

A People of the Book
A Textual Study

A Study of

James

Tom Smith

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES

INTRODUCTION

Contents:

Author
Date
To Whom Written
Purpose
Special Features

AUTHOR: Uncertain. Probably James the Lord's brother. Note these facts.

1. There are three other men named James who are mentioned in the New Testament.
 - ⇒€ There was the Apostle James, who was the Son of Zebedee and the brother of the Apostle John. It is almost impossible that he could have been the author, for he was martyred by Herod Agrippa about A.D. 44. This was some years before the letter of James was written.
 - ⇒€ There was the Apostle James the less, who was the son of Alpheus and who was also the cousin of Jesus. He is a possibility, but so little is known about him that it is highly unlikely that he is the author.
 - ⇒€ There was James, the father of the Apostle Judas (Luke 6:16, NASV). Nothing else is known about this James.
2. James, the Lord's brother, was well known by all believers everywhere. Being the Lord's brother was enough to give him a world-wide reputation among believers. In addition to this, he was the pastor of the great Jerusalem church which was the mother church of Christianity. Note in James 1:1 that he simply calls himself James. He needed no other identification; everyone knew the James who was writing the letter. The point is this:
 - ⇒€ James the Lord's brother was so well known that any other James would have had to identify himself to keep from being mistaken as James the Lord's brother.
3. Some argue that if the author was really James the Lord's brother, he would have mentioned the fact. A.T Robertson has an excellent answer to this position:

“If it be urged that the author of the epistle, if related to Jesus, would have said so, one may reply that a delicate sense of propriety may have had precisely the opposite effect. Jesus had himself laid emphasis on the fact of his spiritual kinship with all believers as more important (Matthew 12:48-50). The fact that James during the ministry of Jesus was not sympathetic with His work would also act as a restraining force upon him. The brother of Jesus (see also Jude 1:1) naturally would wish to make his appeal on the same plane as the other teachers of the gospel. He rejoices in the title of ‘servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,’ just as Paul did later (Romans 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:1) and as Jude, the brother of James, did (Jude 1:1)” (Studies in the Epistle of James. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, p.2).

4. The church, from the very earliest of its tradition, has held that the author was James the Lord's brother. As RVG Tasker says,

“The tradition that became established in the Church that the Epistle was not only apostolic but should be attributed to James, the head of the Early Church at Jerusalem, ought undoubtedly to be accepted as true. Not only is it incapable of being scientifically disproved, but it has much intrinsic probability” (The General Epistle of James. “Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” ed. by RVG Tasker. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956, p.21).

5. The facts about James the Lord’s brother point toward him being the author.
 - ⇒He was a brother of the Lord (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3).
 - ⇒He was an eyewitness of the risen Lord. In fact, the Lord appeared to him in a private conversation (1 Cor. 15:7). He was among those waiting for the coming of the Spirit in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14).
 - ⇒He was an apostle. He was probably appointed after his private encounter with the risen Lord (Galatians 1:19).
 - ⇒He became the pastor of the great Jerusalem Church. He probably assumed his duties when Peter left on his missionary journeys (Acts 12:17; etc.). Thereafter, he is by far the greatest personality in the Jerusalem Church.
 - ⇒He was the first one told about Peter’s release from prison (Acts 12:17).
 - ⇒He was the presiding officer over the great Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).
 - ⇒He was called a pillar of the church along with Peter and John. Paul was forced to discuss his ministry among the Gentiles with him as well as with Peter and John (Galatians 1:19; Galatians 2:9).
 - ⇒He was the one who received the offerings brought by Paul from the Gentile churches to help the Jerusalem saints (Acts 21:18-25).
 - ⇒He was well versed in the Old Testament (cp. Acts 15:15f; Book of James).
 - ⇒He was familiar with Jesus’ teachings. The epistle has around twenty quotations from the Sermon on the Mount alone.

DATE: Uncertain. Probably A.D. 45-50.

The date is disputed. Some say it is one of the earliest writings, perhaps the earliest. Others say it is a later writing. However, the arguments for the earlier date seem to fit the book more readily.

1. The church is still described in its primitive form. The word “assembly” (Greek, *synagogue*) is used instead of *church* (James 2:2), and the elders of the church are mentioned, but the deacons and bishops are not (James 5:14).
2. There is no mention of the Jewish-Gentile controversy nor of the great church council held in Jerusalem in A.D. 50 (Acts 15).
3. The book is a picture of what primitive Christianity meant to a Jew converted to Christ. It leaves one with the sense of *birth-pangs*, of a great transition occurring from a Jewish to a Christian way of life.

TO WHOM WRITTEN: “To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” It was written to Christians of the dispersion (diaspora). The word dispersion simply means to the Jews scattered around the world.

PURPOSE: James had two purposes for writing.

1. To correct a corrupted faith that was rapidly seeping into the church. Many were professing faith in Christ, but living immoral and unrighteous lives. Their faith was profession only—a faith of license with little or no restraint upon behavior.
2. To present the true faith of Christ: a faith of the heart—a faith that produces outward fruit. James' point is very simple: a person is known to be a Christian only by his behavior. What he does proves one of two things: it proves he is a Christian or it proves he is not a Christian.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

1. James is “A General or Catholic Epistle.” That is, it is not written to a specific church or individual, but rather, it is written to all Christian believers. James is written particularly to all Jewish converts.
2. James is “The Epistle of the Royal Law.” That is, it is the epistle stressing the necessity for loving one's neighbor as oneself. The law of Moses is called the law of liberty (James 2:8-12).
3. James is “The Epistle of Sermon Notes.” The characteristics of the Jewish and Greek sermons of that day are found throughout James. The epistle seems to be a collection of sermon notes centered around the theme of trials and temptations.
4. James is “The Epistle of Practical Living” or “The Epistle of the Second Stage.” Its concern is the life of the believer after he has become a Christian and has been assured of his salvation. The thrust is Christian growth.

Greetings

Introduction

As we begin the study of this book let us look carefully at the beginning greetings and see some lessons from these simple statements. Greetings from a man who simply calls himself James, so well known that he needs no other title or identification.

James 1:1

1. A servant of God & the Lord Jesus Christ

- a. With the exception of the book of Jude, James is the only NT writer to identify himself by the term slave without any other qualification.
 - 1) When Paul identifies himself as a slave, he adds the title of apostle
 - 2) However, James goes no further than to call himself a slave of God & the Lord Jesus Christ.
- b. Four implications in this title
 - 1) Implies absolute obedience
 - a) A slave knows no law but his masters' word.
 - b) A slave has no rights of his own.
 - c) A slave is the absolute possession of his master & is bound to give him absolute & unquestioned obedience.
 - 2) Implies absolute humility
 - a) Here is a man who not of his privileges, but of his duties, not of his rights but of his obligations.
 - b) A man who has lost himself in the service of God, literally denying himself & saying yes to God.
 - 3) Implies absolute loyalty
 - a) Here is a man who has no interest of his own but is totally pledged to God. What he does he does for God.
 - b) His own profit & preferences do not matter. He is loyal to God.
 - 4) Yet it also implies a certain pride.
 - a) Being a servant of God is not a title of dishonor but of honor.
 - b) Look at the great men of the OT
 - Moses was known as a servant of God – 1 Kings 8:53
 - Joshua & Caleb also known this way – Num.14:24
 - Abraham, Isaac & Jacob known this way – Deut.9:27
 - Job known this way – Job 1:8
 - Isaiah known this way – Isa.20:3
 - Prophets distinctively known this way – Amos 3:7; Jer.7:25

2. Greetings

- a. This is the way ordinary Greek letters opened. Very unusual – Paul always used the Christian greeting “grace & peace”
- b. This method of greeting only occurs twice in the NT
 - 1) Letter Claudius Lysias (Roman officer) wrote to Felix – Acts 23:26

- 2) Letter issued after the council in Jerusalem – Acts 15:23
- c. This is interesting because James is the one who presided over that council – Acts 15:13

3. To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations

- a. Scattered – (dispora) – technical word for Jews who lived outside Palestine. All the Jews who for some reason or another lived outside the Promised Land.
- b. This dispersion was important in the spreading of Christianity
 - 1) All over the world there were synagogues & allowed Christians to begin spreading the news about Jesus.
 - 2) It meant that all over the world there were people who were familiar with the OT & knew of the promises of God.
 - 3) In God's providence He was giving the gospel a point of contact in almost every city & town in the world.

