  4. Contrary to the assumption that the men of high degree have some kind of inherent superiority in all things, Paul wrote, “...set them to judge who are LEAST ESTEEMED in the church” (**1CO 6:4**). The believer of low degree has as much right to vote in church matters as does the believer of high degree.
  5. In Christ, all false distinctions are forbidden. Partaking of Him knows nothing of national, racial, genealogical, social, financial, external or sexual barriers or classes. **GAL 3:28; 5:6; COL 3:11; 1TI 1:4; 6:2**.
    - a. One may not have had the spiritual gift of tongues that another had and so was *unlearned* in that sense (**1CO 14:16**) but every bit as much a partaker of Christ.
    - b. The *more feeble* and *uncomely parts* of the church body ALL drink of the Spirit, God tempering them together. **1CO 12:13, 21-25**.
- D. These Christians were also at strife among themselves through lust and *envy*. **JAM 4:1-5**.
1. envy: The feeling of displeasure and ill-will at the superiority of (another person) in happiness, success, reputation, or the possession of anything desirable.
  2. *Envy and strife* walk with *confusion and evil works*. **JAM 3:16**.

3. (PRO 27:4) Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?
  4. Few things destroy spiritual harmony and peace in a church as easily as envy.
- E. The wicked rich were financially exploiting their poor brethren, finding the Christian cause to be a fertile ground for covetous gain. **JAM 5:4 c/w 2PE 2:3.**
- F. Some were boasting about their commercial schemes. **JAM 4:13-16.**
1. Mind the peripatetic mentality of the commerce-oriented crowd (**JAM 4:13**). Where was their allegiance to the assembly to which they were joined?
  2. The multiplying of Jewish churches "...throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria..." (**ACT 9:31**) conveniently accommodated those who wanted the best of both worlds: they could transfer from church to church for commercial advantage while maintaining an outward propriety.
- G. Against the errors of class struggle, class preference, covetousness and envy, etc., James sets forth a better way in **JAM 1:9-11.**
1. Remembering that James is dealing with the trials of faith / temptations that are to be *counted as joy and endured*. **vs. 1, 12.**
  2. Material wealth may be a trial of faith.
    - a. The trial may be a matter of one's attitude: will his wealth puff him up with pride and assumed power (**PRO 18:23**) or can he *condescend* (to come or bend down, so far as a particular action is concerned, from one's position of dignity or pride; to stoop voluntarily and graciously; to deign) *to men of low estate*? **ROM 12:16.**
    - b. The trial may be a matter of how he handles his wealth: will he hoard it or be willing to share it in an act of mercy to a genuinely poor brother? **JAM 2:13-17.**
    - c. The trial may be a matter of loss: has he really counted all things loss for Christ or will he cast off faith when hard times come? **PHIL 3:7 c/w HEB 10:34-35.**
    - d. It takes a good, honest heart to not be thwarted in faith by riches. **LUK 8:14-15.**
  3. Poverty may be a trial of faith.
    - a. The trial may be a matter of whether one will steal. **PRO 30:8-9.**
    - b. The trial may be a matter of envy or covetousness. **ROM 13:9.**
    - c. The trial may be a matter of faulty cost analysis: will one return to former folly because it seemed to pay better? **JER 44:18 c/w HEB 10:38-39.**
    - d. The trial may be a matter of faith and patience: will one labor patiently, honestly and diligently to build wealth (**MAT 25:19-20**), trusting God to honor his putting God's kingdom and righteousness first (**MAT 6:33**), or perhaps even waiting unto the coming of the Lord Jesus? **JAM 5:7.**
  4. Whether rich or poor, if one's *love* is money, evil follows. **1TI 6:9-10.**
  5. James is giving a lesson in learning contentment in *abundance* or *abasement*. c/w **PHIL 4:11-13.**
    - a. One may be poor in stuff yet rich spiritually. **REV 2:9.**
    - b. One may rich in stuff yet poor spiritually. **REV 3:17.**
    - c. If you could only pick "a" or "b" above, pick "a."
    - d. But James is setting forth a means whereby a believer may be rich spiritually and genuinely rejoicing whether he is materially rich or poor.
  6. The poor should *rejoice in that he is exalted*. **v. 9.**
    - a. exalted: Raised up or set up on high; elevated.
    - b. He is raised up to heaven in Christ. **EPH 2:6-7.**
    - c. He is made to sit among princes. **PSA 113:7-8.**
    - d. He is a king and priest to God. **REV 1:6.**
    - e. He is rich in faith and an heir of the kingdom. **JAM 2:5 c/w 1CO 1:26-29.**

- f. The true riches are not of this world. **LUK 16:11.**
- 7. The rich should rejoice *in that he is made low*. **v. 10.**
  - a. His riches might well have been a bar to his entering the kingdom. **MAR 10:23-25.**
  - b. His riches can do nothing for him in eternity (**PSA 49:17**). He has no advantage over the poor believer in that regard.
  - c. He and his riches are as ephemeral as grass. **vs. 10-11.**
  - d. He should rejoice to be humbled by these realities.
    - (1) He is made low if he becomes *little in his own sight*. c/w **1SAM 15:17.**
    - (2) God looks to the poor and contrite spirit. **ISA 66:2.**
    - (3) The poor in spirit possess the kingdom. **MAT 5:3.**
  - e. The rich who are not thus made low in this life have received all the consolation they shall ever receive. **LUK 6:24.**
- H. God's word is to be treasured more than the riches of this world since it endures. **1PE 1:24-25.**
- I. Unlike the grass and worldly riches, our heavenly inheritance does not fade away. **1PE 1:4.**
- J. Rather than strive for perishable riches, all should strive to be rich in faith and good works. **1TI 6:9, 17-19.**
- K. Only in such a spiritually-minded church may **PRO 22:2** be realized in peace.

## v.12.

- A. James pronounces blessing upon those who *endure* temptation.
  - 1. **bles**: To declare to be supernaturally favoured; to pronounce or make happy. To pronounce words that confer (or are held to confer) supernatural favour and well-being.
  - 2. Mind the verb tense, "Blessed IS..." Though there is a *future* promised crown, the blessedness is *current*.
    - a. Compare this with **MAT 5:3-12.**
    - b. Note especially **MAT 5:10-12.** Those who are tried because of righteousness are blessed now and have expectation of future reward.
    - c. Mind that there are two groups of whom Jesus said, "...theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (**MAT 5:3, 10**): the *poor in spirit*, and those *persecuted for righteousness' sake*. Humble sinners who trust God for righteousness and suffer for their faith are particularly noted to possess the kingdom of heaven.
  - 3. Mind that *to bless* includes "pronounce or make happy."
    - a. James later says, "Behold, we count them HAPPY which endure..." (**JAM 5:11**).
    - b. The blessedness is not to the man who *is exposed to* temptation, but to the man who *endures* temptation.
      - (1) Many are exposed to temptation/trial but do not endure. **MAT 13:20-22.**
      - (2) The blessed man for whom the crown awaits is the man who fights the good fight of faith to the end. **REV 2:10.**
      - (3) The word here translated as *tried* (*dokimos*, SRN G1384) is everywhere else translated as *approved* (proved or established by experience). The approved believer is one who endures the trial. c/w **1CO 11:19.**
- B. There is a connection of elements here: the man (believer) who endures temptation is one who loves the Lord.
  - 1. One's love of the Lord is in question if his faith caves in under pressure. Which did he love more: the Lord or his own welfare?
  - 2. Love is KEEPING God's commandments. **JOH 14:15, 21.**
  - 3. This promise is not to such as give up on the keeping of God's commandments.

4. Though Job was sorely tempted, he did not abandon faith. **JAM 5:11; JOB 13:15.**
- C. The blessing for the enduring believer is that a *crown of life* awaits a successful trial.
  1. crown: Something which occupies the position of a crown; the top or highest part of anything. *fig.* That which crowns anything; the crowning, consummation, completion or perfection.
  2. The crowning or perfection of a submitted life lived in faithful endurance of trials now is *everlasting life*. **MAT 19:29.**
  3. This crown will be received at Christ's appearing. **MAT 25:31-34, 46; ROM 2:5-7.**
  4. Everlasting life was secured by Christ for His elect. **JOH 17:3; 1JO 5:11.**
  5. Those who thus love the Lord show themselves to be the elect objects of His own purpose and grace which results in their glorification. **ROM 8:28-30 c/w 2TI 1:9.**
  6. This is a reward reckoned entirely of grace, not debt. The elect did nothing to earn it. **ROM 4:4; 6:23.**
- D. **(1CO 16:22)** If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.

**vs. 13-16.**

- A. Some had had weaknesses or failures in the pressures that James had just presented as being expected, enjoyable and endurable.
  1. The pressures were temptations in the sense of *trials of faith* as God had given Abraham. **GEN 22:1 c/w HEB 11:17.**
  2. The weaknesses or failures relative to those pressures would be temptations in the sense of *enticements to do evil*.
  3. James here shifts to counter any notion that since God authors the former kind (and is therefore responsible for them) that He also authors the latter kind (and is therefore responsible for them also).
- B. James is drawing clear lines between things that come from God above and things which do not.
  1. Enticements to do evil do NOT come from above.
  2. Sensual, carnal wisdom does NOT come from above. **JAM 3:14-15.**
  3. Every good and perfect gift, including divine wisdom, DOES come from above. **JAM 1:17; 3:17.**
  4. Our corrupt nature has a bent to pervert these simple facts: we naturally take credit for what good God alone has given us while holding Him responsible for the bad that we do. This is Adam's and Eve's legacy to their posterity. **GEN 3:6, 12.**
  5. **(PRO 15:24)** The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.
- C. God is not the source of moral evil. **1JO 2:16.**
  1. In this sense none can say, "...I am tempted of God..." (v. 13).
  2. "for God cannot be tempted with evil..." (v. 13).
    - a. God is uniquely and absolutely holy. **1SAM 2:2; 1JO 1:5.**
    - b. He abominates sin. **HAB 1:13; PSA 5:4-5.**
  3. "...neither tempteth he any man" (v. 13).
    - a. It never even enters His mind that men ought to sin. **JER 19:5.**
    - b. To make God the responsible source for temptation to sin is to equate Him with Satan who is the Tempter (**MAR 1:13**) and this equality is exactly what Satan desires! **ISA 14:14.**
  4. The culpability for yielding to temptation is NEVER God's; it is ALWAYS the creature's. **v. 14.**
    - a. It is by MAN that sin entered the world through Satan's temptation. **ROM 5:12.**

