

# The General Epistle of James

Teaching Series Conducted At  
West Side Church of God in Christ  
Rockford, Illinois

By  
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## INTRODUCTION

*Blessings upon you, people of the most high God! As you prepare to read this study in the Epistle of James, it is my prayer that it will be a blessing to you. This study was conducted at West Side Church of God in Christ in Rockford, Illinois, during late March and early April 2003. Throughout the text, I have added what I call “Saints’ Principles.” The intention of these principles is to point out truths, strictly as I see them, based on something that has occurred in the Scriptures. The Saints’ Principles are for EVERYONE that professes Christ as their Savior. I hope this study is a blessing to you and gives you the encouragement you need to dig deeper into the Word of God.*

Pastor Maurice A. West – April 2003

## The Legal Disclaimers

There will be various translations of the Scriptures used in our study. If we depart from the King James Version, which will be our standard, what follows are the typical translations used:

- **Amplified Bible** – The Amplified Bible. Copyright © 1965, Zondervan Publishing House.
- **Net Bible** – The Net Bible. Copyright © 1996-2003, Biblical Studies Press
- **NIV** – The New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.
- **NKJV** – The New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.
- **NLT** – The New Living Translation. Copyright © 1996.

At various times in this study, you may also find the following designations referring to reference material used to assist in putting together this study. Direct quotations will be shown in italicized text.

- {**Adam Clarke**} Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible
- {**JF&B**} The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary
- {**Matthew Henry**} Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible in One Volume
- {**Dake**} Dake’s Annotated Reference Bible
- {**MacArthur**} The MacArthur Study Bible
- {**Thompson**} The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible.
- {**McGee**} Thru the Bible Commentary Series by Dr. J. Vernon McGee

If other references, commentators, or Bible translations are used they will be identified in the text.

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## Introduction

**WRITER:** The writer of the book is important because it gives us a sense of his authority to tell us these things. Also, when we run into areas of controversy, his heritage will allow us to accept his point of view more readily. (The fact that it’s in the canon of the Holy Bible should be sufficient but often it is not.) With this book, as is the case of so many others, this is also an area of controversy and differing opinions.

- {**MacArthur**} *“Of the 4 men named James in the New Testament, only two are candidates for authorship of this epistle. No one has seriously considered James the Less, the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3; Acts 1:13), or James the father of Judas, not Iscariot (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). Some have suggested James the son of Zebedee and brother of John (Matt. 4:21), but he was martyred too early to have written it (Acts 12:2). That leaves only James, the oldest half-brother of Christ (Mark 6:3) and brother of Jude (Matt. 13:55), who also wrote the epistle that bears his name (Jude 1). James had at first rejected Jesus as Messiah (John 7:5), but later believed (1 Cor. 15:7). He became the key leader in the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 2:12), being called one of the ‘pillars’ of that church, along with Peter and John (Gal. 2:9). Also known as James the Just because of his devotion to righteousness, he was martyred ca. A.D. 62, according to the first century Jewish historian Josephus. Comparing James’ vocabulary in the letter he wrote which is recorded in Acts 15 with that in the epistle of James further*

corroborates his authorship. James wrote with the authority of one who had personally seen the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 15:7), who was recognized as an associate of the apostles (Gal. 1:19), and who was the leader of the Jerusalem church.”

- {McGee} “The problem of authorship is a major one. There is no question that James wrote the Epistle of James, but which James was the author? Some find at least four men by the name of James in the New Testament. I believe that you can find three who are clearly identified: 1. James, the brother of John and one of the sons of Zebedee. These two men were called ‘sons of thunder’ by our Lord (see Mark 3:17). He was slain by Herod who at the same time put Simon Peter into prison (see Acts 12:1-2). 2. James, the son of Alphaeus, called ‘James the less’ (see Mark 15:40). He is mentioned in the list of apostles, but very little is known concerning him. I automatically dismiss him as the author of this epistle. 3. James, the Lord’s brother. He was a son of Mary and of Joseph, which made him a half brother of the Lord Jesus. In Matthew 13:55 we read: ‘Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James, and ,Joses, and Simon, and Judas?’ In the beginning, the Lord’s brethren did not believe in Him at all, but the time came when James became head of the church at Jerusalem. In Acts 15 James seems to have presided over that great council in Jerusalem. At least he made the summation and brought the council to a decision under the leading of the Holy Spirit. I believe it was this James whom Paul referred to in Galatians 2:9, ‘And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.’ This James is the man whom we believe to be the author of this epistle.”
- Ray Stedman, October 1966, Discovery Publishing, a Ministry of Peninsula Bible Church – “This letter is of unique and peculiar significance to us because it comes from the one who knew more about the Lord Jesus than any other human being---at least as far as the record that is passed on to us is concerned. James, the brother of our Lord, was raised in the same home in Nazareth, grew up with the Lord Jesus, saw him through all those silent years of which we have no record, and joined with his three other brothers---Joseph, Simon, and Judas---in opposition to the Lord Jesus during the early days of his ministry. James was finally converted by the resurrection of the Lord; and the Apostle Paul tells us that after the resurrection, the Lord appeared to James. (1 Cor. 15:7).”

When you listen to all these learned scholars go in a certain direction toward the authorship of this epistle, one could ask, “Where is the controversy?” So that you have the opportunity to come to your own conclusion (even though I agree with those above) let us look at a differing opinion:

- {Matthew Henry} “The writer of this epistle was not James the son of Zebedee; for he was put to death by Herod (Acts 12) before Christianity had gained so much ground among the Jews of the dispersion as is here implied. But it was the other James, the son of Alphaeus, who was cousin to Christ, and one of the twelve apostles, Matt. 10:3. James, our author, was called The Just, for his great piety. He was an eminent example of those graces which he presses upon others. He was so exceedingly revered for his justice, temperance, and devotion, that Josephus the Jewish historian records it as one of the causes of the destruction of Jerusalem, ‘That St. James was martyred in it.’ This is mentioned in hopes of procuring the greater regard to what is penned by so holy and excellent a man.”

With all of this though, I agree with the opinions of MacArthur, McGee, and Stedman. Because these men are much more contemporary than Matthew Henry, I believe that there is sufficient evidence now to put the

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## The Epistle of James

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authorship of this book and the leadership of the early church in the hands of James, the half-brother of the Lord Jesus.

**DATE:** Dake says the epistle was written about 45 AD at Jerusalem before the first Christian Council of Acts 15. Dr. McGee says it was written between 45-50 AD. Dr. MacArthur bears this out when he says, “*James most likely wrote this epistle to believers scattered (1:1) as a result of the unrest recorded in Acts 12 (circa AD 44). There is no mention of the Council of Jerusalem described in Acts 15 (ca. AD. 49), which would be expected if that Council had already taken place. Therefore, James can be reliably dated ca. AD 44-49, making it the earliest written book of the New Testament canon.*”

**STATISTICS:** {Dake} The Epistle of James is the 59th book of the Bible. It contains 5 chapters and 108 verses. There are 100 verses of history and 8 verses of fulfilled prophecy.