Developing Maturity Through Trials

Introduction

James gives us no hint as to the struggles his readers might be going through. Perhaps as he opens his book he is just sharing a principle concerning Christian maturity. Life for a believer will not be easy. He warns Christians that they will often find themselves in all kinds of pressures & temptations (both from within & without) as they strive to live for Jesus. These pressures & temptations must be faced properly for spiritual maturity to result. James knew that if these pressures & temptations were faced improperly they would destroy the believer instead of mature them spiritually.

Verses 2-18 seem to all be connected with this thought. We will examine these verses in several lessons & try to show their connection with one another. As James discusses the right attitude toward trials, he implies that wisdom is needed from God to face them properly. However, when asking we must not doubt God's response. James shares that such trials come upon all (rich or poor), but God is not the originator of the temptations we face – our desires are what triggers them. Satan will seek to use these to destroy us.

James 1:2-4

1. Consider it pure joy

a. Words

1. **Consider** – to account or think; the idea is careful deliberate judgment.
This word is translated in other verses as one taking charge or taking the leadership (governor, chief, rule). James is telling us to deliberately take charge of these trials with our mind & see them in a positive light instead of just hardships.
2. **Pure joy** – to receive something joyfully, as an occasion for joy. Pure & unmixed joy; joy to the highest intensity. **The idea** – face struggles gladly; don't dwell on the unpleasantness of the situation. Don't complain or grumble about the hardships you are facing. Develop the attitude of Jesus – Heb.12:1,2 – for the joy set before Him He endured the cross
3. **Trials** – Used to describe adversities that come from within or without.
Often the meaning of the two words trials & temptations are closely related. What God permits as a test to develop the character, Satan or the flesh may use as a temptation. See the book of Job – God used the designs of Satan to build Job's character. Two things can happen when we are tried – we can develop Christian character or become embittered, rebellious & hardened.
4. **Fall into** – to become encompassed with; something that catches us unaware (robbers in parable of good Samaritan); something that we are unable to anticipate & thus have to face unprepared. In the course of life we will encounter things for which we cannot be prepared in advance. However, we can be prepared in our attitude toward these circumstances.

5. **Patience** – unswerving constancy; ability to meet adversity & overcome

b. **James is not saying that trials are pleasant in themselves**, but since trials are beneficial to our spiritual development, they are to be received in a spirit of joy & not just as unpleasant experiences.

Acts 5:41 (disciples rejoiced – worthy to suffer)

1. Our faith is being tested through our daily trials. Meeting obstacles & overcoming them proves the genuineness of our faith & also molds our character.
2. If our faith is genuine, we will not only stand the trial, but we will be stronger for the experience.
3. One thing that amazed the heathen when they persecuted Christians was that they did not die grimly, they died singing.

2. The results of such actions

a. **Be made perfect** – perfection toward a given end or purpose

1. Sacrificial animal perfect = fit to offer to God
2. Scholar is perfect = past initial stages of learning, mature
3. Man is perfect = past age of bodily development, full grown
4. **Idea** – This patience that is developed through joyfully enduring trials makes us fit for our task in the world. The way that we face every experience in life is either fitting us or unfitting us for the tasks which God has for us to do.

b. **Be made complete** – entire, perfect in every part

1. Bit by bit this unswerving constancy that is being developed through trials is removing the weaknesses & imperfections from our character.
2. Daily we are enabled to conquer sin & shed the old blemishes & gain new virtue until in the end we are complete – fit for service to God & our fellow man.

c. **Not lacking anything** – to be complete in all aspects. Full growth or maturity of character. James is not saying that we will be morally perfect or sinless.

James 3:2 – we all stumble (sin) in many respects

3. How God uses pressure & temptations to mature us spiritually

a. **God is trying to get our attention.**

1. God will allow trouble, opposition & pressure to come upon us, which is greater than our ability to resolve. Usually it will come in multiples – several calamities at once.
2. God's greatest competition for our time, attention & affections is the cares of this world. They choke out His word & rob Him of our affection & devotion. Mt.13:18-23
 - a) Our focus is on our plans & goals
 - b) Along comes adversity whose purpose is to drive us to God

c) The longer the struggle lingers – His invitation more attractive

3

3. If we fail to see the hand of God behind our struggles we will become discouraged & Satan will gain the victory.
4. To endure these pressures we must be assured that God loves us. During the struggle Satan will try to convince us that God has forsaken us, yet scripture reveals to us that the fact that we are struggling should be a strong assurance us that God loves us.

Heb.12:6,7,10,11

b. God is trying to get us to examine ourselves

1. 1 Cor.11:31,32 – if examine selves not be judged
2. God wants us to repent before we are hardened by sin.
3. Just like physical pain can be our greatest protector, so pressure & temptation can warn us of impending danger if we will be observant. It's when we refuse to change that we are in the greatest danger spiritually.
4. Self examination must take place in God's word. Adversity should cause us to pray as David – search me & try me... see if any wicked way in me – Ps.139:23,24
5. If evil seems to never depart from our household, probably it is because we have rewarded evil to those who have done good to us – Prov.17:13
6. Adversity & contention reveal pride & arrogance in our hearts. Prov.13:10; James 4:6,7
7. Pressure & temptations are to remind us of our weaknesses. It is only as we learn to glory in our weaknesses & infirmities that we will experience the power of Jesus in our lives. 2 Cor.12:7-10
8. God wants us to seek Him – to cry out to Him. Remember - it is the intensity of the cry of the child that determines how quickly the parent responds.

4. How Satan uses pressures & temptations to destroy us.

- a. God warns us that we are in a spiritual battle & must be prepared.
 1. In life a soldier must know his enemy, prepare himself for battle & be skilled in the use of his weapons. The same is true spiritually.
 2. Unless we know that a spiritual battle is going on when pressure & temptations arise, we will be overwhelmed & tempted to give up.
 3. Eph.6:10-18 – our wrestling is with spiritual forces & we must have the whole armor of God to withstand the onslaught.
- b. Satan wants us to allow sin to infiltrate our lives – to ignore the fact that we are merely human & are in constant need of God. He wants us to try to deal with our problems from a purely physical way. To resist as the world resists & to ignore the spiritual help that we need from God.
 1. Adversity is supposed to show us the futility of putting our faith in anyone or anything other than Jesus. Satan wants us to trust our

- wisdom & methods & follow the natural inclinations of man.
2. When we do he is assured of victory & we are left helpless.

4

- c. Satan wants us to think that God has forsaken us & is not worthy of our trust.
 1. God uses adversity to purify our faith – remove impurities – prove it genuine. God wants us to trust Him completely (no other gods).
 2. Unless we see the hand of God in every area of our life, including the pressures & temptations that come our way, we will be tempted to think God is not on our side. Somehow or other He has forsaken us
- d. Satan wants us to look upon evil as something good or at least as something that is harmless to us spiritually. Go ahead & sin that grace may abound.
 1. God tells us that the beginning of wisdom is to learn to hate evil
Prov.1:7; 8:13
 2. God wants us to focus on the fact that He will not be mocked. He wants us to hate sin (abhor it) Rom.12:9; Gal.6:7,8
 3. As we see the destruction that sin brings to our lives & the lives of others, that hatred is increased. Sin robs us of our potential for achieving for God & for enjoying God's fellowship. It destroys the plans God has for us.
- e. Satan wants us to pursue our goals & ambitions & just give God the leftovers.
 1. 2 Chron.26:5 – as long as he sought the Lord God made him prosper
 2. Joshua 1:8 – be careful to do all – He make you prosper
 3. Unless God is our 1st priority we lose. Satan wants us to think that we can prosper without God's intervention.

The Wisdom To Face Trials Joyfully

Introduction

How can we as Christians face our trials & temptations joyfully? James shares the value of such experiences to us spiritually – maturity, completeness, not lacking anything. Even though we may agree with this intellectually, how do we put such a teaching into practice? Can we ever really look at the hardships & struggles of life as something to be truly joyful about? James says to do so we must go to God as the source of the wisdom to see trials in such a light.

James 1:5-8

1. If anyone lacks wisdom

- a. **Wisdom** = something more than knowledge or acquired information, whether it comes by experience or through diligent study. A person can be a walking bible & not have what James calls, wisdom. Wisdom is far more than knowing a series of facts.
- b. **Wisdom is** the common sense to put into practice the principles & instruction given us in the word of God. It is practical insight into spiritual truths.
- c. **Wisdom is** the spiritual discernment that enables believers to make correct moral judgments & face life's difficulties & trials in a way that is consistent with God's will. Wisdom starts with an acknowledgement of God & a readiness to perform His will. Prov.9:10
- d. James knows that no matter how well we may know God's will, we will be faced with circumstances in our lives that demands the wisdom that only God can give to us.

