

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) *serving 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. (**1PE 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.