**WHY THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN:** What is the key theme of the book? {MacArthur} “*James, with its devotion to direct, pungent statements on wise living, is reminiscent of the book of Proverbs. It has a practical emphasis, stressing not theoretical knowledge, but godly behavior. James wrote with a passionate desire for his readers to be uncompromisingly obedient to the Word of God. He used at least 30 references to nature (e.g., ‘wave of the sea’ [1:6]; ‘reptile’ [3:7]; and ‘heaven gave rain’ [5:18]), as befits one who spent a great deal of time outdoors. He complements Paul’s emphasis on justification by faith with his own emphasis on spiritual fruitfulness demonstrating true faith.*” James writes as one with a passion for the purity of the church. As one who came to Christ late, he writes as if he were trying to make up for lost time.

**BACKGROUND AND SETTING (MacArthur):** *The recipients of this book were Jewish believers who had been dispersed (1:1), possibly as a result of Stephen’s martyrdom (Acts 7, AD 31-34), but more likely due to the persecution under Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12, circa AD 44). The author refers to his audience as ‘brethren’ 15 times (1:2,16,19; 2:1,5,14; 3:1,10,12; 4:11; 5:7,9,10,12,19), which was a common epithet among the first century Jews. Not surprisingly, then, James is Jewish in its content. For example, the Greek word translated ‘assembly’ (2:2) is the word for ‘synagogue.’ Further, James contains more than 40 allusions to the Old Testament (and more than 20 to the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5-7).*

**APPROACH TO THIS STUDY:** We’ll go through this book in the same manner as we have other studies in the Scriptures. We’ll look to expose myths, uncover truths, and find principles for leaders and the saints in general. In addition, in going through this book, I found a number of words that should be defined. In defining Biblical words, it’s not enough to just go to the dictionary. The New Testament was written primarily in Greek which is a very fluid language. Therefore, in most cases our definitions will not only focus on what the dictionary says but we will also pull definitions from Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.

## Chapter 1

*1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.* Remember, this James was not the son of Zebedee or the son of Alphaeus but the half brother of the Lord Jesus. He is referred to in **Galatians 1:19** *But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.* Also, **1 Corinthians 15:7** speaks of his revelation of the risen Christ, *After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.* He is referred to as an apostle by other commentators (those that feel that there were only twelve would have a problem with this) and is also referred to as the bishop of Jerusalem. He quickly rose to prominence as the leader of the church by his devotion to prayer. He was known as James the Just and Old Camel Knees because of his great devotion to prayer.

*2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; **Amplified Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations.*** Count it the highest joy when you unexpectedly appear to be in various temptations. This verse refers to a trial of any kind, not necessarily a temptation that is intended to lead to sin.

**TEMPTATION** - {GREEK} *peirasmos* – [This word] is used of (a) trials with a beneficial purpose; (b) of trials or temptations divinely permitted or sent; (c) trials with a good or neutral significance such as Paul's physical infirmity, a temptation to the Galatian converts, of such a kind as to arouse feelings of natural repugnance (Galatians 4:14); (d) of trials of a varied character where believers are commanded to watch and pray against entering into temptations by their own carelessness or disobedience (in all such cases God provides the way of escape); (e) a trial diabolically designed to lead to wrong doing; (f) trying or challenging God by men. {DICTIONARY} - An enticement to evil; that which is presented as an inducement, enticement or allurement; to seduce; to try the patience of or provoke; to put to a test.

*3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.* The trying and proving of our faith in Him will work patience in us. **PATIENCE** - Bearing pain or trial without complaining; sustaining afflictions with fortitude, calmness or submission; waiting with calmness; not hasty; long suffering; persevering; calmly diligent; able to bear. The trying of our faith develops all of these traits in us.

*4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. **Amplified But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed [with no defects], lacking in nothing.*** In other words, don't kick down the door and try to jump out of the trial yourself - let the Lord open the door when the full time of seasoning has come or, since this is the intent of the trial, when you have been completely "cooked." (Some have said that you've got to watch how the Lord handles trials. Sometimes we think the trial has come to an end when we see the "light at the end of the tunnel". This may, however, be the time when the Lord "opens the oven door", checks on you, and "turns you over".)

*5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. **NLT If you need wisdom--if you want to know what God wants you to do--ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking.*** We need wisdom in order to accomplish the directive of this scripture. We need wisdom in so many areas of our lives. **Proverbs 4:7** *Wisdom is the*

*principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.* These verses give clear-cut steps towards gaining wisdom (there are two steps in this verse and one in the next):

- 1) **RECOGNIZE YOUR LACK OF WISDOM:** Since you must ask for yourself, YOU must come to the conclusion that you are lacking in this essential skill used in studying and applying God's word or in living well in life (nothing in the verse says that it is for only one usage). (Don't allow pride and personal ego to come in and say that you're doing fine! There's always room for improvement.) **How then can I tell that I am lacking in wisdom?** I see three characteristics that you have to look at but I'm sure there are more:
  - a) **INABILITY TO MAKE THE CORRECT DECISIONS IN LIFE.** Sometimes we are in the midst of trials that have been sent to try our faith. Other times, we have made foolish decisions that have caused us to be in the midst of this trial. In either case, it's good to ask God for wisdom to first determine which is the case.
  - b) **INABILITY TO JUDGE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG IN VAGUE AREAS.** The Scripture says in **Hebrews 5:14** *But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.* When you are confused about the type of behavior that pleases God, you need wisdom. This is not a criticism, this is a MUST. Without this wisdom, we could be lost!
  - c) **LACK OF ABILITY IN THE WORD OF GOD; YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU READ.** This ties in with **2 Timothy 2:15** *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* If you intend to be "approved unto God," you need wisdom and understanding. Wisdom and understanding work hand in hand. See **Proverbs 10:13a** *In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found.*
- 2) **ASK GOD:** James will tell us later in this book that we have not because we ask not. In our asking we are recognizing God as our source and we are putting our trust in Him. With our asking, we must understand four things about how God answers:
  - a) **HE WILL RESPOND LIBERALLY.** That is, God will meet your need generously and bountifully. He's not going to give you a fragment of what you need but all that you need. **Matthew 7:9-11** *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*
  - b) **HE GIVES WISDOM TO ALL THAT ASK.** This is not just for a few or for those that the Lord as deemed as "special," as if He would do that. This is for any and everyone.
  - c) **HE WILL NOT REBUKE OR REPROVE.** When we ask, God does not get upset about our constant asking nor does He go back and bring up past sins that would (with the natural man) make you less worthy. **SAINTS' PRINCIPLE:** **Don't let your current spiritual position dictate whether you should ask but rather your need and your faith.**
  - d) **HE WILL GIVE IT.** In other words, God is going to do it. We're not asking in space or in a vacuum; He will do it. **Matthew 7:7-8** *Ask, and it SHALL be given you; seek, and ye SHALL find; knock, and it SHALL be opened unto you: For EVERY one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