2. Let him ask of God

- a. **Ask** = present tense = keep on asking See also Mt.7:7; Lk.18:1
- b. The source of wisdom is God & the method of obtaining it is prayer.
- c. See Prov.2:1-22

3. Who gives to all men liberally

- a. **Gives** = in Greek this word is a participle with a definite article. It can be translated in two ways.
 - 1) God, the one who gives
 - 2) The giving God (is a part of His nature just as love & forgiveness are)
 - 3) **Present participle** = suggests that God is continually giving
 - 4) **Idea** – as we are to be continuously asking, He is continually giving.
We can be assured that whatever the need, our God is a perpetually giving God. As we see this as a part of God's nature we are encouraged to boldly come to God with our requests.
- b. **To all** = God's grace is for all men, but James is addressing Christians, so the all is limited to all who ask. He stands ready to help again & again. There is no end to His mercy & graciousness.

- c. **Liberally** = simply, with a single motive (no ulterior motives), without restraint
- 1) His only motive is to aid us – gives wholeheartedly, not stingily
 - 2) He gives without any conditions or strings attached.

4. Without finding fault

- a. **Without reproach** KJV = to cast something into one's teeth; rebuke, embarrass & humiliate one for asking.
- 1) A gift loses its joy when we are rebuked, embarrassed & humiliated when it is given. Some will only give grudgingly or so that they might throw into our face how generous they have been to us & our indebtedness to them.
 - 2) No one likes a gift given so that the giver might parade his or her liberality.
- b. God is abundantly generous & truly wants to help us in our struggles, not bring us more hurt or problems.

5. Let him ask in faith nothing doubting

- a. **In faith** = a condition of acceptable prayer – Mk.11:23 (already has)
- 1) Means to pray trusting that God will answer according to His will.
 - 2) God wants us to trust in His power to answer as well as His goodness.
- b. **Nothing doubting** = to divide, to be in a dispute, to be at odds with one's self, to hesitate, to not be committed to fully trust God.
- 1) God wants us to come asking without internal indecision.
 - 2) One might doubt because they are not fully convinced that God will respond or because they are not sure that God wants to answer.

6. James pictures those who doubt

- a. **Like the surge of the sea** – rough water, breakers upon the shore; waves in a storm = wind driven & tossed.
- 1) Picture is indecision & uncertainty
 - 2) Eph.4:13,14 – immature are tossed about with every wind of doctrine
 - 3) One minute they believe & are full of hope, the next they are in despair & full of hopelessness.
 - 4) **Passive voice in Greek** - suggests an outside force motivating their doubt. They lack the inner strength & stability to withstand the external forces of doubt & therefore are in constant turmoil & indecision.
- b. **Such a one is disqualified from receiving God's special favor.**
- 1) **Think** = to suppose or imagine
 - 2) **Idea** - don't even entertain the thought that you will receive anything from the Lord.
 - 3) **Double minded man** – two souls or two personalities in constant conflict with each other. Person plagued with indecision doubt & hesitancy Divided loyalty just doesn't work with God. Mt.6:24

4) Double mindedness expresses itself in instability in every area of life

Rejoicing In Your Status In Life

Introduction

James has been discussing the Christians attitude toward the trials & pressures of life. God calls us to rejoice in the Lord always regardless of the circumstances we might be facing in life. Even hardship & struggles are reasons to rejoice because God is always with us & willing to provide whatever wisdom is needed to handle the situation. The end result is our maturity not our demise. In the midst of this discussion James wants us to realize that there is reason for all of us to rejoice. It doesn't matter whether we are rich or poor – rejoice. Both rich & poor are found in the church, but neither wealth nor poverty is a determining factor in our spirituality, however our attitude concerning our wealth is a determining factor of our spiritual maturity.

James 1:9-11

1. The church is made up of both the rich & the poor

- a. See the early church – people from all walks of life
 - 1) Made up of the poor – Acts 2:45; 4:35; 1 Cor.1:26-28
 - 2) Made up of slaves – Eph.6:5; Col.3:22
 - 3) Made up of the rich – 1 Tim.6:17
- b. James wants all Christians whether rich or poor to rejoice in their status in life
 - 1) Not mean rejoice because we are poor, unhealthy or crippled
 - 2) Means rejoice in spite of these conditions or circumstances
 - 3) God loves & blesses all men regardless of their status in life

2. The brother of humble circumstances

- a. Christianity brings to the poor man a new sense of value
 - 1) Are to take pride in their high position
 - 2) In Christ all Christians are exalted – Eph.2:6; Gal.3:28,29; 1 Cor.12:12,13; Col.3:11
 - 3) God wants us to behave here on earth as kings & priests, regardless of the circumstances we find ourselves in – we are children of God. 1 Cor.6:1-3; Rev.3:21
- b. Sadly most don't look at life this way
 - 1) They allow their circumstances to dull, numb or destroy the spirit of joy
 - 2) They become bitter & jealous & seek to take what others have
 - 3) They also develop a sense of inferiority & inadequacy & take on a withdrawn or slavish behavior (intimidated & ashamed).
- c. God wants all Christians whether rich or poor to understand & rejoice in Jesus.
 - 1) No matter our status in life we are important – His children
 - 2) God wants to work in all of us – Phil.2:12,13
 - 3) A downcast, insecure, threatened Christian is not to be the norm.

Though our outward social status may be viewed with contempt by the world, we can still rejoice because of our spiritual status which is based upon our relationship with Jesus.

3. The rich – take pride in his low position

- a. Wealth has its dangers
 - 1) Hard to enter the kingdom of God – Mt.19:23
 - 2) Can plunge us into ruin & destruction – 1 Tim.6:9,10
 - 3) Choke out the word of God & makes us unfruitful – Mt.13:22
- b. Wealth can also be used properly & be beneficial
 - 1) Acts 4:37 – meet the needs of the poor
 - 2) 1 Tim.6:17-19 – help us accomplish good works as we share
 - 3) Rich Christians can be beneficial to the church, but they must have the right attitude toward their wealth.
 - a) Not to use wealth to manipulate & have their way
 - b) If freely give so kingdom of God advanced – no strings
 - 4) Having riches brings with them responsibilities
 - a) Given to us so we might share with others in need
 - b) If we hoard them, they will destroy us – Lk.18:22-27
- c. As the poor brother is to forget his earthly poverty, so the rich brother is to forget his earthly wealth. We are one (the same) in Christ.
 - 1) God doesn't accept us based upon our social status – 1 Cor.1:26-31
 - 2) We are accepted because of what Jesus did – His righteousness

4. Riches are fleeting & brief

- a. Like flowering grass – soon withers when desert wind blows on it
- b. In the midst of his business – as he chases the elusive dollar
- c. The rich man may feel that he is safe & have a false sense of security
 - 1) Feels that he has the resources to cope with anything
 - 2) Feels he can buy anything – buy self out of any situation
- d. The person who trusts in riches is trusting in something that can be taken from him so quickly – like the winds affect the flowers in the desert. Life is so uncertain, man is so vulnerable – calamity & disaster can come at any moment.
- e. God wants us to realize our helplessness & humbly trust God who alone can give us things which will abide forever.

James 1:12

1. Patiently enduring trials brings blessings

- a. **Blessed** – refers to an inward spiritual joy & satisfaction
 - 1) Knowing that God is looking after & cares for him
 - 2) Knowing that God will deliver him from whatever happens in life
- b. Blessedness comes not from the freedom from trials, but from enduring trials
 - 1) As we learn to faithfully face the trials of life we find blessedness
 - 2) Instead of fleeing from trails – learn to face them properly
- c. Stood the test – faith tried & proven genuine

2. Blessings both now & eternally

- a. Now – life is purified, weaknesses in character are erased
- b. In the life to come – a crown of life (crown = a mark of honor & dignity)
 - 1) A crown of life – a crown that consists of life
 - 2) Life that is eternal & abundant
- c. Barclay “The Christian has a joy that no other can have. Life for him is like life forever at a feast. Christians have a royalty that other men have never realized, for, however humble his earthly circumstances; he is nothing less than a child of God. Christians have a victory that others cannot win, for he meets life & all its demands in the conquering power & presence of Jesus. God Himself gives him the victory. Christians have a new dignity & worth in life through the life & death of Jesus. He is not worthless because Jesus died for him.”