- b. It is always MAN that is responsible for yielding to temptation and therefore suffering the consequences. **PRO 5:22-23; 19:3; ECC 7:29; GAL 2:18.**
  - c. Sinners "...perish in their own corruption" (**2PE 2:12**).
  - d. (**JAM 4:1**) From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?
- D. It is true that God has created all that gives occasion to sin.
- 1. He created Lucifer (who became Satan, the tempting devil). **EZE 28:13.**
  - 2. He made man a morally accountable being with rational capacity to choose. **GEN 2:16-17.**
  - 3. He is the Lawgiver (**JAM 4:12**) and without Law there could be no sin. **1JO 3:4 c/w ROM 4:15.**
    - a. The law was holy, just and good. **ROM 7:12-13.**
    - b. The fault was not with God or His law but with man. **ROM 8:3; HEB 8:7-8.**
- E. The idea of making God responsible for temptation was posited by a poet and rebuffed by a poet.
- 1. "I saw thy pulse's maddening play  
Wild send thee pleasure's devious way,  
Misled by fancy meteor ray,  
By passion driven:  
But yet the light that led astray  
Was light from heaven."  
(*The Vision*, Robert Burns)
  - 2. "It could not be; no light from heaven  
Has ever led astray:  
Its constant stars to guide are given,  
And never to betray.
- When passion drives to wild excess,  
And folly wakes to shame,  
It cannot make the madness less  
To cast on heaven the blame.
- The light that seemed to shine on high,  
And led thee on to sin,  
Was but reflected to thine eye  
From passion's fire within.
- O spurn the guilty thought away!  
Eternity will tell,  
That every light that led astray  
Was light that shone from hell."  
(Rev. James D. Burns)
- F. If God is the source of temptation to do evil, then it could be argued that when one yields to the temptation, he is actually doing God's will.
- 1. If one is doing God's will, why would He find fault? **ROM 3:5.**
  - 2. If one is doing God's will, he "...abideth for ever" (**1JO 2:17**). Sin, therefore, is as much an evidence of eternal life as faith and righteousness.
  - 3. One might even say, "...Let us do evil, that good may come..." (**ROM 3:8**).
    - a. Sin does NOT work for one's good. It is NOT one of those things that "...work together for good to them that love God..." (**ROM 8:28**).

- b. Sin separates one from God. **ISA 59:2.**
  - c. Sin withholds good things from us. **JER 5:25.**
  - d. The flesh and the spirit are “...contrary the one to the other...” (**GAL 5:17**).
  - e. (**ISA 5:20**) Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!
- G. Temptation is owing to one being “...drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (**JAM 1:14**).
- 1. Being drawn away implies deception. **JOS 8:16.**
  - 2. This is the very nature of carnal lusts: they are deceitful. **EPH 4:22.**
  - 3. entice: To stir up; incite, instigate (to a course of action); also to provoke (to anger). *Obs.*  
2. To allure, attract by the offer of pleasure or advantage; *esp.* to allure insidiously or adroitly.
    - a. allure: To attract by the offer of some advantage or pleasure; to tempt by something flattering or acceptable; to entice; to win over.
    - b. insidious: Full of wiles or plots; lying in wait or seeking to entrap or ensnare; proceeding or operating secretly or subtly so as not to excite suspicion; sly, treacherous, deceitful, underhand, artful, cunning.
    - c. Satan is *full of wiles*; he has many *fiery darts* (**EPH 6:16**) of lust burning in us.
  - 4. This is how sin overcomes us: it has an ally in the flesh (lust) that deceives us into seeing and preferring the perceived advantage of yielding.
    - a. A temptation to sin would have no power to entice us if we had no lust for the thing presented in the temptation.
    - b. Jesus Christ alone could say that Satan “...hath nothing in me” (**JOH 14:30**).
    - c. NOTE: The enticement may be presented as something that satisfies a genuine human need: perhaps hunger, security, housing, love, sex, significance, etc.
      - (1) Our needs do not determine the rightness or wrongness of an action.
      - (2) Our God determines the rightness or wrongness of an action by His law.
      - (3) Our God knows our needs/cares and requires us to seek satisfaction by right priorities and actions. **MAT 6:31-33.**
      - (4) Our God is able to “...supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (**PHIL 4:18**).
      - (5) It was by a foolish independence from God for the sake of human need and desire that Satan beguiled Eve. **GEN 3:6.**
  - 5. The image here set forth in **vs. 14-15** is as the strange woman who entices a man into sexual sin. **PRO 7:6-23.**
    - a. Lust is as dangerous as a harlot who offers pleasurable “advantages.”
    - b. “He goeth after her straightway...” (**PRO 7:22**) c/w “...led away with divers lusts...” (**2TI 3:6**).
    - c. Corrupt men in general know full well how to “...allure through the lusts of the flesh...” (**2PE 2:18**).
- H. It is NOT a sin to be tempted or feel a lust.
- 1. If that were the case, then Christ was a sinner. **HEB 4:15.**
  - 2. The sin occurs when the lust draws us away from what is right and we become enticed, the point where we are *stirred up and attracted to action* by the sinful proposition.
  - 3. This is the womb of sin: the evil concupiscence (vehement desire) in the lusts of the heart. **MAT 5:28.**
  - 4. Lust has conceived at this point, per **v. 15**.
  - 5. What follows is sin and death. **v. 15.**
  - 6. This is why it is critical to not indulge lust since it will draw the soul away into sin.

- a. Sin is obeyed in its lusts. **ROM 6:12.**
  - b. Flee lusts at their inception rather than let them mature. **2TI 2:22.**
  - c. The Jewish rabbin even note: “Evil concupiscence is, at the beginning, like the thread of a spider’s web; afterwards it is like a cart rope.” (Sanhedrim, fol. 99)
- I. **v. 15** sets forth the genealogy of death.
- 1. Lust conceives and brings forth sin.
  - 2. Sin brings forth death.
  - 3. This is not an *endless genealogy* (**1TI 1:4**). It has an end: death. **EZE 18:4; ROM 6:21-23.**
  - 4. This is a stark contrast to the *crown of life* which is the end of faithfulness. **v. 12.**
- J. Spiritual death, bodily death, death to fellowship and eternal death all result from sin.
- 1. Indulged lust will deceive you to death.
  - 2. This is why evil desire must be mortified before it causes us to be mortified. **COL 3:5.**
- K. This instruction concurs with the bigger picture of the epistle.
- 1. If believers would be perfect and have a profitable religion, they must deal with sin.
  - 2. They must accept responsibility for sin and not charge it upon God.
  - 3. Sin must be dealt with at the level of the lust.
  - 4. Errors as to the cause and progression of sin will only weaken resistance to it.
- L. (**JAM 1:16**) Do not err, my beloved brethren.

**vs. 17-18.**

- A. Having just made clear that God is not the origin of temptation and sin (evil), James presents God as being the origin of “Every good gift and every perfect gift...” (**v. 17**).
- 1. Adam gave us sin, death, shame, sorrow and the curse (**GEN 3; ROM 5:12-19**), hardly what could be called *good* and *perfect* gifts. Those are evil gifts from below, not above.
  - 2. From God above comes *every good gift* and *every perfect gift*.
    - a. That there are *good* gifts implies that they please God and benefit us.
    - b. That there are *perfect* (complete) gifts implies that there are gifts to which nothing is to be added or taken away as if they were deficient in some way, nor do they come by degrees.
    - c. Jesus argued from the lesser to the greater in showing God's willingness to give good things unto His children, specifically the Holy Spirit. **MAT 7:11 c/w LUK 11:13.**
    - d. Wisdom is one of those good gifts from above. **JAM 1:5.**
      - (1) Heavenly wisdom is “...first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (**JAM 3:17**).
      - (2) Such gifts are essentially the fruit of the Spirit. **GAL 5:22-23.**
      - (3) Such gifts are also *perfect* gifts; they are not deficient: “...against such there is no law” (**GAL 5:23**).
  - 3. Since every good and perfect gift to us is from God, we must not boast as if we had not received them. **JOH 3:27; 1CO 4:17.**
    - a. Righteousness and eternal life are gifts from God above (**ISA 54:17; ROM 6:23; 1JO 5:11**); they are not rewards we earn by works below. Boasting is thus excluded. **ROM 3:27.**
    - b. Church offices are gifts from God above (**EPH 4:10-11**) and but for God's enabling, mercy and grace no man would hold such an office. **1TI 1:12-14.**