*6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

3) **ASK IN FAITH:** If you expect to receive from the Lord, you MUST ask in faith. **Hebrews 11:6** *But without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Faith does not just say that it believes. Faith absolutely expects an answer and does not go to another source for the answer. Wavering can be expressed in many ways: “helping God” - you’ve asked but you’re working things out yourself; “putting feet on your faith” - there are times for this but there are other times that God must work alone. Make sure that the answer you get comes from the presence of God; anything else will be damaging, a counterfeit, and not the result of faith. I found a formula for faith that helps me see when I’m moving toward the world’s view of faith (wishing and hoping) versus God’s view of faith (expectation). Evangelist Darlene Bishop was given a powerful acrostic that I’ve been using to help me see whether I truly believe in each situation and in my life as a whole:

**B - Because**  
**E - Emmanuel**  
**L - Lives**  
**I - I**  
**E - Expect**  
**V - Victory**  
**E - Every time (I also substitute**  
**“everyday”)**

**7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.** James puts it in “plain as day” language. If you waver in your faith, don’t think that you’re going to get anything from the Lord. This doesn’t just apply to wisdom but everything that we will ever ask God for.

**8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.** The double minded person is not a hypocrite. They truly want to receive from the Lord and they’re living a life to receive from God but they’re tossed back and forth as to whether He actually will. The literal Greek refers to being “double souled” or having a fight between two different “you’s”. In other words, two complete sets of emotions are involved. One says, “Trust God, He’ll answer”; the other says, “True, but God helps those that help themselves.” This double mindedness will be seen in every area of that person’s life.

**9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:** Let (allow) the person who is poor or not highly thought of among the saints rejoice when they are lifted up. This is not the time to rebuke them for pride - this is one of the least of their worries.

**10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.** On the other hand, those that are rich materially or full of favor should rejoice when they are abased. This humbling will keep them from getting caught up with the goods of this world. **SAINTS’ PRINCIPLE: When you’re up (spiritually, naturally and emotionally) and you’re humbled, it’s time to praise the Lord. You see, God is keeping you from getting too far off track.**

**11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.** This appears to be a reminder to the rich that they too have a temporary existence like every one else. Because of that, they must not be high minded in light of the previous verse.

**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.** Our blessings come from going through; for successfully being tried.

**13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:** {Dake} “After using the word *temptation* in the sense of *trial*, James now uses it in the sense of *solicitation to sin*. *God cannot be tempted with evil.*” The reason why is shown in the coming verses - there is nothing in Him that can be used as the starting point because He is absolutely perfect. He does not tempt anyone to do evil. God is in business to transform souls to live the life of Christ.

**14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.** Oswald Chambers says, “*Temptation means the test by an alien power of the possessions held by a personality.*” The alien power is the devil. The test is to see if you will remain true to God. Here’s the interesting point that James adds to this: the tool this alien power (the devil) uses to shake our steadfastness is something that is already within us. That thing within each of us that we hold dear and which we should have already dealt with is the thing that the devil works on to move us towards sin. If he can move us towards an evil passion towards that treasure, then he has a foot hold. That is why it is so important to die daily from those things that are our treasures - give them to Jesus. When there is an earthly treasure present, there is the possibility for the devil to use that to entice (seduce, attract, lure, beguile) us into sin. The key to this verse is that the devil uses our “own lust” - the thing that we hold dear. For this reason, the devil will not move you into things that are unimportant to you (as a saint). The sinner or the carnal Christian, on the other hand, can be moved to do almost anything because of indwelling spirits that bring their lusts with them.

**15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.** **LUST** - {GREEK} *epithumia* - Strong desire of any kind. It is used of a good desire in only three verses in the New Testament, Luke 22:15, Phil. 1:23, I Thessalonians 2:17. In all other cases, it has a bad sense. Though they may be sophisticated in character, if they are inconsistent with the will of God, they are evil. {DICTIONARY} - Sexual appetite; depraved or unlawful sexual craving; intense longing or passionate desire; an eagerness to possess or enjoy. So then, lust is an inordinate, evil desire. When that desire is fulfilled, it is fulfilled in sin. And sin ultimately brings forth utter death - the death of the soul.

**16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.** {Dake} “*Do not be deceived by supposing that God is the author of sin or that He impels any man to commit it.*” The term “err” has to do with wandering. The Biblical image is of one who has lost his way and is deluded or deceived.

**17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.** On the contrary to the thinking that God may be (but is not) the author of evil, this verse lets us know what does proceed from the Lord. {JF&B} “*‘Shadow of turning,’ lit., the dark, ‘shadow-mark’ cast from one of the heavenly bodies, arising from its turning or revolution, e.g., when the moon is eclipsed by the shadow of the earth, and the sun by the body of the moon.*” The intent is to let us know that God will not change from this course of being the author of every good and perfect gift by even the slightest amount.

**18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.** {MH} “*Our regeneration, and all the holy happy consequences of it, must be ascribed to Him. It is of God’s own will; not by our skill or power; but purely from the goodwill and grace of God. This gospel is indeed a word of truth, or else it could never produce such real, such lasting, such great and noble effects.*”

*Christ is the first fruits of Christians, Christians are the first fruits of creatures.”* We were begotten by God’s Word. Why then should He tempt us with evil and destroy His work?

**19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:** {JF&B} *“Wherefore - as your evil is of yourselves, but your good from God.”* So because of this discussion going back to verse 12, we must take James’ advice:

- (1) **BE SWIFT TO HEAR:** {MH} *“Be ready to hear and consider what God’s word teaches.”* **SAINTS’ PRINCIPLE: We cannot learn anything unless we open our ears and close our mouths!** Too many saints today fall into the category of being unteachable. You can’t tell them anything because they know EVERYTHING. But the Scripture says of God’s people that a child shall lead them.
- (2) **BE SLOW TO SPEAK:** {JF&B} *“Two ears are given to us, the rabbis observe, but only one tongue: the ears are open and exposed, whereas the tongue is walled in behind the teeth.”* Unless you first learn to be swift to hear, you’ll never get to the point of being cautious in your speech. You’ve got to close your mouth first and then learn to re-open it carefully.
- (3) **BE SLOW TO WRATH:** {AC} *“Those who are hasty in speech are generally of a peevish or angry disposition. A person who is careful to consider what he says is not likely to be soon angry.”* This is the formula for avoiding error. Too often, people will not listen but continue to express their point of view. After awhile, they find themselves getting angry because their point is not getting across. Once anger is present, the next step is wrath or anger out of control.