3. The weak Christian will cave in to trials & pressures & lose the blessing

- a. Mt.10:22 – he that endures to the end shall be saved
- b. 1 Cor.15:58 – be steadfast & unmovable – our work in the Lord is never in vain
- c. Gal.6:9 – not to grow weary in well doing
- d. Rev.3:11 – holdfast to what you have, that no one take your crown
- e. Heb.5:8 – learned obedience through things suffered
- f. 1 Cor.9:27 – make body a slave lest disqualified for the prize

The Source Of Our Temptations

Introduction

As James discusses the attitudes we need in life concerning the hardships we face & our focus concerning the abundance of material things in our lives, he now deals with some supposed arguments as to why God would allow these things to come about in our life. Man always is looking for an excuse when he needs to accept his responsibility.

James 1:13-15

1. Don't blame God for your temptations

- a. **In every person a civil war is going on** – as we are pulled in 2 directions
 - 1) Rom.7:22,23
 - 2) **Man's logic** - Since God created everything, He must be to blame for this civil war & evil tendency that we find in our lives.
 - 3) Rom.7:17 – “It is no longer I that do it, but sin living in me”
 - 4) Mt.6 – Lord's prayer – “lead us not into temptation”
- b. **Our trials can easily become temptations**
 - 1) Although God's goal is our maturity, when we don't face these trials as God wants us to, but instead react to them with bitterness & hardness of heart they become temptations to sin.
 - 2) When this happens, we have a tendency to blame something or someone else other than ourselves.
 - a) See Adam & Eve
 - b) Saying – “If it hadn't been there, wouldn't have done it”
 - c) Goal is somehow to justify our behavior & quiet our conscience.
- c. **James says – don't seek to justify your behavior by blaming God**
 - 1) Examples
 - a) Wondering why would God ever allow such a thing to happen?
 - b) Thinking that God created us with desires & passions, so He will understand & forgive us.
 - 2) God did create us with desires & passions, but He is not the person that arouses them – we are.
 - 3) God allows trials but He does not do so with evil intent.

2. Reasons God is not to blame for our temptations.

- a. **God's character** - God can't be tempted with evil.
 - 1) He is of such a righteous, holy & perfect character that He is not susceptible to temptations.
 - 2) There is absolutely nothing in God to which evil can make its appeal
- b. **God's actions** – God does not tempt anyone
 - 1) His character would not allow Him to do something morally wrong
 - 2) He tests our character, but not to solicit evil.
 - 3) 1 Cor.10:13 – God works to counteract the work of the enemy

3. Man is to blame for his own temptations.

- a. **Each one** = suggests that here is a universal truth; no exceptions
- b. **Temptations come from our own lusts** – we are inescapably responsible
 - 1) Sin would be helpless, if there were nothing within man to which it could appeal.
 - 2) Things we must understand to conquer temptation
 - a) Everyone has lusts & desires & can be enticed. Therefore all lust must be controlled – discipline ourselves. We are all susceptible to sin.
 - b) The danger begins when we allow these desires to be focused upon forbidden things. Instead of fleeing we allow our mind to picture the pleasure & dwell upon it. Sin is conceived. Mt.5:28
 - c) The result of allowing this lust & enticement to go unchallenged is death
 - 3) William Barclay has a thought on temptation that should challenge us to turn our total being over to Christ. The statements are in outline form for emphasis:

“Now desire is something which can be nourished or stifled. A man can...by the grace of God, eliminate desire if he faces it and deals with it at once. But...

- he can allow his steps to take him into certain places and certain company.
- he can encourage his eyes to linger on certain forbidden things.
- he can spend his life fomenting desire.
- he can use mind and heart and eyes and feet and lips to nourish desire.

“[However, a man] can so hand himself over to Christ and to the Spirit of Christ that he is cleansed of evil desire. He can be so engaged on good things that there is no time or place left for desire. It is idle hands for which Satan finds mischief to do; and it is an unexercised mind which plays with desire, and an uncommitted heart which is vulnerable to the appeal of lust.

“If a man nourishes and encourages desire long enough, there is an inevitable consequence. Desire becomes action. If a man thinks about anything long enough if he allows himself to desire it long enough, all the chances are that in the end he will do it. Desire in the heart in the end begets sin in the action” (The Letters of James and Peter. “The Daily Study Bible.” Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1958, p.61f).

c. **Two participles – carried away & enticed**

- 1) These are terms used in hunting & fishing
- 2) **Carried away** = to draw out like bait being used to lure a fish.
Satan tries to lure is by appealing to our desires.
- 3) **Enticed** = to trap or snare with bait
- 4) Both participles are in the present tense suggesting a continual problem
- 5) **The picture** – Satan attracts & stimulates our desires which results in temptation.
- 6) Satan is bound & has no power over us except what we give him. The origin of all of our temptations are within us, therefore we are to blame if a situation happens & we are tempted to sin.
- 7) **Notice** – our guilt is not derived from Adam, but from our own actions

8) If we allow sin to go unchecked & we are unrepentant, it brings death

3

James 1:16-18

1. Don't allow yourselves to be deceived.

- a. Man can both be deceived & deceive himself – 1 Cor.6:9,10; 15:33; James 1:26
- b. We are responsible for the way that we react – stop blaming others

2. See the nature of God

- a. **He is good & perfect** – rather than envisioning God as tempting & evil – see Him as He is – good & giving
 - 1) He alone is good in the absolute sense (only gives good)
 - 2) Good = useful, profitable, beneficial
 - 3) Perfect = complete, lacking nothing
 - 4) God's giving is both beneficial & complete (without lack)
 - 5) Coming down = present tense (continually coming)
- b. **He is unchangeable** – no shadows – His gifts are always good & perfect
- c. **He wants only our salvation & our best**

3. First fruits

- a. Were sacred & belonged to God – joyfully given in anticipation of harvest
- b. So we are reborn through the word to become the sacred property of God.

The Word Of God & Spiritual Maturity - # 1

Introduction

James has introduced the way in which God positively enriches our lives. He is the giver of all good gifts & it was through the word that He gave us new birth. Now James wants us to understand how important the word of God is in our lives, not only bringing us new birth, but also guiding us to spiritual maturity. However, for that to take place there are proper attitudes & responses we must manifest toward that word of God.

If we ever want to be victorious over temptations & trials on a regular basis we must learn to respond correctly to God's word in our everyday lives.

James 1:19-21

1. Be quick to listen.

- a. The book of Proverbs is full of the perils of hasty speech.
 - 1) Prov.10:19 – there is sin in a multitude of words
 - 2) Prov.13:3 – one who keeps his mouth keeps his life
 - 3) Prov.17:28 – even a fool is considered wise when he holds his tongue
 - 4) Prov.29:20 – more hope for a fool than one who is hasty in his words
- b. **Saying** – have two ears & 1 mouth = listen more than speak
- c. Even Christians need to be reminded to listen to God's word
 - 1) Many listen & hear the words about conversion – believe, repent, confess & be baptized.
 - 2) Not listen to teachings about self-control, good deeds & sanctification
- d. Pride keeps us from listening – already know truth
 - 1) Be willing to listen instead of just hanging onto your own ideas
 - 2) Stop insisting that you right – open your self to God's truth
- e. **Sign on school** – even most intelligent have something more to learn

2. Be slow to speak

- a. **Means** – using words to declare one's mind, or to disclose one's thoughts
- b. **Idea** - be slow to speak back or show displeasure at the teachings of the word of God.
 - 1) Acts 13:45 – Jews were jealous & contradicted word spoken by Paul
 - 2) Gal.4:16 – some disciples angry with Paul because he told the truth
- c. Sometimes we are so wrapped up in our own desires not want to hear the truth
- d. God wants us to attentively listen to the scriptures, analyzing the message & seeking to realize the truth that is contained there & allow it to affect our lives in the way that God desires.

3. Be slow to get angry

- a. Jer.36 – king became so angry at word of God spoken by the prophet he cut up the pages & burned them.
- b. Reckless speech can lead to & engender anger.