- c. Other spiritual gifts are from God above and it was therefore vainglorious of the Corinthians to exploit them for personal reasons. **1CO 14:26.**
  - 4. The good and perfect gifts from God stand in opposition to *false gifts* that some pretend to have received from Him. **PRO 25:14 c/w JER 23:32; ACT 19:13-16; REV 2:2.**
- B. These things come from God, "...the Father of lights..." (v. 17).
  - 1. God is the Father of natural lights (**PSA 136:7-9**). Certainly no other begat them. **JOB 38:28.**
  - 2. God is the Father of spiritual lights.
    - a. He gave His word which is light. **PSA 68:11; 119:105.**
    - b. He gave prophets and apostles as lights. **JOH 5:35; 2CO 4:6; 2PE 1:19.**
    - c. He gave His church to be light to a dark world. **MAT 5:14; PHIL 2:15.**
    - d. He gave His Son Who is the true light. **MAL 4:2; JOH 1:9; 8:12.**
  - 3. (**1JO 1:5**) This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.
    - a. This counters the objection, "If God is good, why is there so much evil?"
    - b. God is no more the cause or source of evil than the sun is the cause or source of darkness every night or during an eclipse.
- C. Light suggests righteousness while darkness suggests unrighteousness. **JOH 3:19-21; EPH 5:8-11.**
  - 1. James is adamant that God is the Source and Giver of all things good.
    - a. He deserves all credit for any and all genuine good, including our righteousness. **2CO 5:21.**
    - b. The Creator of all good things is also Savior (**ISA 45:18, 21**), for only a Creator could make new creatures in Christ. **2CO 5:17; EPH 2:8-10.**
  - 2. Sin is chargeable to us, not God. **JAM 1:13-14.**
- D. Unlike natural light, God is "...the Father of lights with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (v. 17).
  - 1. The celestial lights vary in intensity and life and have their "dark side."
  - 2. God is constant and eternal. **HEB 1:10-12.**
  - 3. His counsel is immutable (unchanging). **HEB 6:17.**
    - a. God never commands us not to sin only to turn and tempt us to sin.
    - b. He is not the author of confusion. **1CO 14:33.**
    - b. He is not double-minded. **JOB 23:13.**
  - 4. Thus, His saving Light excels natural light. **ISA 60:18-22.**
  - 5. Paul connects the unchangeableness of God with His gifts. **ROM 11:29.**
  - 6. Our security is owing to God's immutability. **MAL 3:6.**
- E. Since God is the source of all good, He only can be the source of the renewing of our nature. **v. 18.**
  - 1. This verse speaks of regeneration (the new birth).
    - a. We are "...by nature the children of wrath..." (**EPH 2:3**).
    - b. Our nature is averse to God and unable to please Him. **ROM 8:7-8.**
    - c. We have no capacity to change our nature. **JER 13:23; MAT 12:33-34.**
  - 2. Any change of our nature to good could only come from the Father of lights Who begets all things good. He begets men *of His own will*. **JOH 1:13.**
  - 3. God begets the elect *with the word of truth*.
    - a. There is a written word of truth but also a Personal Word of Truth. **JOH 1:1; 14:6.**
    - b. Jesus Christ is the Word by which we are begotten. **JOH 5:21, 25.**
    - c. He has power to make alive by His personal utterance. **JOH 11:43-44.**

- d. If John calls Christ "...the Word of life;" (**1JO 1:1**), why should it be thought strange if James calls him "...the word of truth..."?
  - (1) Let not the lower-case "w" in *word of truth* be a problem for you.
  - (2) The Person of Jesus Christ our High Priest is called the "word of God" in **HEB 4:12-14**.
4. God has begotten us with Christ "...that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."
  - a. The firstfruits were to be set apart for the Lord. **EXO 34:26; PRO 3:9**.
  - b. God's elect are especially set apart from amongst men for Himself (**DEU 32:7-9**); they are His *peculiar* (one's private possession) people. **TIT 2:14**.
  - c. God's firstfruits were redeemed *from* the earth and *from among* men. **REV 14:3-4 c/w 1CO 15:23**.
  - d. Mind that the Biblical classification of creatures is everything "...after his kind..." (**GEN 1**).
    - (1) Collectively, humanity is *mankind*. **JAM 3:7**.
    - (2) The distinction between the elect and the non-elect is described as a separation of *kinds* at Christ's Second Coming which is the general resurrection. **MAT 13:47-50 c/w JOH 5:28-29**.
    - (3) The elect are of the same *kind* as Christ "...the firstfruits of them that slept" (**1CO 15:20**), being begotten by God out of death in sin *with him* (**COL 2:13**) Who is "...the first begotten of the dead..." (**REV 1:5**).
    - (4) Christ was begotten from *physical* death by God by the Spirit (**ROM 8:11**) and God's elect are begotten from *spiritual* death by God by the Spirit (**JOH 3:5-7**). They are thus of the same *kind* and are the "...children of the resurrection" (**LUK 20:36**).
5. God's begetting of us by His own will delivers us from the uncontested mastery of sin so that we may live as sons of God ought to live. **PHIL 2:12-15**.
6. This is not only a good gift; it is a *perfect* gift: it is not in any way deficient nor gained by degrees. We are so made complete. **COL 2:10**.
  - a. Sin is begotten by *degrees* by the will of the *creature*. **JAM 1:14-15**.
  - b. The new birth is a begetting by *decree instantly and intact* by the will of the *Creator*.

**vs. 19-21.**

- A. These verses set forth the logical progression of James' preceding remarks about owning up to sin and owning God as the Giver of one's regeneration.
  1. Mind the connective "wherefore" in **vs. 19, 21**.
  2. God's making us His own is a making of us a holy people by a change of our nature. **EPH 4:24**.
  3. Because we have such a new nature, we are called to holiness. **1PE 1:15**.
  4. The new birth makes practical holiness *possible* and *requisite*.
  5. Holiness gives one assurance of seeing God favorably. **HEB 12:14**.
- B. There is a broad application of **v. 19** that speaks to proper Christian speech and temper:
  1. (**PRO 18:21**) Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.
  2. (**PRO 21:23**) Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.
  3. (**PRO 14:17**) He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

4. (PRO 14:29) He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.
  5. (PRO 18:13) He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.
  6. (PRO 10:19) In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.
  7. (PRO 29:20) Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.
  8. (PRO 16:32) He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.
  9. (PRO 25:28) He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.
  10. (PRO 19:11) The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.
  11. (ECC 7:9) Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.
  12. (MAT 5:22) But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.
  13. (1CO 13:5) Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;
  14. (EPH 4:26) Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:
- B. James leads his exhortation with "...let every man be swift to hear..." (v. 19).
1. Discernment is needed here. PRO 19:27.
  2. We ought NOT be swift to hear:
    - a. lies. PRO 17:4.
    - b. filthy communication. COL 3:8.
    - c. heresies. ROM 16:17-18; 2TI 2:16-18.
    - d. backbiting. PRO 25:23.
    - e. fables. TIT 1:14.
  3. We ought to be swift to hear truth, even uncomfortable truth. PRO 8:32-36; 13:1.
  4. It is in hearing that believers are saved. 1TI 4:16.
  5. It is the rebel that will not hear. ISA 30:9.
    - a. This condition is owing to a hardened heart. ZEC 7:11-12.
    - b. If we will not hear God, God will not hear us. ZEC 7:13; PRO 28:9.
    - c. Those who refuse to hear will NOT escape. ACT 3:22-23; HEB 12:25.
  6. Being swift to hear rather than speak would have been beneficial in their assemblies. ECC 5:1 c/w 1CO 14:26.
- C. Against the weaknesses of the old man, James exhorts the believers to meekly receive the word of God. v. 21.
1. As the rest of the chapter shows, this *word of God* is gospel instruction: God's law which a man may *hear* but not *do*. JAM 1:22-23.
    - a. It is the *hearing* of the word that is of primary concern here. v. 19.
    - b. Since faith comes by *hearing the word* (ROM 10:17), one reluctant to hear it starves the growth of his faith.
    - c. Those who were hardened against the word "...stopped their ears..." (ACT 7:57).
  2. The word of God often reproves, corrects and rebukes. 2TI 3:16; 4:2.
  3. It pricks the heart where it needs pricking. ACT 2:37.
  4. As such, it can cause the flesh to *kick against the pricks*. ACT 9:5.

5. One who treasures his *filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness* (v. 21) more than holiness might not be *swift to hear*, might not be *slow to speak* against it, and might not be *slow to wrath* in reacting to it.
    - a. This instruction was particularly important for a people whose history was one of *gainsaying* (denying, speaking against, contradicting) the preached word which condemned them. **ROM 10:21.**
    - b. Such unbridled speech evinces a deceived heart and vain religion. **JAM 1:26.**
    - c. Israel was often guilty of reacting to the truth with wrath against the prophet or teacher. **LUK 4:24-29; ACT 7:51-58.**
  6. A wrathful reaction to the word of God "...worketh not the righteousness of God" (v. 20).
    - a. It is the fear of God's wrath that works the righteousness of God, not the wrath of man who rejects the word of God. **HEB 10:24-27; ACT 10:35.**
    - b. Cain reacted in wrath to God's rebuke and slew Abel. **GEN 4:5-8.**
    - c. Cain had previously rejected God's instruction concerning worship, not offering by faith as did Abel. **GEN 4:3-5 c/w HEB 11:4.**
    - d. Religion is to be performed "...without wrath and doubting" (**1TI 2:8**).
    - e. "Dr. Manton here says of some assemblies, 'That if we were as swift to hear as we are ready to speak there would be less of wrath, and more of profit, in our meetings.'" (Matthew Henry's Commentary)
    - f. Being slow to wrath would also apply to the way in which one reacts to the disobedience or provocation of others. **2TI 2:24-26; 1CO 13:5.**
      - (1) Israel provoked Moses to a hasty, wrathful reaction. **PSA 106:32-33.**
      - (2) Moses' wrath did not work the righteousness of God; God was willing to give the congregation the water they desired. **NUM 20:8.**
  7. We ought to meekly receive the truth in all circumstances, especially when it exposes and condemns our unholiness. **PSA 141:5; PRO 9:8.**
  8. (**JAM 3:14**) But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.
- D. In order to meekly receive the word, one must "...lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness..." (v. 21). c/w **2CO 7:1.**
1. filthiness: Moral corruption or pollution; obscenity; vileness, wickedness.
  2. superfluity: Superabundant supply, superabundance; the condition of there being (or of one's having) more than enough; an instance of this.
  3. naughtiness: a. Wickedness, viciousness, depravity. b. Waywardness, disobedience.
  4. We have plenty of naughtiness; we are not called only to lay apart *some* of it but ALL of it.
  5. Sin must be laid aside to make room for the word. **1PE 2:1-2.**
    - a. God's order is "...repent ye, and believe..." (**MAR 1:15**).
    - b. Those who prefer unrighteousness to truth will receive delusion. **2TH 2:10-12.**
- E. Mind that this is instruction to *saints* to "...receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (v. 21).
1. meekness: Gentleness of spirit; humility.
    - a. Meekness speaks of lowliness and submissiveness. **MAT 21:5 c/w ZEC 9:9; 1PE 3:4-5.**
    - b. God teaches the meek but resists the proud. **PSA 25:9; JAM 4:6.**
  2. This salvation is obviously not *eternal* salvation since he is addressing already begotten brethren (v. 18) with the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. **JAM 2:1.**
  3. This must be *temporal* salvation through proper response to the truth, by which a *brother's soul* can be saved from death. **JAM 5:19-20.**