**20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.** This verse explains the previous verse. Wrath is emphasized because it has no place in holy living and no matter how you justify yourself, it does not work with it. The Bible is clear in calling for us to control our anger.

**21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.**

- (4) **LAY APART ALL FILTHINESS:** Lay aside as a filthy garment. Dirty clothes are usually isolated in a certain location until they are ready to be cleaned. In like manner is the trash that we put into trash bins until it is ready to be disposed of. Likewise, all filthiness (dirtiness, something that tends to corrupt, rottenness, foulness) in our flesh and spirit must be laid aside and disposed of.
- (5) **LAY APART ALL SUPERFLUITY OF NAUGHTINESS:** Superfluity (*perisseia*), an exceeding measure, something above the ordinary is used four times in the New Testament, Romans 4:17, 2 Corinthians 8:2, 2 Corinthians 10:15 and in this verse. It is used here figuratively to refer to overflowing wickedness. In this verse, it would refer to what remains, what is unnecessary, or what is over and above our Christian character. The idea is that any remaining wickedness within us must be dealt with and laid aside.
- (6) **RECEIVE WITH MEEKNESS THE ENGRAFTED WORD:** Receive with meekness (demonstrating mildness of temper and submissiveness) the established, settled Word of God. If we will receive the Word as the tree receives the new limb that is grafted in, it will become one with our nature and become as much a part of us as if it had always been there.

**22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.** But while you are receiving the Word, understand that to be receptive is to do more than become a Bible scholar. We must also

DO as the Word says do. Self deception comes from only hearing the Word and focusing on the academic knowledge to be gained from the Word. The Bible scholar should be the best liver of the Word or their efforts are fruitless.

**23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:** The phrase, “in a glass” refers to a mirror. The Word of God shows us ourselves. It shows us what we should be and we see plainly where we are in relation to it. This is the reason why Isaiah fell down before the presence of God in Isaiah 6 and said, Woe is me! I am an unclean man and I dwell in the midst of unclean people. The awesomeness of God was so much greater than the righteous life he had been living as to seem unrighteous.

**24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.** If you are a hearer only, you will see yourself and then walk away and forget about what you have seen. Since you view the Word of God with head knowledge rather than spiritual impact, what the Word shows you has no impact on you and it’s easy to forget. The Word must be spiritually discerned to receive the full impact.

**25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. **SAINTS’ PRINCIPLE: Unless you DO SOMETHING with the Word, you will be a forgetful hearer. The source of our blessing and favor is DOING SOMETHING with the Word.****

**26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.** Religious - a careful follower of his belief. Bridle - to hold in check or restrain. This verse calls to mind verse 19. If someone seems to be really sold out for Jesus and they do nothing about restraining their tongue, what they demonstrate is vain (futile, pointless, unprofitable). **WHAT A SIGNIFICANT VERSE!** The tongue holds the key to our salvation; CHECK IT!

**27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.** Religion that is not vain consists of sharing yourself with others while they are going through and keeping yourself UNSPOTTED from the world. Keeping yourself implies jealous watchfulness over what God has done for you. In other, you protect what God has given you with a fierce passion because you realize the price you paid to reach the level you are at. False religion may also visit the afflicted but the difference is that the pure will also keep themselves pure and unspotted.

“Unspotted” is a term that should be easily understood by mothers. Once you’ve dressed your child in their “Sunday best” you want them to maintain that crisp, clean look. Even if they wash their hands, you want them to be careful so they don’t get water spots on their clothes. The clothes are still clean but they’re no longer as “crisp” as they used to be. To be unspotted then is to deal with those weights that hinder us from moving into the presence of the Lord. We’re clean but we’re not the same level of clean as when He first cleansed us.

Before we leave this verse, what does it mean to be “unspotted from the world”? Does it refer to our music, our clothes, our speech, or even what’s in our refrigerator? This is what is always taught but these are only symptoms of the world. The true character of the world is shown in the First Epistle of John. Let’s look at 1 John 2:15-16 from our previous study on First John:

**15** *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. NIV Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. WORLD - kosmos* Primarily order or arrangement; it is used to represent the present condition of human affairs in alienation from and opposition to God. It also refers to the sum of earthly possessions. Watchman Nee, an apostle to China who was martyred in 1972 said, “**Separation to God, Separation from the world, is the first principle of Christian living.**” He goes further and gives an illustration of our relationship to the world: “*Let us suppose that the municipal authorities...should decree that the school where you are employed must be closed. As soon as you hear this news you realize there is no future for you in that school. You go on working there for a period but you do not build up anything for the future there...or to use another illustration, suppose the government decides to close a certain bank. Will you hasten to deposit in it a large sum of money in order to save the bank from collapse? No, not a cent more do you pay into it once you hear it has no future. You put nothing in because you expect nothing from it...we still go on living in the world and using the things of the world, but we can build no future with them, for the cross has shattered all our hope in them.*”

**16** *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.* The illustration of this verse is best found in Genesis 3 in the temptation of Eve. There are three main parts to the world’s system: **Genesis 3:6** *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food,* ① **THOSE THINGS WHICH APPEAL TO THE NATURAL OR SENSUAL PART OF MAN** *and that it was pleasant to the eyes,* ② **THOSE THINGS WHICH AROUSE THE EYES** *and a tree to be desired to make one wise,* ③ **THOSE THINGS THAT APPEAL TO OUR MINDS AND EGOS** - *she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.* All of this is in the world and is used to trap people in the world.

If what was said in the preceding verse is what we are longing after, we are not spiritual people and need to purge ourselves from these things. That is, we must become unspotted from this. In our actions, if we don’t change, we also demonstrate that we love the world more than we love God.

## Chapter 2

*1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.*

**Amplified** *My brethren, pay no servile regard to people - show no prejudice, no partiality. Do not attempt to hold and practice the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ [the Lord] of glory together with - snobbery!* {JF&B} “As all believers, alike rich and poor, derive all their glory from their union with Him, ‘the Lord of glory,’ not from external advantages of worldly fortune, the sin in question is peculiarly inconsistent with His ‘faith.’” The sin in question here is partiality especially towards those of position and prominence. James will explain what he means in the next few verses. **RESPECT** - {GREEK} *epiblepo* - To look upon is used of favorable regard; having partial regard for the well to do. {DICTIONARY} - To have deferential regard for; esteem.