- c. James is referring not just to a quick outburst of anger, but also the persistent & strong feelings of resentment, the harboring of animosity.
 - 1) All anger must be controlled – Eph.4:26
 - 2) Nowhere in scripture does God permit the venting of personal vengeance.
 - 3) Heated discussions can lead to animosity & resentment. Therefore all anger must be controlled & dealt with quickly.
- d. One reason man gets angry at the words of God is his sin. Man does not wish to correct his life, he wants to continue in his sinful ways & so therefore reacts in anger to God's call for change in his life.

4. **Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life God desires.**

- a. An angry man cannot please God. Man in his anger will not accomplish righteousness, but will be deceived into following Satan & not God.
- b. Our acting in anger will not further the cause of righteousness. Acting in anger will not further the cause of God it only advances the cause of Satan.

5. **The proper response to God's word**

a. **Put away all filthiness**

- 1) **Put away** – strip off, like stripping off one's clothes
- 2) **Moral filth** – vulgarity & wickedness
- 3) **All** – every instance of, every kind of
- 4) **Idea** – as rapidly as possible, erase from your life all immorality & filth
- 5. Rom.13:14 – make no provision to fulfill the lust of the flesh.
 - * Whatever sins we commit should be honest mistakes & weaknesses of the flesh.
 - * All other evil & sin must be dealt with quickly & decisively
 - * Any sin allowed to remain in life with will only bring destruction

b. **Get rid of the evil that is so prevalent**

- 1) Because we are human evil is prevalent in our lives – Rom.3:10-23
- 2) We are not inherently good – evil tendencies are always present
Rom.7:21-24; 1 Jn.1:8-10

c. **Meekly receive the word of God**

- 1. **Idea** – to be openly ready, having a spirit of readiness to obey, having an absence from resentment, a yielding & receptive attitude.
- 2. To properly respond to God's word we must have a teachable spirit
 - a) **Many are not teachable** – only want to hear what confirms their ideas. They resent new insights into old truths.
 - b) **Only the meek will receive the truth**
Ps.25:9 – teaches the humble His way
Ps.147:6 – Lord sustains the humble
Ps.149:4 – Lord crowns the humble with salvation
- 3. A teachable spirit is one that is without anger & resentment & is therefore able to face truth even when it hurts & condemns.

4. A resentful & prejudiced attitude hindered the religious leaders in NT

The Word Of God & Maturity - # 2

Introduction

As James continues with the thought of God's positive action in our lives through the word of God, he adds that not only must we have the proper attitude as we approach the word, but the proper actions. Be doers of the word & not hearers only. To conquer temptation & trials we must go beyond hearing & put God's words into action. Contrary to what many think, we must not only hear the word of God, but we must also live it.

James 1:22-25

1. Do not merely listen to the word.

- a. Some think that merely attending & listening to the word of God being expounded is enough, that somehow that makes one a good Christian.
 - 1) They shut their eyes to the fact that what is read & heard must be lived in our daily lives.
 - 2) Faithful attendance & diligent Bible study is just part of being a Christian. The really important thing is to turn that which we have heard & learned from God's word into actions in our everyday lives.
 - 3) To do anything less is to deceive ourselves.
- b. There are many who sit under the Word of God week after week, and they learn and know as much of the Word as anyone. They think that their listening and learning makes them acceptable to God, that it makes them safe and secure.
 - 1) When they slip into sin, they feel that they can ask God for forgiveness and that He will forgive them. They just feel that God would never reject them.
 - 2) But note something, the most critical fact: God does not accept us because we hear and know the Word nor because we confess our sins. Each of these are necessary and very important, but they are not enough.
 - 3) God accepts us because we *confess and repent*.
 - * Repentance means that we turn away from our sins and turn to God.
 - * God accepts us because we turn to Him and live for Him.
 - * When we believe God—really believe Him—then we trust and follow Him and do exactly what He says.
- c. Other scriptures
 - 1) Mt.7:24-27 – two foundations (rock & sand)
 - 2) Heb.4:2 – must be combined with faith
 - 3) Lk.11:27,28 – blessed are those who hear & obey
 - 4) Rev.1:3 – blessed are ones who read, hear & take to heart
 - 5) Rev.22:7 - blessed are ones who keep words of this prophecy
 - 6) Rom.2:13 – not those who hear that are righteous – those who obey

d. Deceive selves – irrational & fallacious reasoning

2. Portrait of one who merely hears & does not follow through with obedience.

a. Looks at self in mirror & goes away

- 1) The emphasis in the Greek emphasize a continuing & sustained state
- 2) He merely looks but takes no action to correct – moves on

b. Immediately forgets

- 1) Because he makes no effort to practice what he heard it soon fades from his memory. The word never becomes a part of his life.
- 2) When we hear the word of God & are convicted we must act quickly or Satan will distract us & the word has no effect in our lives.

Mt.13:19

3. The one who looks intently into the perfect law

a. Looks intently – to examine thoroughly & minutely

- 1) Like one bending over to get a closer look – Jn.20:5,11
- 2) Like angels who longed to look at salvation in Jesus – 1 Pet.1:12
- 3) James refers to doing more than just glance at the word, its careful examination & scrutiny.

b. Perfect law that gives freedom

1) James is referring to the word of God

- * James 1:18 – the word of truth
- * 1 Cor.9:21; Gal.6:2 – the law of Christ
- * Rom.3:27 – the law of faith

2) James does not use the definite article suggesting nature & quality, not the OT Law.

- * It is the body of truth, the standard by which the Christian life is lived.
- * It is the spirit of the law as interpreted by Jesus & expounded upon by the apostles.

3) Sin enslaves, but the word of God (Christ) sets us free

- * Jn.8:32-36 – abide in my words = know truth & set free
- * 2 Cor.3:17 – where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom
- * Rom.8:2 - Christians are set free from the law of sin & death

4) Although free, we are still accountable – Gal.5:13; 1 Pet.2:16

c. Continues to do this – perseveres in intently looking & obeying

4. Application

a. God's word is to be obeyed & applied, not just studied & meditated about.

b. It is so much more than a philosophy or a collection of writings

c. 2 Tim.3:16,17 – it comes from God & is meant to be applied daily – beneficial

d. However, it is only beneficial when it is obeyed fully. (partial truth destroys)

The Word Of God & Spiritual Maturity - # 3

Introduction

God brought us into His family through the word of God. We were born again when we positively responded to God's word & that word is to have an ongoing effect in our lives. We are to be quick to listen & slow to speak back & become angry; we are to allow the word to have a positive influence upon us as we continually meditate upon it & make application in our lives. Now James shows us how the word is to be applied in our everyday lives. Religion that God accepts must be demonstrated in our every day lives.

James 1:26,27

1. If anyone considers himself religious

- a. **Considers himself** = to fancy himself or suppose himself to be
 - 1) James is discussing self-deception, not what others think of us
 - 2) This person considers himself a devout Christian or a pious person
 - 3) They are basing their concept of themselves on something other than their lifestyle. (Perhaps their attendance or their form of worship.)
- b. **Religious** – the outward expression or service (not ritual or ceremony)
 - 1) The finest ritual & ceremony we can offer to God is found in our service to the poor & our own personal purity
 - 2) Unless worship goes beyond our ritual & public ceremony it is not the worship that God desires.
- c. **One may participate in the finest expression of worship in prayer & song, & yet it only be something that is empty & meaningless before God.**
 - 1) God has always called man to make religion more than ritual
 - 2) Scriptures – Hosea 6:1-6; Isa.58:1-14; Micah 6:6-8; Mt.25:31-46

2. Three areas of our lives that must be affected by the word

- a. **The tongue**
 - 1) **It must be bridled** – controlled, restrained, guided in the proper direction. The tongue (like an unruly horse) needs a bit & bridle to keep it under control.
 - 2) **The challenge** – control the tongue & use only for good or religion vain
 - 3) **The power of words** –
 - Prov.18:21 – tongue has the power of life & death
 - Prov.12:25 – can make an anxious heart glad
 - Prov.15:4 – when brings healing is a tree of life – deceitful one crushes the spirit
 - Prov.16:24 – pleasant words are healing
 - Prov.25:11 – like apples of gold when spoken in right situations
 - Prov.25:20 – wrong timing – like taking one's garment on cold day
 - Prov.25:23 – how delightful is a timely word
 - James 3:5,6 – power to determine whole course of life

4) Sins of the tongue

- * Interrupting & dominating the conversation
- * Being easily provoked & lashing out at others
- * Gossiping & telling tales
- * Criticizing & murmuring
- * Judging & condemning others
- * Cursing & using slang
- * Using suggestive or off colored talk
- * Talking about or running others down
- * Lying
- * Arguing
- * Being offensive
- * Boasting