- a. He may be saved from death in carnality. **1TI 5:6 c/w ROM 8:6.**
- b. He may be saved from death of fellowship with the Father.  
**1CO 5:5 c/w LUK 15:24.**
- c. He may even be saved from the death of the body by God's wrath. **ACT 5:1-5.**
- d. There are other salvations that come by meek receiving of truth: from ignorance, fear, deception, spiritual immaturity, sin's pull on the soul, etc.
- e. God was always said to "...command deliverances for Jacob" (**PSA 44:4**).
- 4. This word to be received is *engrafted*.
  - a. engraft: To graft in; to insert (a scion of one tree) as a graft into or upon (another).
  - b. This word is in the past tense: *engrafted*. What believers are commanded to receive has already been graft into them. **HEB 8:10; ROM 10:8.**
- 5. James thus concurs with Paul, who endured "...all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (**2TI 2:10**).
- 6. For the Jews of James' day who longed for liberty, he presents them the one genuine path to liberty: truth. **JOH 8:31-32.**

**vs. 22-25.**

- A. James escalates from the importance of *hearing* the word (**vs. 19-21**) to the next level of *doing* the word.
  - 1. This theme is enlarged upon in the next chapter where he rebukes the vain man for the absence of good works. **JAM 2:20.**
  - 2. It is addressed again later where he shows that the absence of good works in the face of knowledge is *sin*. **JAM 4:17.**
  - 3. He further shows in **JAM 4-5** that there was not only an *absence of good works* among the professing believers, there was an *abundance of evil works*.
  - 4. James' words to his own countrymen are reminiscent of Jeremiah's words to his own countrymen whose wickedness was inviting general judgment. **JER 4:22; 13:23.**
  - 5. The instruction given here and in the rest of the chapter is a warning against hypocrisy and vanity in religion, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof..." (**2TI 3:5**).
    - a. Believers are to be light to the unbelievers (**PHIL 2:15**), but "...if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (**MAT 6:23**).
    - b. The honour of God is denied Him where the conversation does not accord with the profession. **ROM 2:17-24.**
- B. The man who thinks that hearing the word is all that is needed is deceiving himself. **v. 22.**
  - 1. He may be deceiving himself into thinking that he will escape chastening. **LUK 12:47.**
  - 2. He may be deceiving himself into thinking that the preacher is there for his pleasure. **EZE 33:30-32 c/w 2TI 4:2-3.**
  - 3. He may be deceiving himself into thinking that he will always have a good preacher. **EZE 33:33.**
  - 4. He may be deceiving himself into thinking that good understanding only requires hearing. **PSA 111:10; JOH 7:17 c/w ISA 29:9-14.**
  - 5. Worst, he may be deceiving himself that he even has a heavenly inheritance awaiting him. **MAT 7:21-27.**
    - a. It is a glorious truth that God begets His children by His own will. **v. 18.**
    - b. It is a glorious truth that the new birth makes repentance possible and necessary. **v. 21.**

- c. It is a glorious truth that the elect can receive the engrafted word meekly. **v. 21.**
  - d. It is a glorious truth that the received word can save one's soul from many things in this life. **v. 21.**
  - e. But it is also a glorious truth that the temporal saving of one's soul is only a *possibility* in the receiving/hearing; it is a *reality* only in the doing.
  - f. The election of God unto eternal life which eventuates a new birth by His will which is brought to light by the gospel (**2TI 1:10**) which calls men to faith and repentance (**ACT 20:21**) also calls them to "...do works meet for repentance" (**ACT 26:20**).
    - (1) Isaiah had long before made clear the need to "...cease to do evil; Learn to do well..." (**ISA 1:16-17**).
    - (2) Bona fide service does not stop at *putting off* works of darkness. It also *puts on* righteousness. **ROM 13:12 c/w EPH 4:22-32.**
  - g. Therefore, none should assume to *make his calling and election sure* by reasoning back to God's begetting from the hearing of the word but from the doing of the word. **2PE 1:10-11.**
    - (1) God's begetting of "...a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (**v. 18**) is a creation unto good works. **EPH 2:10.**
    - (2) God's working in His elect is "...both to will and TO DO of his good pleasure" (**PHIL 2:13**).
  - h. It is not the hearers of the law but the doers that shall be justified. **ROM 2:13.**
    - (1) They shall be justified before God in the sense of their actions being approved by God and deemed righteous. *c/w* **JAM 2:24.**
    - (2) They shall be justified before God in the sense of being declared free from the guilt and penalty of sin on Judgment Day, their earthly works now being their evidence. **JOH 5:28-29.**
  - i. It is the foolish and the slothful that does nothing with the good thing he has acquired. **PRO 12:27; MAT 25:24-26.**
  - j. Genuine Christianity is more than sitting in church and listening to sermons!
- C. James uses a simple but powerful illustration to show the importance of not forgetting what has been received from the word. **vs. 23-25.**
- 1. The non-doer of the word is like a man who looks at himself in a glass (mirror) and then immediately forgets what he looks like.
    - a. He has not a lasting perception of what he is really like and does not act in accord with what was seen.
    - b. Prudent people who examine themselves in a mirror will make the most of what assets and liabilities they see.
  - 2. The word of God is a spiritual mirror.
    - a. It reveals the deficiencies in our beliefs, attitudes and conduct, and tells us to do something about them. **2TI 3:16-17.**
    - b. It also reveals that we are new creatures in Christ, legally dead to the law which condemned us, dead to sin and no longer under its bondage, and therefore have both power and responsibility to do what is right. **1PE 4:1-2; ROM 6:6-14; ROM 8:1-2; EPH 4:22-24.**
    - c. It is the means by which we *now* can *openly* see Jesus Christ as the "...end of the law for righteousness..." (**ROM 10:4**) and is therefore "...the perfect (completed, finished, fully formed) law of liberty..." (**JAM 1:25**) in which we can continue and become more like Christ. **2CO 3:7-18.**

- (1) The glory of God at the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai made the people afraid of death, a great bondage. **EXO 20:19 c/w HEB 2:15.**
  - (2) God promised the people that a Prophet would come to speak a message that would not have such a spirit of fear of death. **DEU 18:15-16.**
  - (3) Christ is that Prophet. **ACT 3:22-23.**
  - (4) What we have received in Christ and His New Testament is not a spirit of bondage to fear but one of liberty. **ROM 8:15.**
  - (5) Whereas Israel of old *could not stedfastly behold* under the spirit of bondage (**2CO 3:7, 13**), we can *look into and continue therein* under the spirit of liberty. **JAM 1:25.**
  - (6) Compare "...looketh into..." (v. 25) with **1SAM 6:19**. Things have changed!
  - (7) What holds men back from attaining Christ's image in their attitude and conduct is not the lack of approachability, availability or liberty. It is the lack of desire and faith. **1PE 2:2; 2CO 4:3-4.**
- d. The New Testament of Jesus Christ being a perfect law of liberty had particular relevance to the Jewish believers who were still being enticed to bondage. **GAL 2:4.**
- (1) The Old Testament was a law of bondage. **GAL 4:24-25.**
  - (2) The Old Testament church was like a child under the bondage of tutors and governors. **GAL 4:1-3.**
  - (3) The New Testament delivers all from many rules and rituals of the Old Testament. Continuing in the New Testament is the way of freedom whereas going back to the Old Testament is the way of bondage. **GAL 4:9-10 c/w HEB 13:9-16.**
  - (4) (**GAL 5:1**) Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.
- e. That we have a *perfect* law of liberty demands that it cannot be added to or improved upon.
- (1) Man's ideas and traditions certainly do not improve it. **MAR 7:7, 13.**
  - (2) Adding Moses' Law to it ruins its liberty. **GAL 5:3.**
  - (3) This also forbids post-apostolic era "revelations" such as are assumed amongst Catholics, Mormons and the cults in general.
- D. Note the shift from *hearing* the word to *looking into* the word (v. 25).
1. One should attend to *preaching* and *reading*. One may "hear" God speaking in both.
  2. One should *search the scriptures* after the preaching. **ACT 17:11.**
  3. This "looking into" implies *meditation*, a necessary part of reading Scripture. **JOS 1:8; PSA 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148.**
    - a. meditate: To muse over or reflect upon; to consider, study, ponder.
    - b. ponder: To weigh (a matter, words, etc.) mentally; to give due weight to and consider carefully; to think over, meditate upon. ....to think deeply or seriously *on*.
    - c. This is more than a cursory reading to satisfy conscience!
- E. James links being "not a forgetful hearer" with "doer of the work" (v. 25).
1. A good way of not forgetting something important is to make a habit of doing that thing.
  2. The gospel saves us if we keep it in memory. **1CO 15:1-2.**
  3. Those who *look into* the word and *continue in* the word are *disciples INDEED* and *free*. **JOH 8:31-32.**
- F. The believer who looks into the word, continues in it, remembers it and does it, "...this man shall be blessed in his deed" (v. 25). The blessing is IN the doing. **PSA 1:1-3; 19:7-11; JOH 13:17.**

vs. 26-27.