*2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;* {Dake} “The ring is not condemned; it was customary for men and women to wear rings and other ornaments.” James gives two contrasts not with the intent of condemning or condoning the dress of either; his focus is on our attitude towards these. **VILE** - {GREEK} *rhuparos* - filthy, dirty, old shabby clothing. {DICTIONARY} - wretchedly bad; highly offensive or objectionable; repulsive or disgusting; poor, wretched, or sorry, as in quality or state; of little value or account.

*3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:* The person in the better clothes gets moved up strictly because of what he is wearing. Likewise, the poor person is moved down strictly because of what they are wearing. The individual doing this is making judgments based on outside appearance. **SAINTS’ PRINCIPLE:** **Let us take this Scripture beyond just the idea of rich versus poor and look at our attitude regarding the outward appearance of one that “looks” saved versus one that doesn’t “look” saved. Are we not also partial? GAY** - {GREEK} *lampros* - gay, bright, goodly, splendid, gorgeous. {DICTIONARY} - Bright or brilliantly colored; showily adorned.

*4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Amplified Are you not discriminating among your own and becoming critics and judges with wrong motives?* Partial - having a special liking. This passage is not talking about partiality but blind partiality. The only place for partiality in the Scripture is found in **Galatians 6:10** *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.* This passage shows that the only partiality that we can make is distinguishing the good we do to the clean versus the unclean. If we show blind partiality, we become judges who judge based on an evil perspective. To judge is to appraise or evaluate; to censure or criticize. Therefore, in order to judge properly, you must have all the facts. The more facts that are missing, the more inaccurate and sinful your judgment. (Remember **Matthew 7:1-2** *Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*)

*5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?* When you are poor, exercising faith is not a problem because you have nothing to lose and no other source. When you are rich, you don’t understand the testimonies of the poor. God has called the poor to be rich in faith, not necessarily rich in this world’s goods. Their rich faith may prompt the richness in this world.

**6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?** In that day, the Jewish officials, who were rich, were constantly oppressing the church. Today, those that oppress the church in government positions are likewise rich in this world's goods. Generally speaking, our oppressors are not the poor, the homeless or the street people. Our oppressors are people in high places who have high salaries along with it. But today, as then, we still dishonor the poor who have done nothing to us. {JF&B} *“To dishonor the poor is to dishonor those whom God honors, and so to invert the order of God.”*

**7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?** The rich heathens, even today, take every occasion to blaspheme the name of Christ. Watch on the television what Hollywood brings to us. Watch the actions of our officials in government.

**8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:** So after all of this discussion, here is what we must do. We must follow one of the two chief (or royal, kingly, supreme) commandments and love our neighbor, be they rich or poor, as ourselves. Only then will we do well. This royal law says nothing of the state of the neighbor; it says everything about what we must do.

**9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.** {Dake} *“If you show any degree of partiality and injustice you break God's law.”* **SAINTS' PRINCIPLE: Blind partiality is SIN!**

**10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.** This is not new information but a reminder that James points out for those that would justify themselves. So after we have done everything God said to do and we blow it in this area, we've blown it completely.

**11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.** So then, the conclusion of the matter is that we must live like we are going to be judged...because we will be.

**13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. NLT For there will be no mercy for you if you have not been merciful to others. But if you have been merciful, then God's mercy toward you will win out over his judgment against you.** This is another example of an offshoot of the law of sowing and reaping. If you have shown no mercy, you can expect to be judged without mercy. But if you show yourself merciful, you don't have to worry about judgment. You will be lifted, by the mercy you have already demonstrated, above judgment.

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At this point in James, we go into one of the most controversial doctrines in the New Testament: James study on faith versus works. Some feel that James is in direct contradiction with Paul who supported faith without works. Others feebly, try to explain how these concepts are complimentary. But before going further, let us understand the two points in question – faith versus works. To understand this, we need to look at two different “doctrines” in the church today that emphasize one of these two ideas:

**Faith Doctrine** – The Eternal Security doctrine is a good starting point to look at a pure faith doctrine. It states, in essence, that as long as one maintains faith in Jesus Christ to save them from sin, all of the dead works and sin they are engaged in (present tense) are covered under the blood and they are saved whether this sin is confessed or not. Under this doctrine, there is no requirement for works or sin consciousness. People in this state confess Jesus as Savior

with obvious sins in their lives: alcohol, sex, drugs, filthy language, etc. Those that profess this doctrine have some notable Scriptures to back up their claim. One of them is **Romans 8:38-39** *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Notwithstanding their supposed “proof,” this doctrine was, and remains to be, in error. There were some in the church in that day that obviously embraced this doctrine.

**Works Doctrine** – The basic Holiness doctrine is a good starting point for focusing on works. This doctrine states that as long as one maintains themselves free from sin, they are saved. If they die with any sin in their life or without getting rid of certain works in their life, they will be lost. In the Christian church, those that emphasize the importance of works without faith are known as “Judaizers”. These are basically bringing back the Law.

**James (Bible) Doctrine** – James brings us the balanced doctrine of the Bible. As long as one maintains faith in Jesus Christ demonstrated by a life of obedience to Him, they are saved. These strive to show their allegiance to Christ more and more by living for Him more and more. These demonstrate their faith in Him by realizing that without Him, they can do nothing.

**14** *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? Amplified What is the use (profit), my brethren, for any one to profess to have faith if he has no [good] works [to show for it]? Can [such] faith save [his soul]?* The key to James’ doctrine is found in this verse and in verse 24. In this verse, he states, “Though a man say he hath faith.” The implication is that faith is confessed but not demonstrated. Verse 24 confirms that, which we shall soon see, when he speaks of “faith only.” So the question is, “Can faith alone, with nothing else, save us?” This concept spawned the “Eternal Security” doctrine. The Amplified Version makes it even clearer in focusing on the question of whether a person can merely profess faith without demonstrated works to show his faith. Also, John in his first epistle makes it crystal clear that the Christian life is not just demonstrated in words: **1 John 2:6** *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

**15** *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? NLT Suppose you see a brother or sister who needs food or clothing, 16 and you say, “Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat well”--but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?* There is a time to exercise faith and a time to exercise ourselves. This was a situation where we should have exercised ourselves. Speaking words of faith and comfort in a situation where we should DO something are meaningless to the recipient and hypocritical to us!

**17** *Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*

**FAITH** - {GREEK} *pistis* - A firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing. It is used for (a) trust; (b) trustworthiness; (c) what is believed [“the faith”]; (d) an assurance; (e) a pledge of fidelity. {DICTIONARY} - Confidence or trust in a person or thing; belief not substantiated by proof; spiritual acceptance of truth or realities not certified by reason.