*When our
speech
is motivate
by:*

Satan

It is full of:

Bitter envy
Selfish ambition
Earthly concerns and desires
Unspiritual thoughts and ideas
Disorder
Evil

**God and his
wisdom**

Mercy
Love for others
Peace
Consideration for others
Submission
Sincerity, impartiality
Righteousness

5) Application

- * Mt.15:10,11 – makes one unclean
- * Mt.12:34,35 – exposes the heart
- * Mt.12:36,37 – determine your destiny

6) Other scriptures

Ps.34:12,13 – want good days = control tongue
Prov.13:3 – guard lips or come to ruin
Prov.21:23 – guard mouth = keep from calamity
1 Pet.3:10-12 – to receive a blessing we must control tongue
1 Peter 2:1 – rid self of every type of slander
James 4:11 – do not slander
James 3:6 – tongue is a world of evil & corrupts whole person
Titus 3:1,2 – slander no one

Eph.4:31 – get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, slander, all malice
Eph.4:29 – allow no unwholesome speech
Col.4:6 – conversation always be full of grace

3

b. Attitude & actions toward the fatherless & widows

- 1) **Pure & undefiled religion** – free from stain or sin
 - a) Moral cleanness is more important than ceremonial cleanness
 - b) Religious acts may impress men, but service & moral purity impresses God
- 2) **Visit fatherless & widows in their distress** – look in on & see to their needs (not leave them destitute or lacking the necessities of life).
 - a) James is speaking of more than just a social visit or even the impersonal giving of funds through an agency to meet their needs. It is personally coming to the aid of needy individuals – personal involvement. God has always expected His people to be concerned for the plight of the needy .
 - b) Scriptures
 - Ps.68:5 – God a father for fatherless & judge for widows
 - Deut.27:19 – cursed if withhold justice from them
 - Ex.22:22 – take advantage of & God's anger aroused
 - Lk.7:12-15 – example of Jesus
 - Mt.25:31-46 – difference between sheep & goats
 - Acts 6:1-6 – seven appointed to care for needs
 - 1 Tim.5:3-16 – needy put on list & cared for

c. Moral purity

- 1) Pure religion doesn't focus on ritual; it focuses on the power of God to change our lives & motivates us to serve others.
- 2) We are to come out of the world, not act like the world – Rom.12:1,2;
2 Cor.6:17,18; Eph.5:11; 2 Tim.2:4; 1 Jn.2:15,16;
- 3) We have an individual responsibility to keep ourselves pure
1 Pet.1:15,16

Accepting Others Without Partiality

Introduction

As we enter into the second chapter we need to realize that James is still continuing his discussion of pure & undefiled religion. Godly behavior will express itself in a sympathetic attitude toward those who are less fortunate & in the separation from sinful behavior, but will also express itself in an accepting, non-prejudicial attitude toward the poor & the social outcast.

James 2:1-13

1. The sin of showing partiality

- a. **Means** – to favor or show special attention to some & not others
- b. **Reasons we are prone to do this** – wealth; social standing; position; authority; popularity; looks; influence etc.
- c. **Why showing partiality is wrong**
 - 1) We are all brothers & stand on equal footing before God
 - 2) Jesus is Lord & we are all His servants – He alone is to be exalted
 - 3) Other passages – Lev.19:15; Job 13:10; Prov.24:23; 1 Tim.5:21

2. James pictures showing partiality

- a. **Two unbelievers visit** – one dressed sharply & the other shabbily
 - 1) Gold ring – wore on every finger to show wealth
 - 2) Fine clothes – literally bright & sparkling
 - 3) Shabby – dirty & work stained (dirty smelly beggar off the streets)
- b. **You pay special attention to the rich & carelessly treat the poor**
 - 1) Awed by his appearance you have a special place for them
 - 2) Treat poor as inferior (not even offer your seat)
 - 3) Treated according to external criteria & not according to character or real worth

3. Showing partiality sets one up as the judge of men

- a. **It is saying we are as God** – judging who can worship; who is acceptable
- b. That position belongs only to God – He chooses not us
- c. Scriptures – Mt.7:1; Rom.14:4,13; 1 Cor.4:5; James 4:12

4. Showing partiality reveals evil thinking

- a. Our focus is on corruptible things not eternal things – mundane changeable things that waste away & rot
- b. It says that material things are more important than the person

5. Showing partiality discriminates against those who are loved by God

- a. God chose the poor to be rich in faith & inherit the kingdom
- b. Why poor would be rich in faith? 1 Cor.1:26-31; Lk.18:24

6. Showing partiality is a disgraceful attitude

- a. It dishonors, humiliates, disgraces, shames & insults others
- b. Think of the pain & humiliation the poor man is feeling – imagine the ammunition Satan has to hinder them from responding to Jesus.
- c. Why would we make appearance more important than character?
 - 1) Poverty makes us uncomfortable & don't want to face our responsibility to those less fortunate than us.
 - 2) We want to be wealthy too & hope the rich person is a means to that end.
 - 3) We want the rich to join our church & help us financially
 - 4) We mistakenly assume that riches are a sign of God's blessing & approval

7. Showing partiality is acting foolishly

- a. **Rich usually oppress the poor** – grabbing what they can – use the law to protect & increase the wealth & power they already have.
Acts 16:19; 19:27; Heb. 10:32-34; James 5:1-6
- b. **Rich usually blaspheme the name of Jesus** – mock His teachings as foolishness – 1 Cor. 1:26-31
- c. Rich feel self sufficient & have no need of Jesus & His gospel
- d. Ps. 41:1; Prov. 19:17

8. Three warnings

- a. Showing partiality violates the royal law of love – James 2:8,9; Lev. 19:18
Royal Law – given by God; embraces all the other laws - Rom. 13:8-10
- b. Showing partiality makes us guilty of violating the whole law – all laws are to be kept, can't pick & choose which ones we like – all are necessary
- c. Showing partiality is as serious as adultery & murder – same root & cause
Rom. 12:9; 13:10; 15:1,2; Gal. 5:14

9. Final motivation against showing partiality

- a. We will all face God's judgment & give an accounting – should act & speak like people who will be judged
- b. We will all face a reciprocal reward for our behavior – treated as we treat others – give mercy = receive mercy; no mercy = receive none
Mt. 5:7; 6:14,15; 7:1,2; 18:35

10. God is not a respecter of persons

- a. Rom. 3:29,30; Gal. 2:6; Acts 10:23-35; Rom. 2:11-15
- b. He makes no distinction between men – all are His creation & loved; all are sinners & saved only through Jesus
- c. God is rich in mercy to all who call upon Him – Eph. 2:4-7

11. How might James have pictured showing partiality in our day?

- a. Race; nationality
- b. Mannerisms – raising hands; verbal in worship; opinions

12. Application

- a. How can we improve in welcoming the poor into our assemblies?
- b. What are some practical ways that we can show genuine love for people of all races, cultures & economic standings?
- c. Why is favoritism or prejudice often overlooked as a sin?

Summary

Why it is wrong to show favoritism to the wealthy:

1. It is inconsistent with Christ's teachings.
2. It results from evil thoughts.
3. It insults people made in God's image.
4. It is a by-product of selfish motives.
5. It goes against the Biblical definition of love.
6. It shows a lack of mercy to those less fortunate.
7. It is hypocritical.
8. It is sin.

Authentic Faith

Introduction

One of the greatest tragedies of the church today is that some people who profess Christ do not live for Jesus. Many profess Christ & they are baptized recognized as members of the church, but they do not follow nor live for Christ. They do not live pure and righteous lives, nor do they give all they are and have to reach the lost and needy of the world. Are they saved? Do they have a genuine faith? This is the discussion of this passage.