- A. James here contrasts *vain* religion and *pure* religion. From these verses, we observe:
1. One may seem to be religious but not truly religious.
  2. An unbridled tongue “vanitizes” religion; it makes for a defiled religion.
  3. Pure religion is more about godly benevolence *and* godly living than outward show or words.
  6. Benevolence is not the sole definition of pure religion.
    - a. One may give goods to the poor but not have true charity. **1CO 13:3.**
    - b. One may be big on relieving the poor but spotted from the world. **JOH 12:4-6.**
- B. This is a continuation of James' earlier words concerning *speech* and *active godliness*. vs. 19, 22.
1. The hearer who is a non-doer deceives himself. **v. 22.**
  2. The doer with an unbridled tongue deceives himself. **v. 26.**
  3. James' words were very relevant to the Jewish churches which were spotted with self-deceivers among them. c/w **2PE 2:13.**
  4. The apostles in general had much to say about self-deception. **1CO 3:18; GAL 6:3; 1JO 1:8.**
  5. The man with an unbridled tongue does to himself and his religion what a false prophet or teacher can do to believers and religion. c/w **2PE 2:1-2.**
    - a. Corruption in religion may come from external deception working in. **ACT 20:29.**
    - b. Corruption in religion may come from self-deception working out. **REV 3:17.**
    - c. Paul told Titus to guard against both. **TIT 1:10-11; 2:7-8.**
  6. James has much more to say about bridling the tongue in **JAM 3:1-14.**
    - a. The unbridled tongue defiles the whole *body*. **JAM 3:6.**
    - b. The unbridled tongue defiles the whole *religion*.
    - c. Bridling the tongue would have had a special relevance to the poor believers who were being oppressed by the wicked rich. **PSA 39:1-2.**
      - (1) Bridling the tongue would have prevented the breakout of words of strife and envy which cause great trouble in the church. **JAM 3:14-16.**
      - (2) Bridling the tongue would have been better than cursing persecutors who should have been blessed instead. **JAM 3:10 c/w MAT 5:43-44.**
  7. “If any man among you SEEM to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue...”
    - a. seem: With infinitive: To appear *to be* or *to do* something.
    - b. religious: Imbued with religion; exhibiting the spiritual or practical effects of religion; pious, godly, god-fearing, devout.
    - c. One may appear to be religious when he is not really so. c/w **GAL 6:3.**
    - d. **(LUK 8:18) Take heed therefore how ye hear**: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he SEEMETH to have.
- C. God rejects vain religion. **JOB 35:13; ISA 1:13-14.**
1. The reception of the engrafted word (v. 21) should be reforming *speech* as well as *deeds*. **EPH 4:24-25, 29, 31.**
    - a. The *law of liberty* by which we examine ourselves (v. 25) sits in judgment upon our *speech* and *deeds*. **JAM 2:12.**
    - b. Carefully consider **MAT 12:35-37.**
  2. While we are waxing bold against man's commandments which “vanitize” worship (**MAR 7:7**), let us not forget to wax bold inwardly where corrupt speech is sourced.

**MAT 12:34 c/w JAM 4:8.**

3. Our appearance *before God* in public worship should not be a venue for blurting out rash words. **ECC 5:1-2.**
4. We should pray for the church to be purged of those whose religion is vain. **PSA 144:11.**
- D. Contrary to vain religion, James shows the substance of pure and undefiled religion. **v. 27.**
  1. This is religion that is pure and undefiled *before God*. It meets with His approval, unlike the religion of the unbridled tongue.
  2. Undefiled religion is Bible religion. **PSA 119:1.**
  3. Pure and undefiled religion is to *visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.*  
c/w **MAT 25:35-40.**
    - a. visit: To make a practice of going to (persons in sickness or distress) in order to to comfort or assist them. c/w **JOB 29:12-13.**
    - b. It was a deficiency in visitation of widows that caused some unbridled murmuring in the early Jerusalem church. **ACT 6:1.**
    - c. God takes particular notice of the fatherless and widows.  
**EXO 22:22; PSA 68:5; DEU 27:19.**
    - d. Covetous exploitation of the fatherless and the widows was a longstanding problem in Israel. **PSA 94:6-7; ISA 1:23; 10:1-2; EZE 22:7; ZEC 7:10; MAL 3:5.**
    - e. Recall that the Pharisees (masters of vain religion) had wormed their way into the Jewish church (**ACT 15:5**) and they had a penchant for *devouring widows' houses.*  
**MAT 23:14.**
    - f. Paul ordered widows to be first supported by family, "...for that is good and acceptable *before God*" (**1TI 5:4**), an example of pure and undefiled religion.
  4. Pure and undefiled religion is also *keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.*
    - a. unspotted: Not marked with spots; free from any spot or stain. 2. Not morally stained; unblemished, pure: a. Of persons, the mind, etc., b. Of character, qualities, etc.
    - b. This is not a forbidding of the lawful use of this world (**LUK 16:9; 1CO 7:31**) or of all association with sinners of this world. **1CO 5:9-10.**
    - c. The things that are in the world are "...the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life..." (**1JO 2:16**).
    - d. The corruption that is in the world is through lust. **2PE 1:4.**
    - e. We must put off the manner of life lived according to the deceitful lusts.  
**EPH 4:22-32.**
    - f. We should hate "...even the garment spotted by the flesh" (**JUDE 1:23**).
      - (1) Garments that reflect and accommodate fleshly lusts should be despised.  
**1TI 2:9.**
      - (2) Allusion may be made here (**JUDE 1:23**) to O.T. laws pertaining to lepers and other defiled persons (**LEV 13:52-57; 15:4-17**) whose garments were held to be polluted.
      - (3) Christians who have received a spiritual white garment from Christ are not to defile it by approach to what is defiled. **REV 3:4, 18.**
  5. James is treating of the same issues as did Isaiah. **ISA 1:10-20.**

**Chapter 2**

vs. 1-7.

- A. James here rebukes the sin of having respect of persons in the church.
1. Solomon said that respect of persons *sets one up to commit* sin. **PRO 28:21.**
  2. James makes clear that respect of persons *is* sin against the second great commandment. **JAM 2:8-9.**
- B. As noted earlier, the word “assembly” (v. 2) translates the Greek word “synagogue” which is the basis of the word “synagogue.”
1. This is the only clear occurrence of “synagogue” in a Christian context.
  2. As the Christian system transitioned out of its historic Jewish roots, the term “synagogue” fell into disfavor.
  3. The last uses of “synagogue” in Scripture are in a decidedly unflattering context. **REV 2:9; 3:9.**
- C. The issue at hand here was the showing of partiality to the materially rich. They were judging according to the outward appearance, contrary to **JOH 7:24; 2CO 10:7.**
1. Preferred seating in the assembly was given to the rich in contempt of poorer saints.
  2. One might wonder if the influence of the sect of the Pharisees in the church (**ACT 15:5**) was affecting their thinking. **MAT 23:5-7.**
    - a. This is hardly a uniquely Jewish problem.
    - b. How many churches throughout history have abandoned principle to court or maintain the favor of the wealthy?
    - c. How many churches throughout history have fallen into the trap of thinking that *gain is godliness*? **1TI 6:5.**
  3. This partiality was entirely contrary to the nature of Christian brotherhood. **MAT 23:8.**
  4. This partiality is contrary to the character of God Who has no respect of persons. **ROM 2:11.**
  5. This partiality may well have been contributing to the envy and strife among them. **JAM 3:16-17.**
  6. Partiality in judgment is not to be afforded the rich or the poor. **LEV 19:15.**
- D. It is evident that God's church may have poor brethren in it, whom James had earlier decreed should be remembered. **GAL 2:9-10.**
1. They may be materially poor but spiritually rich. **JAM 2:5.**
  2. The gospel is tailored for the poor. **MAT 11:5; 1CO 1:26; MAR 12:37.**
  3. Riches can be a great barrier to entering the kingdom of God. **MAR 10:23-27.**
  4. Desperate pursuit of riches can be a cause for losing the kingdom of God's benefits. **1TI 6:9.**
  5. Poverty in the church may indicate hard times, lack of training, opportunity, business sense or effort.
  6. But poverty in the church does NOT necessarily indicate a lack of genuine faith! **HEB 10:34; 11:37.**
    - a. This flatly opposes the “word-faith,” “name-it-and-claim-it” belief system.
    - b. Jesus did not die “to get your stuff back.”
  7. Material abundance is no proof of the great faith of an individual or a church. **REV 2:9 c/w 3:17; PRO 13:7.**
  8. The true riches are not material. **LUK 16:11; PRO 8:18-19; HEB 11:26.**
- E. Some wrongly had “...the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons” (v. 1).
1. Mind that this shows that we are to be cautious as to HOW we have our faith.
  2. The faith that we have is the *faith of our Lord Jesus*. It is of the Lord Jesus in that He is the

*author and object of it.* **HEB 12:2; ACT 20:21.**

3. Jesus is *the Lord of glory*.
  - a. James here equates Christ with Jehovah. **PSA 24:7-10.**
  - b. The glory of the rich is nothing compared to the glory of the Lord Jesus.
  - c. Had they been more focused on Jesus' glory, they would not have been so affected by material wealth.
  - d. James would have agreed with Paul's prayer for Ephesus. **EPH 1:17-18.**
- F. James charged their partiality and judgment of persons to evil thoughts. **v. 4.**
  1. To think thoughts of respect of persons is to think evil thoughts.
  2. We are to judge without respect of persons. **PRO 24:23-25.**
  3. Thoughts breed actions. **PRO 23:7; MAT 12:34-35.**
- G. James also charged them with despising the poor. **v. 6.**
  1. What they were doing was not only bad manners, it was sin. **PRO 14:20-21.**
  2. Despite of brethren is despite of God. **1TH 4:8.**
  3. Would John the Baptist have been made to stand through the whole service?  
**MAT 11:8; 3:4.**
  4. Would Jesus Christ have been despised among them because He was poor while on earth?  
**2CO 8:9; LUK 9:57-58.**
- H. James declares those rich in faith though poor in substance as "...heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him" (**v. 5**).
  1. Those who *love the Lord* also *shall receive the crown of life*. **JAM 1:12.**
  2. They are now in the local church which is God's kingdom. **LUK 22:29-30.**
  3. They shall inhabit the world to come. **MAT 25:34.**
  4. All of God's plan and work of salvation work together to bring such to glory.  
**ROM 8:28-31.**
  5. Those who *love the Lord* are heirs of a crown and a kingdom. We reign and shall reign with Him. **ROM 5:17, 21; 2TI 2:12; REV 22:5.**
- I. Those who *love* the Lord are in stark contrast to the oppressive rich. **vs. 6-7.**
  1. The rich oppress men and drag them into courts. **ISA 3:14-15.**
  2. The rich blaspheme the name of Christ by which we are called. **ACT 11:26; PSA 73:7-12.**
    - a. If such a rich man had come into their assembly as a visitor, they were foolish for overlooking this.
    - b. If such a rich man was a member of their assembly, his oppressive tactics were cause for the name of God to be blasphemed. **EZE 36:21-22; ROM 2:24.**
  3. (**PRO 14:31**) He that oppressteth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.
  4. (**PRO 28:6**) Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.
- J. James' rebuke is sorely needed in this day of the gospel of wealth.
  1. Prosperity-gospel preachers are a dime a dozen, commonly attributing material wealth to great faith and poverty to little faith or no faith.
  2. **PRO 21:21** says, "he that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour" but the NIV corrupts this to say that one "finds life, prosperity, and wealth."
  3. **1TI 6:6** says, "...godliness with contentment is great gain." but the NASV corrupts this to say, "...godliness is actually a means of great gain, when accompanied with contentment." This makes godliness a means of gain rather than the gain itself.
  4. Contrast what Satan offered Christ in the temptation with what Jesus countered.