Notice how the dictionary definition expresses the ways of the world. But also notice how that the definition of the literal Greek does not express the thinking of Hebrews 11:1 - **faith becoming the substance and evidence for the thing that is believed upon.**

**WORKS** - {GREEK} *ergon* - denotes (a) employment, task; (b) a deed or act of God, Christ and believers. In James, in the sense of acts of the believers, it is rendered as the effect of faith. {DICTIONARY} - Continued physical or mental exertion or activity directed to some purpose or end.

**DEAD** - {GREEK} *nekros* - Used in the death of the body in its most frequent sense. {DICTIONARY} - (a) Having ceased to live, lifeless; (b) without effectiveness, vitality, brilliance, etc.; (c) no longer productive or operative.

So then, it would seem that this is the conclusion of the matter: ***Our assurance in Christ for ultimate salvation is ineffective without continued good deeds directed towards this same end. Our faith words cannot stand alone.***

***18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.*** It appears that James' intent here is to show the pre-eminence of works over faith alone. (The "alone" part is the key word in this discussion.) If it is possible, show me your faith that exists without works. Even the people in the world will let you know that as a Christian you have to demonstrate this by good works -- you have to "live something." How is that we are so deceived in the Church? On the other hand, James lets the hearer know that he can demonstrate his faith by his works. TALK IS CHEAP; DO SOMETHING!

***19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.*** Believing that there is one God is not a big deal. In fact, it is good that you believe that - this puts you on an even keel with our adversaries, the devil and his hordes. But if your faith is no more than that, you are in no better state than they.

***20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*** {Dake} "Are you willing to be instructed as to the nature of true saving faith?" {MH} "Faith without works is said to be dead, not only as void of all those operations which are the proofs of spiritual life, but as unavailable to eternal life." Hence, faith that exists without good works supporting it is insufficient to save us.

***21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?*** The wording on this verse has caused much controversy. Abraham was justified by his faith and by his works. Every where in Scripture, Abraham for his faith in God (**Romans 4:3** *For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*). But in this verse, Abraham demonstrated the faith that he already had by his works of offering Isaac up. He believed God to the point that he accepted the promise and knew that God would have to raise up Isaac again to fulfill the promise (Hebrews 11:17-19).

***22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*** The works worked with his faith and perfected his faith. Faith must have some demonstration to prove that it is faith. He obeyed because he believed God. Could he have believed God and not obeyed? Probably, but his disobedience would have nullified his faith. We believe unto the saving of the soul. This takes more than just weak faith.

**23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.** {Dake} “Thus every act of obedience is an act of faith and works combined to maintain justification before God.”

**24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.** From this whole discussion, those who believe in eternal security and the idea of faith only without a life to support, ought to see that we are justified by faith with works or works with faith. It is not done by faith only.

**25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?** This is an important point. Rahab is known throughout the Scripture with the title of “the harlot.” How can a harlot be saved or recognized as one of the champions of faith? Harlot (prostitute!) was her occupation up until she met the spies. At that point, she expressed her belief based on what she heard and what she knew (by faith). Her works of hiding the spies, binding the scarlet thread upon her window and obeying their words regarding her family were the works to support her faith.

**26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.** Works are the life behind our faith. Again, revisit verse 20, without works, faith is vain and ineffectual.

To get a balance in verses 14 - 26, I see three phases in the believer’s life:

- (1) **SINNER - (*Works without faith*)** The sinner tries to satisfy a holy God by good works without the accepting the salvation of Jesus Christ. This is what Paul taught against in Romans.
- (2) **INITIAL SALVATION - (*Faith without legal works*)** At the point of salvation, your justification is dependent upon your faith in operation with the grace of God. There are no moral deeds attached to it (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 4:4-5; Galatians 2:16). Note that these verses are the ones that add to the controversy of this doctrine but they point to initial salvation, not to the continuation of it, as James deals with. Our salvation is not based on anything we do but on our faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice at the cross.
- (3) **CONTINUED SALVATION - (*Faith with works*)** After initial salvation, the Christian has the responsibility to live a consistent, holy life before God and others. Sin must be confessed and laid aside; weights must also be recognized and laid aside (Hebrews 12:1). The Christian’s walk has nothing to do with continued sinful inconsistencies (Galatians 2:17-18). Our goal is to be like Jesus (I John 2:6; Romans 8:12-13; Galatians 5:24-25).

## Chapter 3

### The Danger of the Tongue

**1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.** {MH} “These words do not forbid doing what we can to direct and instruct others in the way of their duty or to reprove them in a Christian way for what is amiss; but we must not affect to speak and act as those who are continually assuming the chair, we must not prescribe to one another, so as to make our own sentiments a standard by which to try all others, because God gives various gifts to men, and expects from each according to that measure of light which he gives. ‘Therefore by not many masters’ (or teachers, as some read it); ‘do not give yourselves the air of teachers, imposers, and judges, but rather speak with the humility and spirit of learners; do not censure one another, as if all must be brought to your standard.’” A teacher has a vast responsibility and shall receive greater judgment because they know to do and therefore, must do. We must be careful, for in assuming this mastery, how do we effect God’s people? How many do we condemn to be like us, perishing for a lack of knowledge? These things will cause greater condemnation. Now though James is speaking about teaching, he’s really moving to his real topic – how we handle the tongue. The ones that are warned here are teachers that are unprepared to teach but are so willing to open their mouths and provide unholy advice. The problem is the teaching but the source is an undisciplined tongue.

**2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Amplified For we all often stumble and fall and offend in many things. And if anyone does not offend in speech [never says the wrong things], he is a fully developed character and a perfect man, able to control his whole body and to curb his entire nature.** The key to perfection is found in our control of our mouths. If we can keep from offending someone through our speech, we have reached perfection.

**3 Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. 4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!** {MH} “We are taught to dread an unruly tongue as one of the greatest and most pernicious evils. It is compared to a little fire placed among a great deal of combustible matter, which soon raises a flame and consumes all before it.”

**6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. NLT And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is full of wickedness that can ruin your whole life. It can turn the entire course of your life into a blazing flame of destruction, for it is set on fire by hell itself.** The tongue, or an uncontrolled mouth, will mess up your whole life and then cause your life after death to be miserable also.

**7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:** Of course there are some animals that have not and cannot be domesticated but that is not James’ point. The point is that all types of wild, savage animals have been tamed but, as he will say in the next verse, the tongue cannot be tamed by mankind.

**8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.** Does this mean we’re doomed to hell because we cannot control our tongue? No. No MAN can control it but with God all things are

possible. {MH} “The apostle does not intend to represent it as a thing impossible, but as a thing extremely difficult, which therefore will require great watchfulness, and pains, and prayer, to keep it in due order.”