James 2:14-26

1. Two questions every believer needs to ask himself

- a. Can a man have faith without doing good works?
- b. Can faith without good works save us?
- c. The answer to both of these questions is emphatically “NO”
 - 1) If a person really believes they will act upon what they believe
 - 2) Yet many will profess faith in Jesus & not live for Him, but for the world & themselves. The only difference between them & unbelievers is their attendance of Sunday.
- d. Note two facts
 - 1) The person says they have faith but does nothing to show that faith. His faith is only talk.
 - 2) James calls this faith a “dead faith” – James 2:17,20,26
 - * In vs.14 he calls it an unprofitable faith
 - * In 1 Cor.15:2 Paul calls it a “vain or empty faith”
 - * The idea is that it is a faith that profits nothing – absolutely useless – provides us with nothing

2. These verses are perhaps the best-known & most controversial passages in the NT

- a. Martin Luther saw James in direct opposition to Paul’s teaching on justification by faith – considered James an inferior book.
- b. James is merely continuing his discussion of true religion. True religion brings a proper response – doer & not just a hearer of the word – is concerned about the needy & living righteously
- c. Is James contradicting Paul?
 - 1) Rom.1:5 – the obedience that comes from faith
 - 2) Gal.3:26,27 – sons through faith – baptized have put on Christ
 - 3) Phil.2:12 – work out your salvation
 - 4) Eph.2:9 – were created for good works
 - 5) Rom.6:13 – must present members as instruments of righteousness
 - 6) Rom.8:13 – live after the flesh you will die
 - 7) Rom.7:4 – must bring forth fruit for God
- d. Paul’s focus was that obedience to the Law did not earn you salvation
 - 1) Salvation is a gift from God & is never deserved

- 2) All man can do is accept the forgiveness offered by God through the sacrificial death of Jesus.

3. The deadness of faith that has no works – vs.14-17

- a. **Of what use** – what good is it to claim you believe but have no deeds?
 - 1) **Uses present tense verbs** - says this is a way of life – repeatedly claiming to believe & continually lacking any evidence of that belief in deeds
 - 2) Can such faith save him? Will it make any difference when we are before the throne of judgment? 2 Cor.5:10; Mt.25:33-46
- b. **Illustration of a non-working non-charitable faith**
 - 1) Brother or sister is destitute – Gal.6:10
 - 2) Response – go in peace, be warmed & filled
 - a) Passive = let someone else warm & feed you
 - b) Our flippant words – “I am praying for you” “good luck”
 - 3) You are physically able to help but you do not. Your compassion is in words only.
- c. Such faith for all practical purposes is dead, unproductive & useless.
- d. Application
 - 1) The point is this: faith, if it does not do good works, is dead. True faith loves and cares and is compassionate and reaches out to help the needy.
 - 2) A person can talk about believing in Jesus Christ until he is blue in the face, but if he is not reaching out and helping the destitute of the world just like Jesus did, his faith is dead—utterly meaningless.
 - 3) No person really believes in Jesus Christ unless he is following Jesus Christ and doing the works of love and righteousness which Christ did.
 - 4) True faith is an operative faith, a faith that really works. Therefore, if we really believe in Christ, we will follow Christ: we will take all that *we are and have* beyond our own needs and give it to meet the needs of destitute brothers and sisters throughout the world.
 - 5) Mt.19:21-23; Mt.25:41-46; Mk.10:28; Lk.9:23,26,27; 1 Tim.6:17,18

4. The futility of religion without works – vs.18-20

- a. Scriptures
 - 1) Mt.7:21-23 – not those who say, but those that do
 - 2) Mk.7:6 – honor with lips, but heart far away – vain worship
 - 3) Titus 1:16 – profess to know but works deny Him
- b. **How can one show his faith without works?**
 - 1) Even demons profess a faith in God – Mt.8:29; Mk.5:7; Lk.4:41
Although they believe & shutter their lifestyle doesn't change
 - 2) The only way to demonstrate one's faith is in works of faith
 - 3) Anything less is just useless – meaningless. True faith must have proof; it must be backed up; you must demonstrate that you believe.

4) Scriptures

- a) Mt.5:16 – let light shine – see good works
- b) 1 Pet.2:12 – good works glorify God

5. **Examples of productive faith** – vs.21-26a. **Abraham** – had a working faith by which he was justified1) **Justified** – 2 meanings

a) To be vindicated or shown to be right – God vindicated in declaring him righteous

b) To acquit, to pronounce righteous

2) Offering up Isaac was 30 or 40 years after Abraham was accounted righteous. He was declared righteous when he took God at His word & believed that he would be the father of a multitude.

3) **Point** – faith & action work together & thus faith is made complete. His works were a product of his faith.

4) **Three results from working faith**

a) **His faith was perfected** – matured, to be brought to it's intended goal

b) **Scripture was fulfilled** – as if Gen.15:6 was prophetic

c) **Abraham called a friend of God** - When we live in obedience we are God's friend – Jn.15:14

b. **Rahab** – a pagan, immoral, Canaanite woman

1) Tradition says she became the wife of Joshua & the mother of many prophets. She is included in the genealogy of Jesus by Matthew. Mt.1:5

2) Her faith demonstrated – she received them & assured their safety by sending them out another way.

6. **Final thought** – as body without the spirit is dead so is faith without deeds

a. A body without the spirit or breath is dead. It does not move, act, live, or work. It is empty, totally useless and worthless. It is a dead body.

b. So it is with faith: faith without works is dead. It does not move, act, live, or work. Faith without works is empty, totally useless and worthless. It does not live for Christ, does not follow Him in righteousness or purity nor work for Him in reaching people and meeting the needs of a destitute world.

Controlling The Tongue

Introduction

A true mark of Christian maturity is the proper control of one's speech. As James discusses pure & undefiled religion a further discussion of controlling the tongue had to be mentioned. James introduced the subject earlier in chapter one where he counseled us to be "slow to speak" vs.19 & to "bridle our tongue" vs.26. Now he will discuss in length the importance of controlling the tongue.

James 3:1-12

1. The Importance Of Controlling The Tongue – Vs.1,2

- a. **James specifically speaks to teachers in the following verses**, but there is much for all of us to learn from the principles taught here.
- b. **In the early church being a teacher was a position of dignity & respect** similar to the position of a Rabbi in the Jewish synagogue. Along with the position came various rewards – status, honor, a following etc.
 - 1) Perhaps some aspired to that position for the wrong motives & intentions. They were unqualified or did not realize the awesome responsibility that came with that position.
 - 2) James wants to warn any & all of the power of the tongue
- c. **The church needs teachers**
 - 1) The **Spirit gifted some** to be teachers – 1 Cor.12:28; Eph.4:11
 - 2) Part of **elders qualifications** was to be able to teach – 1 Tim.3:2
 - 3) **All were expected to become** teachers over time – Heb.5:12
 - 4) James not discouraging us from being teachers but reminding us of the seriousness of the position.
 - a) Lk.12:48 – whom given much – much required
 - b) 1 Tim.5:22 – don't be hasty in ordaining leaders
 - c) Mt.12:36 – we will give an account for every careless word
 - 5) Teachers need search their motives & desires for teaching
 - a) What are you seeking?
 - b) Do you comprehend the responsibility you are taking on – are you determined to control that member you will be using; the tongue?
- d. **Some teachers who failed**
 - 1) Acts 15:24 – those who tried to turn Christianity into Judaism demanding that all be circumcised & adhere to the Law
 - 2) Rom.2:17-19 – those who taught others but did not try to live according to the truth themselves
 - 3) 1 Tim.1:6,7 – those who tried to teach before they understood themselves
 - 4) 2 Tim.4:3 – those who pandered to the lusts of the crowd

e. **We all stumble** – make mistakes that are blameworthy

- 1) Present tense = repeated action – occurs over & over again
- 2) Rom.3:23 – all have sinned; 1Jn1:8 – say no sin deceive self
- 3) Rom.3:13-15 – 4 of the 5 body parts Paul lists as vehicles of sin relate to our speech
- 4) Mt.12:34-37 – tongue reveals what is in the heart

f. **If control tongue a perfect man**

- 1) One who has his body under control & has come to spiritual maturity
- 2) If can control most difficult member of body – easy control rest
- 3) James is not arguing for silence, but for an effective use of the tongue – Jesus is a supreme example – 1 Pet.2:21-23

2. **The Need For Controlling The Tongue – vs.3-6**

a. **Little things can have a far-reaching effect**

- 1) The tongue has great potential – both for good & evil
- 2) Illustrations – bridle & bit ; a ships rudder; fire
 - a) 1st 2 are useful – small yet control things many times their size
 - b) Last shows the destructive power of something insignificant
- 3) **Bridle** – controls an animated object – power from within
- 4) **Rudder** – controls an inanimate object – external power

b. **James argues that this great power ought be harnessed for good**

- 1) If not – as a spark ignites a forest so tongue destroys
- 2) Two things about fire – wide ranging (no limit to destruction can bring)

Is uncontrollable (can never get back what destroyed)
- 3) Just think about the great and terrible damage that has been done by the fire of words, rumors, tale bearing, and sharp or cutting remarks.