**LUK 4:1-13.**

- a. Satan offered Christ instant gratification of need, the miraculous, the world, power, glory, and the spectacular. These are the essence of the prosperity-gospel!
- b. Satan offered Christ the crown without the cross.
- c. Christ countered with the word of God, worship, service and trust.
- d. Christ refused Satan's offer and went to the cross.

**vs. 8-13.**

- A. James continues with his rebuke of their partiality to the rich which was:
  1. a matter of "...having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (**JUDE 1:16**).
  2. a disregard of the low estate of the Lord Jesus Christ while on earth.
  3. a disregard of the equality of brethren in Christ.
  4. a disregard of the fact that the rich oppressed them.
  5. a disregard of the fact that the rich blasphemed Christ.
  6. a despising of their poorer brethren.
  7. sin. **v. 9.**
- B. Their respect of persons stood in contrast to "...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself..." (**v. 8**).
  1. The Law of Moses was explicit on this law and its application. **LEV 19:18, 34.**
  2. Jesus exalted this law above almost all others. **MAT 22:37-40.**
  3. Jesus declared this to be the great message of the law and the prophets. **MAT 7:12.**
  4. James calls it "...the royal law according to the scripture..." (**v. 8**). It is the word of a king and therefore should have had power over their words and deeds. **ECC 8:4.**
    - a. It came from God, "...the lord of kings..." (**DAN 2:47**).
    - b. It was lived and exalted by Jesus Christ, "...KING OF KINGS..." (**REV 19:16**).
    - c. It is *according to the scripture*, not a tradition of the elders.
    - d. It is *according to the scripture*, not a mere recommendation of secular psychology.
    - e. It is *according to the scripture*, showing Scripture to have sovereign authority.
    - f. It is *according to the scripture* and therefore to be esteemed as right as any other law of the scripture. **PSA 119:128.**
    - g. Even the least commandments are important (**MAT 5:19**) and this law is the greatest of commandments of man's relating to man.
    - h. Yet despite of the high priority of this law, it seems that they had selectively excused its disregard as not being a breach of law. **vs. 10-11.**
    - i. It is the one commandment above others that is the bond of perfectness. **COL 3:14.**
    - j. Here then was a *royal law* for a *royal priesthood* (**1PE 2:9**) who were acting like common rabble.
  5. Jesus explained this law in the account of the good Samaritan. **LUK 10:25-37.**
    - a. The Samaritan wasn't canvassing the world looking for causes to relieve.
    - b. The Samaritan didn't care about the nation or religion of the victim.
    - c. The Samaritan didn't force others through taxation to support the victim.
    - d. The Samaritan subsidized the care of the victim's health, not his lifestyle.
    - e. The Samaritan essentially applied **GAL 6:9-10.**
  6. Loving one's neighbour as oneself assumes that we have no lack of love of self. **EPH 5:28-29.**
    - a. Perilous times are characterized by excessive love of self. **2TI 3:1-2.**
    - b. We are living in times where *self-esteem* is a buzzword, *selfishness* a forgotten word, and Black Friday fights over stuff are common.

- c. True love seeks the welfare of its object. It is not a self-promoting act. **1CO 13:5; EPH 5:25 c/w JOH 13:34.**
- 7. Loving one's neighbour as oneself assumes a rational mind. *Doing unto others as you would have them do unto you (MAT 7:12)* does not apply if you are suicidal or a self-destructive masochist who takes a sick delight in pain, or someone who delights in being victimized.
- 8. Loving one's neighbour as oneself assumes godly behavior and reciprocity.
  - a. It does not justify flattering because you like to be flattered.
  - b. It does not justify seductive overtures towards unqualified others because you like receiving them.
  - c. It does not justify excusing sin in others because you would like it excused in yourself.
- 9. Loving one's neighbour as oneself certainly applies to impartial judgment of others, as this text makes clear.
- C. Their respect of persons was not the fulfilling of the royal law but the commission of sin. v. 9.
  - 1. They were "...convinced of the law as transgressors."
  - 2. convince: To prove a person to be guilty, or in the wrong, esp. by judicial procedure; to prove or find guilty; to convict. (See **JOH 8:46**)
  - 3. Sin is proven from the law. **1JO 3:4; ROM 4:15.**
  - 4. Of all Christians, these Jewish believers should have known the royal law and the evil of having respect of persons in judgment. **DEU 16:19.**
  - 5. Their error could not be justified by *seeming religious (JAM 1:26)*, by assuming that outward motions of sacrifice were more important than impartial judgment and mercy. **PRO 21:3; MAT 23:23.**
- D. All points of the law are to be honored. vs. 10-11 c/w **MAT 5:19; 28:19-20.**
  - 1. One breach of the law makes a man a transgressor of the law.
    - a. Moses' law was such that a man was cursed if he broke a single law. **GAL 3:10.**
    - b. This underscores the foolishness of welding works to grace for eternal justification before God since such a system makes one a debtor to do the whole law. **GAL 5:3.**
  - 2. James is not teaching that there is no distinction between sin, as if a man who bore false witness should be condemned as an adulterer or a murderer.
    - a. The law is viewed here as a body. Breach of one law is sin against the body of law.
    - b. It is as the law of the leper: a man was deemed a leper if he only had one spot of leprosy. **LEV 13:41-46.**
  - 3. Adultery and murder are different kinds of the same thing: transgression of the law.
    - a. One might think that he could be justified in killing an adulterer with his own hands, similar to Absalom's slaying of Amnon. **2SAM 13:14, 28.**
    - b. James later charges some with adultery and killing. **JAM 4:2-4.**
  - 4. James' words condemn the notion that one's good works compensate for his bad works. c/w **EZE 33:12.**
    - a. James' words would have been relevant to any who entertained the rabbinical error, "that he who observed any principal command was equal to him who kept the whole law;" (Kiddushin, fol. 39); and they give for example, "If a man abandon idolatry, it is the same as if he had fulfilled the whole law," (Ibid., fol. 40.)  
[Adam Clarke Commentary]
    - b. Such is the exact opposite of the truth that breach of one law is breach of all the law.
  - 5. Remember that sin is heart-oriented.
    - a. The thought of sin is sin. **PRO 24:9; MAT 5:28.**

- b. One may be mortified at the thought of murder but not at the thought of adultery, and so be as guilty of breaking the law as a hateful, plotting murderer.
    - c. The same argument would apply to other “secret” sins like envy, hatred, covetousness, etc.
  - 6. James here condemns the notion of being selective in the application of God's laws, another unacceptable form of being partial. **MAL 2:9.**
- E. Contrary to partiality in the law and towards others, we are to speak and do “...as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty” (v. 12).
  - 1. We should conform to the New Testament, the perfect law of liberty, since we shall be judged by it.
  - 2. Under the New Testament we are freed from sin and made willing and able to obey God. **ROM 6; HEB 8:10; PHIL 2:13.**
  - 3. The New Testament is a law. **GAL 6:2; 1CO 9:21.**
  - 4. It is a law bereft of O.T. dietary law, sabbaths, holy days, etc. but filled with instruction concerning thoughts, words and deeds.
- F. Christ's law teaches us to have mercy on the poor rather than despising them. v. 13. **MAT 5:7; LUK 10:30-37; 12:33; 14:12-14.**
  - 1. The merciful will receive mercy in the day of judgment. **MAT 25:34-40; 2TI 1:16-18.**
  - 2. Those who show no mercy will be judged without mercy. **PRO 21:13; MAT 18:23-35.**
  - 3. Mercy rejoices against judgment.
    - a. mercy: Forbearance and compassion shown by one person to another who is in his power and who has no claim to receive kindness; kind and compassionate treatment in a case where severity is merited or expected.
    - b. This obviously contrasts with judgment in the sense of punishment.
    - c. In judgment one receives what he deserves whereas in mercy one receives what he has NO claim to receive.
    - d. God's mercy rejoices against judgment. **MIC 7:18-20.**
  - 4. **(1JO 4:11)** Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

**vs. 14-26.**

- A. James sets forth the doctrine of justification by works.
  - 1. This seems to contradict Paul's teaching. **ROM 3:20; GAL 2:16.**
  - 2. Martin Luther once condemned this epistle because of this seeming contradiction.
  - 3. There are no contradictions in God's word. **2PE 1:20.**
- B. These verses expand the theme of *how* to have the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 1) and not be guilty of vain religion. v. 20.
  - 1. They should not have it *with respect of persons*. v. 1.
  - 2. They should not have it *without works*.
    - a. Faith without works is not profitable and cannot save a man. v. 14.
      - (1) This is *temporal* salvation *from* the deceits of Satan and *unto* fellowship with God. **2TI 2:10; 1JO 1:6-7.**
      - (2) Our faith and works do not save us *eternally*. **EPH 2:8-10; 1JO 5:1; 2:29.**
    - b. A workless faith profited the Jewish Christian no more than lawless circumcision. **ROM 2:25.**
    - c. The sum is that faith without works is dead. vs. 17, 20, 26.
      - (1) It is alone. v. 17.