**9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.** We use the same tongue to praise the Lord, the same tongue to comfort children, and the same tongue to spew out bitter gossip about our brother and sister. Yes, that same tongue! And what is James response?

**10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. NLT And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right!** This is not right; this does not line up with the requirement of God! We can't overlook this! We must work on our tongues!

**11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.** In nature, you cannot get two different fruits from one tree but with the tongue, you can get all kind of fruit.

**13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.** Now James is finished, for now, with his discussion of the tongue and moves to giving us an understanding of what it means to be truly wise. **NLT If you are wise and understand God's ways, live a life of steady goodness so that only good deeds will pour forth. And if you don't brag about the good you do, then you will be truly wise!** **SAINTS' PRINCIPLE:** True wisdom is demonstrated through the life you live.

### The True Believer

**14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. NLT But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your hearts, don't brag about being wise. That is the worst kind of lie.** After you have begun to work on your speech, let's also look at what's in your heart? Don't brag about being “God's wise ambassador” and you have all kind of JUNK in your heart. And this is not just “junk”. Notice the words of James, “bitter envying and strife in your hearts”. These are serious issues that will not only cause you great embarrassment in this life but cause you to lose your soul. Envy (resentment, spite, hatred) is bad enough without it being bitter (angry, strong resentment). This type of sin will move to the next level and begin to actively work against their neighbor. Is this Christ-like? I think not. The next verse tells us where this attitude comes from.

**15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.** What wisdom? The type of wisdom that will call itself wise with envy, jealousy, and strife in their hearts. This is the type of wisdom that James calls demonic, carnal (sensual), and of this world. When I see him using these terms, I must conclude that this is NOT directed to the unsaved but TO THE CHURCH! **SAINTS' PRINCIPLE:** **If your heart is not right, no matter how you look, you are under demonic influence and need to be delivered.**

**16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. Amplified For wherever there is jealousy (envy) and contention (rivalry and selfish ambition), there will also be confusion (unrest, disharmony, rebellion) and all sorts of evil and vile practices.** The start of EVERY kind of evil work is envy and strife. Now where did the envy and strife come from? The Scripture also tells us their origin: **Proverbs 13:10a Only by pride cometh contention.** In our look at the Amplified Bible, we see that contention and strife are one and the same.

**17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.** Now compare that carnal wisdom to the wisdom that is from God. This wisdom has eight attributes shown in this verse. The wisdom of God is:

- (1) **PURE** - chaste, holy, clean. This wisdom does not manifest itself in working tricks or trying to get by. This wisdom is holy - it lines up 100% with the Word of God.
- (2) **PEACEABLE** - Instead of being full of strife, it manifests itself in peace. James already said that where strife is there is also confusion and God is not the author of confusion.
- (3) **GENTLE** - Meek, modest, kind, not harsh or bitter. This wisdom will not try to impose its will upon another. The facts are gently laid out for another to accept or reject. If they choose to turn away, this wisdom maintains a peaceable demeanor.
- (4) **EASY TO BE ENTREATED** - Not stubborn or obstinate but yielding to others. Those possessing the wisdom that comes from God are easily approachable.
- (5) **FULL OF MERCY** - This one does not just have mercy but they are full of mercy. They are always forgiving and performing acts of kindness.
- (6) **FULL OF GOOD FRUITS** - The wisdom of God not only has the right fruit but they are full of that fruit. **Galatians 5:22-23** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*
- (7) **WITHOUT PARTIALITY** - This wisdom does not violate James instructions regarding having respect of persons.
- (8) **WITHOUT HYPOCRISY** - This wisdom is not partial nor is it hypocritical. The dictionary says hypocrisy means “*the act or practice of simulating or feigning feelings or beliefs, especially the false appearance of piety (holiness, godliness) and virtue (morality, goodness); insincerity*”. Those that have the wisdom of God don’t use flattery to impress those that they really don’t care for.

**18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.** Those that are peace makers and are living the law will demonstrate righteousness in their lives.

## Chapter 4

It's difficult to find various themes in this chapter. James hits a number of topics to ensure the sanctity of the people of God.

**1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?** Where do wars and infighting among the saints come from? Yes, James makes it clear that these wars and fightings are among the saints. They originate from active lusts that have not been dealt with inside of us. Call to mind Chapter 1 of this epistle. The source of sin is lust that has not been dealt with. These things are warring inside of us. We want to do good but we don't. We don't want to do something else but we do. Stop it and gain control over your life through the Spirit of the Lord!

**2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.** We do all types of things to get what we want: we lust, we kill, and we fight and war. However, these are not just things we want. These are things we are obsessed with. Obsession is lust. But after all of this obsession and envy and strife, we still don't have what we're trying to get because we didn't simply ask for it. But there's still another problem.

**3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.** When we do ask, we don't receive it because we ask amiss (*kakos* - evil), or with evil intentions. What does this mean? Sometimes people lust for things to show someone up, to make themselves look good, or for more sinister reasons. You won't receive it because you're asking with evil intentions. When we find ourselves using any of these excuses for unanswered prayer, there is a definite problem with our salvation that goes way beyond unanswered prayer. If you stay in Christ and LIVE in Christ, you will not ask amiss. However, since God has higher purposes in mind, we have to go back to Him if after we ask we don't receive. Jesus said, in the Sermon on the Mount, **Matthew 7:7-8** *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* Since the Word of God Himself has said this, we must believe the Word.

**4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.** When James calls his readers adulterers and adulteresses, he's not speaking to sinners but to Christians engaged in spiritual adultery. Friendship with the world system (not those in the world) is to reject the ways of God and worship another. The world lusts for things, for power, for prestige, for money. When we do likewise, we put ourselves in the same mind as the world. When we esteem the ways of the world highly in our hearts, we will do all of the things of verses 1 - 3 and then some. We also will find ourselves out of the ark of safety - an enemy of God. (This verse has nothing to do with individuals in the world but its focus is on the world system. If we pull away from individuals in the world, how will they be saved?) **1 John 2:15** *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

**5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? Amplified Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us and He yearns for the Spirit [to be welcome] with a jealous love?** (Note: there is no exact Scripture quoted in this passage but rather he seems to refer to the spirit of a number of passages from the Old Testament. The spirit of the world will tend towards envy because of the lusts in our hearts. The spirit of Christ will do no such thing. In fact, the Spirit of Christ jealously wants us to desire only Him.

**6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.** There's a striking difference when looking how God deals with the proud versus those that have a humble heart. On the one hand, He works against them. On the other, He gives grace - that undeserved extra boost that takes us over the top. This verse represents the author's view of **Proverbs 3:34 Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.**

**7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** {JF&B} "The language is taken from warfare. 'Submit' as a good soldier puts himself in complete subjection to his captain. 'Resist,' stand bravely against." If we will submit ourselves to God, this submissive spirit will keep us humble before Him. While doing so, and to keep ourselves humble, we must resist the devil. We must not give in to his temptations. When doing so, he will flee from us.

**8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.** The first part of this verse appears to be a continuation of the prior verse. We resist the devil and he flees; we draw nigh to God and He likewise draws nigh. But then James begins a plea to sinners, backsliders and carnal saints. To get close to God, you must have clean hands. The hands represent action - the action that causes sin or good works. Likewise, you must purify your hearts - the source of sin and good works. {JF&B} "The double-minded is at fault in heart; the sinner in his hands likewise."

**9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.** After you have done that, show true repentance and sorrow for your sins. How can you be truly sorry for what you have done while still laughing? There must be some remorse.

**10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.** If we will truly humble ourselves before the Lord, realizing His majesty and His sovereign rule, He will lift us out of our situations and circumstances. He will also lift up our heads, not in pride, but in joy in the Holy Ghost.

**11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.** In looking at this verse, it seems to be very powerful. If we speak evil of our brethren, we are speaking evil of the law because it condemns this practice. Our actions say that it is of no effect. By doing this we set ourselves up as better than the law - judges of it. We hold our sinful actions up as representative of what should be done rather than obeying the law.

**12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?** There is only One Lawgiver and Judge. Who do you think you are to put yourself in His position? We are also not called upon to be "fruit inspectors". We must realize that any judgment we make will cause the same method of judgment to fall back on us (see Matthew 7).

**13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:** Go to now - Come now or Come and hear what I have to say.

**14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.** It is highly presumptuous to think that tomorrow is promised to us. Christians have died prematurely as well as those in the world. Our life is but a vapor when compared to the length of eternity.

**15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.** But James does not reprove and leave it at that. He tells us what we ought to say, If the Lord will. Unless we know what the Lord has willed through divine revelation, this should be our saying.

**16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.** But now you brag about your future plans (vacations, sales trips, plans to engage in commerce). All talk like this without using the statement in the prior verse is evil.

**17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.** James has expressed many warnings in this chapter and shown clearly what we should and should not do. If we refuse to do it after knowing that we should, to us it is sin.

## Chapter 5

### Warnings to the Unsaved Rich

*1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.* “Go to now” - see chapter 4:13 for an explanation of this term. It is apparent that this is a prophecy to the unbelieving rich. Because James was based in Jerusalem, it was probably to the rich Jews there. The prophecy goes down to verse six saying that all the things that the rich trust in will soon come to nothing.

*2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten. 3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.*

*4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.* **Amplified [But] look! [Here are] the wages that you have withheld by fraud from the laborers who have reaped your fields, crying out [for vengeance]; and the cries of the harvesters have come to the ears of the Lord of hosts.** God is not unrighteous to ignore what’s going on. He sees how the poor are mistreated and when He “hears” something, something will soon happen.

*5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.* {AC} “You have lived luxuriously feeding yourselves without fear, pampering the flesh. You have indulged all your sinful and sensual appetites to the uttermost.” Wanton – living recklessly.

*6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.* The rich were accustomed to condemning and killing the just without expecting resistance.

### The Saints Must Learn to Go Through

*7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.* We must be patient until the rapture for until that day, there will be things for us to go through from minor trials to full blown persecution. We must be patient because the Lord has a purpose in mind in delaying the rapture. We must realize that He is patiently waiting for those to get saved that will be saved - likewise, then, we must be patient.

*8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Once again, the call is for patience. While you are waiting patiently, “establish your hearts.”* This is to say, per Adam Clarke, “*take courage, do not sink under your trials*”. The reason why is that God’s judgment is at hand. For the Jews at Jerusalem, it arrived at 70 AD. No doubt this last statement applied to them.

*9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.* Don’t murmur against one another because God is not pleased with any kind of murmuring.

*10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.* Instead of murmuring against one another, look to the prophets as an example of suffering affliction and of patience. **SAINTS’ PRINCIPLE: LEARN HOW TO GO THROUGH! And do that with one another also.**

**11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.** Indeed the Lord is full of pity and of tender mercies. Those that go through are also happy - they can exult in the victory they have attained.

**12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.** {Dake} “Jews and Arabs were notorious for swearing or taking oaths by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, the temple, the altar and the different members of the body. Even simple affirmatives were always accompanied by an oath. The word ‘condemnation’ here refers to ‘hypocrisy.’ The idea is that those who were in the habit of making oaths also believed that they could make them with the mouth while the heart cancelled them...This was all done in hypocrisy and fostered searing of the conscience as to what was said.”

### **Divine Prescriptions For Afflictions And Sickness**

**13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.** These are not matter-of-fact statements but the means to deliverance and maintenance of joy.

- Those among the saints that are in distress, difficulty or suffering hardship should pray. Pray for deliverance and for divine favor to secure the blessing.
- If you are full of joy and just generally happy, sing psalms. Sing to the goodness of the Lord while you are in this state - don't get caught up in carnal matters.

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

- Are you sick? You haven't got to be in the hospital but the reference is to any type of sickness. If this is you, call for the elders of the church. Don't wait for a visit, call for them. (Now your part is done.) When the elders of the church come, they are to anoint the sick with olive oil in the name of the Lord and pray the prayer of faith. The next verse gives us the promised results.

**15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.** This is one of the clearest promises in the Scriptures and so rarely used. The prayer of faith will yield these results:

- The prayer of faith shall rescue the sick from their sickness (not save their souls);
- They won't just feel better but the Lord will raise them up out of their sick bed and set them upon their feet;
- Their sins shall be forgiven. This last point is a side benefit that was not even asked for but it comes along with the rest of it.

### **The Power of Prayer**

**16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.** Again, going back to the theme of not grudging one another, let us confess our faults one to another and pray for each other that we may be healed of these faults. PRAYER WILL DO SOMETHING!

**17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. NLT Elijah was as human as we are,**

***and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for the next three and a half years!***

This verse demonstrates the power of prayer. This is not some small thing. Elijah was a regular man like us and look what prayer did for him.

***18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.***

**Restoration of Wandering Believers**

***19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. NLT My dear brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back again, you can be sure that the one who brings that person back will save that sinner from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.*** These two verses dismiss the “once saved always saved” doctrine. The prior verse points to the possibility that a saint can err from the truth. The role of the rest of the church is bring that one back. When we do, we can take great comfort in the fact that we have saved a soul from death and hidden a multitude of sins.

In closing our study in this powerful epistle, let us go back to the theme of 1:16 - DO NOT ERR, MY BE-LOVED BRETHREN.