- (2) It is a single work. **JOH 6:28-29; 1JO 3:22-23.**
- (3) God requires more than the single work of faith.
- (4) Abraham's faith *wrought* (past tense and past participle of WORK) *with his works*. **v. 22.**
- d. A dead, unprofitable faith that cannot save is not genuine faith since genuine faith saves. **1CO 15:1-2.**
- e. A dead, unprofitable faith that cannot save is therefore not the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ but tantamount to the futile, notional faith of devils. **v. 19.**
  - (1) Those begotten of God are created unto good works. **EPH 2:10.**
  - (2) It should be constantly affirmed that believers *maintain good works*. **TIT 3:8.**
- f. At issue here are two things that a man may say:
  - (1) A man may say he has faith (but has no works which prove that).
  - (2) Another man may say in retort, "...Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (**v. 18**).
- 3. The example which James uses here echoes the despite of the poor mentioned earlier. **vs. 6, 15-16.**
  - a. Only saying something nice to a desperate saint is a hollow substitute for rendering aid.
    - (1) That kind of faith does not profit either person.
    - (2) That kind of "love" is *feigned* love that shows the lack of God's indwelling love. **1PE 1:22; 1JO 3:16-17.**
  - b. The elect are created unto good *works*, not *words*. **EPH 2:10.**
  - c. Scripture even speaks of those who "...bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly" (**PSA 62:4**).
  - d. Mind that James is not affirming a wealth redistribution program to relieve all inconveniences of life.
    - (1) naked: Unclothed, having no clothing upon the body, stripped to the skin, nude. Also occas. having only an undergarment on.
    - (2) destitute: a. Deprived or bereft *of* (something formerly possessed). Devoid *of*, wanting or entirely lacking *in* (something desirable).
    - (3) Even Paul experienced such conditions. **2CO 11:27.**
    - (4) It is the things "...needful to the body..." (**v. 16**) that demand our attention. **1TI 6:8.**
    - (5) *Necessity* is the operative term. **ROM 12:13; EPH 4:28.**
- 4. The man who says he has faith but has no works is a vain man with dead faith. **v. 20.**
  - a. vain: Devoid of real value, worth or significance; idle, unprofitable, useless, worthless; of no effect, force or power; fruitless, futile, unavailing.
  - b. Such a man is a burden that will eventually be purged out. **LUK 13:6-9; MAT 25:30.**
- C. It seems that there were some of these Jews who were building their hopes upon the great tenet of Jewish religion: monotheism. **v. 19 c/w MAR 12:29.**
  - 1. This distinguishes a man from an atheist or an idolater but not from a devil.
  - 2. The atheist and the idolater have less "faith" than a devil!
  - 3. Devils affirm the most high God and that Jesus is His Son. **MAR 5:7; ACT 16:17.**
  - 4. Devils believe what an unbelieving Jew or Muslim does not believe.
  - 5. The devils' faith, though, only makes them tremble, not do good works. **c/w ACT 24:25.**

6. The implication here is that some of these Christians did not even tremble at the obvious vanity of their workless, dead faith. c/w **2PE 2:13; JUDE 1:12.**
- D. James cites two notable examples of justification by works: Abraham and Rahab. **vs. 20-25.**
1. Abraham was a Hebrew man, Rahab a Gentile woman.
  2. Abraham was noted as God's Friend, Rahab was noted as a harlot.
  3. Abraham was noted for lifelong faith, Rahab was noted for sin.
  4. Abraham was noted for great faith, Rahab for some faith.
  5. The ultimate test for both was whether life could be entrusted to God. c/w **LUK 23:46.**
  6. Thus, whether a believer is Jew, Gentile, famous, infamous, great faith or little faith, good works are expected for justification as James presents it.
    - a. There is justification in the sense of setting one free from the guilt and penalty of sin and making him righteous. In this sense we are justified by Christ alone without our faith and works. **GAL 2:16; ROM 4:6; 5:9, 19.**
    - b. There is justification in the sense of *proving* the righteousness of a person or action (**LUK 7:29; 1TI 3:16**). In this sense our faith and works prove that we already have been made righteous and justified from sin by Christ. **ACT 13:39; 1JO 3:7.**
    - c. Our faith must be more than the notional faith of a devil to justify us in this latter sense. It must be demonstrated by good works.
    - d. Mind how this is so contrary to "easy-believe-ism" evangelism which emphasizes a decision as the key and proof of eternal life.
- E. Abraham was justified by works when he offered his son upon an altar at God's command. **v. 21 c/w GEN 22.**
1. **HEB 11:17-19** says that he did this by faith, i.e., upon the word of God. **ROM 10:17.**
  2. Abraham had been a man of faith since he was called out of Ur. **HEB 11:8.**
  3. Abraham later believed God would give him a seed. **GEN 15:4-6.**
  4. Abraham's faith alone did not produce that seed; it was faith AND work! **ROM 4:19-22.**
  5. The grand fulfillment or realization of **GEN 15:6** was in the trial of offering Isaac. **v. 23.**
    - a. This was a great trial on top of the trials Abraham had already faced.
    - b. Isaac was the promised son by which his seed would be multiplied. **GEN 17:15-21.**
    - c. Abraham was called upon to put obedience to God ahead of his natural affection for his son. c/w **LUK 14:26, 33.**
    - d. Abraham did not chafe or pit his reason against God's word but believed God would solve any problems this would cause. **HEB 11:19.**
    - e. Abraham offered Isaac in a figure inasmuch as he received him from the dead in a figure. **HEB 11:19.**
    - f. By works his faith was made *perfect* (**v. 22**), i.e. fully accomplished.
    - g. The real proof of genuine faith is in the darkness of trials.
  6. He was thus called "...the Friend of God" (**v. 23**).
    - a. friend: One joined to another in mutual benevolence and intimacy.
    - b. Christ declares those who DO His commandments His friends. **JOH 15:14.**
  7. Those who prove their faith by their works are the spiritual children of Abraham and blessed with him. **GAL 3:7-9.**
- F. Rahab was justified by works also when she received the messengers (spies) with peace and sent them out another way. **v. 25 c/w JOS 2.**
1. What she did was also an act of faith. **HEB 11:31.**
  2. She had heard of Israel's God and what He had done and promised.
  3. She therefore forsook her unbelieving fellow-citizens and aligned with Israel.

4. This she did at risk of her life! What if the authorities had found out?
  5. On the other hand, her belief in Israel's God would also have jeopardized her life if she hadn't acted upon it, since she was convinced that God had given them the city.
  6. Her faith with her works saved her! She became a citizen of Israel and ancestor of Jesus Christ. **JOS 6:25; MAT 1:5-6.**
- G. One never loses when one works what faith demands though it appears to imply great loss. **MAT 16:25.**
- H. **(JAM 2:26)** For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

### Chapter 3

- A. This chapter has the most concentrated discourse in Scripture on the government of the tongue.
- B. Outside of this chapter, this epistle addresses speech issues many times (**1:6; 1:13; 1:19; 1:26; 2:3; 2:7; 2:12; 2:16; 2:18; 4:3; 4:11; 4:13; 4:15; 4:16; 5:12; 5:13; 5:14; 5:15; 5:16; 5:17; 5:18**).
- C. James is continuing his warning against vain religion, the tongue being very central to that. **JAM 1:19, 26.**
- D. James continues his theme about worthless superficialities in religion.
1. Hearing without doing is worthless. **JAM 1:22.**
  2. Wealth without godliness is worthless. **JAM 2:1-5; 5:1.**
  3. Faith without works is worthless. **JAM 2:26.**
  4. Knowing good without doing it is worthless. **JAM 4:17.**
  5. Knowledge without governed speech is worthless. **JAM 3:1-13; 1:26.**
- E. James' discourse was very relevant in view of the "bad fish" problem amongst the Jewish churches discussed earlier in this series. **TIT 1:10-11.**
- F. Man's tongue is his glory. **PSA 30:12; 16:8-9 c/w ACT 2:25-26.**
1. With his tongue he can praise and thank God.
  2. With his tongue he can confess Christ.
  3. With his tongue he can pray out loud to God.
  4. With his tongue he can teach others about God and Christ.
  5. With his tongue he can warn, edify, exhort, admonish or comfort others.
  6. With his tongue he can defend others. **PRO 31:8.**
  7. Death and life are in its power. **PRO 18:21.**
    - a. How many have died because a commander gave an order to attack?
    - b. How many have been saved because a commander gave an order to attack, or an order to lay down arms, or an order to pursue diplomatic resolutions?
    - c. Sapphira sealed her doom by what she said. **ACT 5:8.**
    - d. Abigail and Esther spoke and saved many lives. **1SAM 25:33; EST 7-8.**
    - e. **(PRO 13:3)** He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.
    - f. **(1PE 3:10)** For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:
- G. Sin corrupted the use of man's glory (tongue). **ROM 3:13-14.**
1. By nature, our first action following birth is a perverse use of the tongue. **PSA 58:3.**
  2. The tongue has a capacity for many different sins and errors including:
    - a. *inappropriate cursing*. **JAM 3:9 ct/w JER 48:10; 1CO 16:22.**
    - b. *blasphemy*. **LEV 24:11.**
    - c. *lying* (including false witness, false accusation, deceit, seduction, guile). **EPH 4:25; 1TI 4:2.**

- d. *railing* (uttering abusive language). **MAR 15:29.**
  - e. *backbiting* (slander, defamation of character). **2CO 12:20.**
  - f. *whispering* (malicious insinuation, secret slander). **2CO 12:20.**
  - g. *improper debate* (ungodly dissension, quarrelling, wrangling). **ROM 1:29.**
  - h. *talebearing/tattling* (unsolicited spread of private matters for malice or idle curiosity). **PRO 20:19; 1TI 5:13.**
  - i. *flattery* (false or insincere praise). **PRO 20:19; 29:5; PSA 5:9.**
  - j. *boasting* (bragging, extolling oneself). **ROM 1:30; JAM 4:16.**
  - k. *inconvenient* (unsuitable, inappropriate) *jestings/foolish speech*. **EPH 5:4.**
  - l. *filthy communication*. **COL 3:8.**
  - m. *murmuring/complaining*. **JUDE 1:16.**
  - n. *praising the wicked*. **PRO 28:4.**
  - o. *praising devils/false gods/idols*. **DAN 5:4 c/w 1CO 10:20.**
  - p. *gainsaying* (denying, contradicting) the truth. **ROM 10:21.**
  - q. *heresy*. **GAL 5:20.**
  - r. *betraying* (treacherous informing). **MAT 10:4.**
  - s. *prating* (purposeless chatter, blabbing, tale-telling). **3JO 1:10.**
  - t. *babbling* (meaningless iteration). **ECC 10:11; 2TI 2:16.**
  - u. *bewildering speech*. **1CO 14:9.**
3. Peter sums up all such errors as *evil speakings* that should be put away. **1PE 2:1.**
- H. James' instruction here is especially appropriate for assembly in God's house. **ECC 5:1.**
- 1. The church at Corinth assumed that assembly-time was a venue for everyone to speak without qualification or order. **1CO 14:26, 34.**
  - 2. This fostered confusion, of which God is not the author. **1CO 14:33.**
  - 3. Church assembly is for edification, not entertainment: "...Let all things be done unto edifying" (**1CO 14:26**).

**vs. 1-2.**

- A. James combines here a warning against unqualified mastery over others with an exhortation to bridling the tongue.
- 1. This ties in well with his earlier words about the perfecting (completing, maturing) of the believer. **JAM 1:4.**
  - 2. The believer is not perfected as long as his tongue is ungoverned. **v. 2.**
  - 3. He may be striving to bring the rest of his body under subjection (per **1CO 9:27**) but what about the tongue?
- B. The master in this context refers to one who instructs others.
- 1. master: A teacher; one qualified to teach. A man to whose care a child or children are committed for purposes of instruction; a tutor, preceptor...He whose disciple one is; the teacher (in religion, philosophy, art, science, or scholarship) from whom one has chiefly learned, or whose doctrines one accepts. The (our, my, his, etc.) Master: often applied to Christ...
  - 2. The relationship is one of *master and scholar* (**MAL 2:12**), teacher and student.
  - 3. The rule of the church is entrusted to its teachers. **HEB 13:7.**
  - 4. There is therefore an implication of dominion over others in being such a master.
  - 5. Someone who has no dominion over his tongue would make a poor choice for mastery in teaching in the church.
  - 6. A good reason for "not many masters" is that not many can govern the tongue.

- C. **vs. 13-14** in this context indicate that there were some who were assuming that their knowledge was the only qualification for mastery in teaching.
1. Knowledge alone can puff up a man but not to the betterment of others. **1CO 8:1-2.**
  2. Immature believers awash in the sudden flood of knowledge of the truth can fall prey to the pride of life and are therefore inappropriate for the ministry in the church. **1TI 3:6.**
  3. We are warned against imprudent desire to teach (**1TI 1:7**) and *loving to have the preeminence*. **3JO 1:9.**
- D. Another reason to be wary of striving for mastery in teaching is the weighty responsibility that comes with it: "...knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (v. 1).
1. "The highest hills are most exposed to lightning."
  2. Since the teacher has greater knowledge, more is expected from him. **LUK 12:47-48.**
  3. *A little folly* can ruin his reputation. **ECC 10:1.**
  4. Hypocrisy particularly condemns the teacher. **ROM 2:18-21.**
  5. Because of the influence the master/teacher has over others, an ungoverned tongue may cause them to go astray, for which God will judge the master/teacher. **MAL 2:7-9.**
  6. If the inspired apostle was not immune to censure, how much more the unqualified or unlearned who may not only be charged with hypocrisy for personal inconsistency, but also through pride-filled ignorance be held accountable for leading others astray? **1TI 1:3; 2TI 2:16-18.**
- E. Given the infection of Pharisees in the Jewish church (**ACT 15:5**), James' treatise on the tongue and teachers would not have left them unscathed.
1. The Scribes and Pharisees were noted for *speaking* righteousness but not doing it. **MAT 23:2-3.**
  2. Matthew Henry noted of the Pharisees that they "...are empty of good works; great talkers, but little doers; the voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." (Matthew Henry Commentary on MAT 23:1-12)

**vs. 3-12.**

- A. James continues his discourse on the government of the tongue by rich illustrations of observable things and phenomena.
1. The controlled tongue means a controlled body. **JAM 3:2.**
  2. The uncontrolled tongue defiles the whole body. v. 6 c/w **ECC 5:6; MAT 15:17-20.**
    - a. Sinful passions of the heart when vented by the tongue can empower bodily sins.
    - b. (**1CO 15:33**) Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.
  3. What is said here about the tongue's influence upon man's natural body to a limited extent would also apply to the spiritual body of the church.
    - a. Consider how spoken heresies can cause schism in the church. **1CO 11:18-19.**
    - b. Consider the damage that whispering, backbiting, talebearing, etc. can do to the fellowship of the church. **PRO 16:28 c/w PRO 6:19.**
- B. James sets forth three examples of little things that affect great things.
1. The entire body of the horse is turned by a small bit in its mouth. v. 3.
    - a. David said, "...I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me" (**PSA 39:1**).
    - b. Remember that the unbridled tongue "vanitizes" one's religion. **JAM 1:26.**
  2. A great ship is turned by a very small helm. v. 4.
    - a. Mind that the helm can still turn the ship in spite of being driven with fierce winds.
    - b. Similarly, the controlled tongue can steer our bodies in spite of the powerful forces

that try to overwhelm them.

3. A little fire can kindle a great matter. **v. 5.**
    - a. Fire is a good servant in the hearth, but a terrible master when loose in the rest of the house.
    - b. So is the tongue: a blessing when controlled, but a curse when not.
    - c. Unlike the bit and the helm which are inherently benign instruments, fire is an ever destructive potential. It is fire that James uses to describe the tongue. **v. 6.**
      - (1) The tongue is a fire capable of destroying ourselves and others. **PRO 16:27.**
      - (2) It is "...a world of iniquity." Here is a limited, particular *world*.
        - [a] A world of iniquity sprang from Satan's lie. **GEN 3:4-6.**
        - [b] Balaam's counsel corrupted Israel. **NUM 31:16.**
        - [c] Absalom stole the hearts of Israel with his words. **2SAM 15:2-6.**
        - [d] Men are enticed to sin with words. **DEU 13:6; PRO 1:10-14; 7:21.**
        - [e] Men divide churches with their tongues. **ROM 16:17-18.**
        - [f] Men defy God with their tongues. **JUDE 1:14-16.**
      - (3) It "...setteth on fire the course of nature..."
        - [a] It ignites the passions of the natural man. **EPH 2:2-3.**
        - [b] Who has not had their wrath or lust kindled by ungodly words?
      - (4) It "...is set on fire of hell."
        - [a] *Hell* is put here for Satan as *heaven* is put for God in **MAT 21:25.**
        - [b] Satan is the father of lies (**JOH 8:44**) and of all sinful speech.
        - [c] Because the tongue has such destructive power, it is appropriately said to be *set on fire of hell*, a place of destruction (**MAT 10:28**) ruled by Apollyon (the Destroyer). **REV 9:11.**
      - (5) We do well to not provide fuel for the fire. **PRO 26:20-21; 25:23.**
  4. "For who hath despised the day of small things?..." (**ZEC 4:10**).
- C. James describes the tongue as being untamable. **vs. 7-8.**
1. This speaks of natural taming, not miraculous taming (as when the angel shut the lions' mouths). **DAN 6:22.**
  2. The tongue defies human government more than a lion or a serpent. It is by nature not amenable to rule or discipline.
  3. It is FULL of deadly poison, a potential weapon of mass destruction. It is a deadly weapon that man cannot control.
  4. It takes the power of God to bring it under control.
    - a. What no man can tame, Christ can tame. **MAR 5:4.**
    - b. Faith claims His power for victory. **PHIL 4:13; 1JO 5:4.**
- D. James condemns contradictory use of the tongue by contrasting examples in nature. At issue is the difference between blessing and cursing. **vs. 9-12.**
1. bless: To hold or call holy; to extol as holy, divine, gracious.
  2. curse: To utter against (persons or things) words which consign, or are intended or supposed to consign, them to evil spiritual or temporal.
  3. With the same tongue we bless God and curse men "...which are made after the similitude of God" (**v. 9**).
    - a. Man was originally made in God's image. **GEN 1:26.**
    - b. After sin entered, Adam "...begat a son in his own likeness, after his image..." (**GEN 5:3**).
    - c. Man yet retains some of the image of God. **GEN 9:6; 1CO 11:7.**
    - d. Becoming more Christ-like is putting on Him Who is the "...express image of

- [God's] person..." (HEB 1:3). COL 3:10.
- e. We are to bless them who curse us (ROM 12:14), and it is therefore especially inconsistent to curse brethren in Christ! c/w MAT 5:22.
  4. Such inconsistency is not found in the products of plants and fountains. vs. 11-12 c/w MAT 7:16.
  5. Even the blessings and cursing of the Law were hurled from different mountains. DEU 27:12-13.
  6. Recall that the tongue is a gauge of the heart. MAT 12:34.
    - a. So we ought to place the bridling of the tongue high on our list of priorities since this implies a purifying of the heart from where all sin issues spring. JAM 4:8 c/w MAT 15:17-20.
    - b. Mastery of one's spirit makes one great. PRO 16:32.
  7. The rest of this chapter addresses issues of arrogance, envy and strife which are contrary to cohesion and peace in the church. How often is the peace of the church disrupted by corrupt speech among its members!
    - a. Let our speech be with salt, which retards corruption. COL 4:6; MAR 9:50.
    - b. (EPH 4:29) Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.
- E. Here are other considerations in the government of the tongue.
1. There is a time to be silent. ECC 3:7.
  2. Don't be hasty to speak. JAM 1:19; PRO 18:13; ECC 5:2-3.
  3. Think before you speak. PSA 39:2-3.
  4. Limit speech. PRO 10:19; 29:11 ct/w 17:28.
  5. Think scripturally; speak scripturally. 1PE 4:11.
  6. Don't be too rigid in judging others for errors in their speech. ECC 7:21-22; ISA 29:20-21.
  7. Good words and fair speeches can be corrupt speech also. ROM 16:18; 2PE 2:18.
- F. The ultimate model of excellent speech and a governed tongue is the Lord Jesus Christ. PSA 45:2 c/w LUK 4:22; 1PE 2:22.
- G. Consider David's resolve and prayers:
1. (PSA 17:3) Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.
  2. (PSA 141:3) Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.
  3. (PSA 19:14) Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.