Think about the...

 - marriages destroyed
 - children disturbed
 - friendships damaged
 - reputations ruined
 - wars fought
 - fights aroused
 - injuries caused
 - bodies maimed
 - promotions denied

The list could go on an on, but the point is well made. The tongue can be a little fire that sets ablaze and consumes a whole forest of people and relationships.

c. **Several things about the tongue**

- 1) **A world of iniquity** – a world composed of or characterized by iniquity
 - a) A universe of evil that voices every evil feeling or thought
 - b) Sets in motion or gives concreteness to every kind of sinful act
 - c) Nothing evil is beyond its power of accomplishment

- 2) **Is set among our members** as that which defiles the whole body
 - a) Set – appointed or caused to be
 - b) The tongue is so made that it can cause all kinds of sin
- 3) **Able to defile the whole body** – Mt.15:11 – what allow come out
- 4) **Sets on fire the whole course of life** – all relationships & aspects of life are effected – pollute & dirty a persons whole life.
How is this possible? Just think for a moment how all the evil of the world finds expression in our words...
 - words that lead to immorality
 - words that lead to wickedness
 - words that are malicious
 - words that are envious
 - words that express lust
 - words that curse and blaspheme
 - words that show covetousness
 - words that lead to idolatry
 - words that lead to murder
 - words that express anger
 - words that are divisive

Name the sin, and words are involved either through thoughts of the mind or verbally through the tongue.
- 5) **Set on fire by hell** – inflamed by Satan himself

3. The Difficulty Of Controlling The Tongue – vs.7,8

- a. **Man able tame all kinds of creatures** – our responsibility to subdue the earth
 - 1) Are being & have been – throughout time been this way
 - 2) Art of taming is as old as man & has gone on since beginning of time
- b. **The tongue can no man tame**
 - 1) **It is a restless evil** – unstable; like a caged animal pacing back & forth
 - 2) **No matter how hard you try** – still be times we say wrong thing
 - 3) **It is full of deadly poison** – how deadly is gossip & slander - it can bless God in one breath and curse men in the next, men who are made in the image of God.
- c. **Taming the tongue**
 - 1) Dedicate both your heart & your tongue to the Lord – Ps.19:14
 - 2) Put your heart in tune with God’s Spirit – Ps.119:11
 - 3) Assume responsibility for every word you speak – Mt.12:36
 - 4) Ask those around you what do I say that is offensive – Prov.27:17
 - 5) Commit yourself to speaking wholesome things – Eph.4:29
 - 6) When necessary to confront another follow Mt.18:15 – Gal.6:1,2
 - 7) Fulfill past promises & be careful before making new ones – Ps.15:4
 - 8) Ask forgiveness for any unloving words or attitudes – 1 Jn.1:9
 - 9) Learn to speak words that encourage, comfort, inspire & edify – Col.4:6

d. Passages to memorize that will help us tame our tongues

- 1) Prov.13:3 - He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin. (NIV)
- 2) Prov.29:20 - Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him. (NIV)
- 3) Prov.18:13 - He who answers before listening-- that is his folly and his shame. (NIV)
- 4) Mt.12:36 - But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. (NIV)
- 5) Eph.4:29 - Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (NIV)
- 6) Prov.15:23 - A man finds joy in giving an apt reply-- and how good is a timely word! (NIV)
- 7) Prov.21:23 - He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity. (NIV)
- 8) Prov.15:1,4 - Vs.1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (NIV)
Vs.4 The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit. (NIV)
- 9) Prov.17:28 - Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue. (NIV)
- 10) Prov.18:8 - The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts. (NIV)
- 11) 1 Pet.3:10-12 - For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." (NIV)
- 12) James 1:26 - If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. (NIV)

4. The Inconsistency Of An Uncontrolled Tongue Vs.9-12

- a. Here we are blessing God & professing to be His children, yet cursing men who are made in His likeness – even nature is more consistent than this.
 - 1) On one hand we praise & extol God
 - 2) On the other we invoke evil & damnation on those who bear His likeness – in a sense we are harming God too.
- b. Out of the same mouth comes blessing & cursing – ought not be
 - 1) Don't get sweet & bitter water from same fountain
 - 2) Don't expect different fruit from the same kind of tree

3) Spring not yield sweet & salt water

Demonstrating Godly Wisdom

Introduction

James continues with his discussion of the teacher. Not only must a teacher have control of his tongue, he must also demonstrate godly wisdom in his life. These principles are not just for teachers, but for all who wish to live a godly life.

James 3:13-18

1. James appeals for us to demonstrate godly wisdom – vs.13

a. Who is wise?

- 1) **To the Greek** a wise man was one who had achieved a high degree of abstract knowledge
- 2) **To the Jew** (Bible definition) – wisdom is more than academic knowledge in problem solving.
 - a) He is one who had practical moral insight based upon a knowledge of God & His word
 - b) He is one who could give godly advise on practical issues of conduct
 - c) Prov.9:10 – The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom

b. Who is understanding?

- 1) The word implies being a specialist, an expert
- 2) One who has a professional knowledge of a field of study

c. Let him show

- 1) Something must be demonstrated – a lifestyle is as important as intellectual skill
- 2) Just as genuine faith results in works, so true wisdom leads to a good & godly lifestyle.
- 3) The Christians lifestyle is to be beautiful & attractive – glorifying God
Jn.8:31,32; Phil.1:27; 1 Tim.3:7; 1 Pet.2:12

2. James demonstrates earthly wisdom – vs.14-16

a. Two evidences of earthly wisdom

- 1) **Bitter Jealousy** – harsh contemptuous zeal; refers to feelings of anger & animosity
- 2) **Selfish ambition** – promoting ones own views & concerns for personal advantage; promoting of self at the expense of others

b. Don't boast about it & deny (lie against) the truth

- 1) Their arrogance & boasting is in stark contrast to truth
- 2) This lifestyle is contrary to truth

c. Such wisdom is not from above it is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil

- 1) **Comes from above** = Jewish way of saying “from God”
- 2) **Earthly** = limited to the frail & finite existence of man; merely human
- 3) **Unspiritual** – that which characterizes the non spiritual man
1 Cor.2:14 – natural man not accept things of Spirit are foolishness

4) **Of the devil** – demonic (influenced by demons) originates from Satan
 d. **Where bitter jealousy & selfish ambition exist we see the flesh at work.**

- 1) Two of the most difficult things to do is to argue without passion & to meet arguments without wounding.
- 2) To be utterly convinced of your beliefs without being bitter at those who differ is no easy thing. Yet it is a necessity for the Christian teacher. 2 Tim.2:24-26

e. **Four characteristics of the wrong kind of teaching**

- 1) **Fanatical** – holding truth with violence rather than reasoned conviction
- 2) **Bitter** – regards opponents as enemies to be annihilated rather than friends to be persuaded
- 3) **Selfishly ambitious** – more eager to display itself than in displaying the truth; interested more in the victory of its own opinions than in the victory of truth.
- 4) **Arrogant** – proud of its knowledge rather than humility of its own ignorance

f. **The consequences of such wisdom**

- 1) Disorder & every evil thing
- 2) Such wisdom throws people into confusion, rivalry, antagonism & anarchy

3. **James demonstrates the wisdom that comes from above – vs.17,18**

a. **Comes down** = present participle (continually descending – constant supply)
James 1:5 – lack = ask God; 1Cor.2:10 – revealed through the Spirit

b. **Eight characteristics of God given wisdom**

- 1) **Pure** = clean & uncontaminated.
 - a) Speaks of an inner quality without jealousy & selfish ambition; free from ulterior motives & moral contamination.
 - b) James mentions this first because it is foundational to all that follows.
- 2) **Peace loving** = orderliness, not given to conflict; able to keep peace & make peace. God's wisdom brings men closer to each other & to God.
- 3) **Considerate** (gentle) – There is no exact equivalent word in English to translate this word.
 - a) It speaks of one who is fair & considerate, reasonable & generous.
 - b) The Greeks used it to describe a judge who knows when it is wrong to apply the strict letter of the law. Therefore he sought to be reasonable rather than strict in his application of the law.
 - c) Carries the idea of reasonableness & graciousness – the absence of bad manners & a quick temper.

- 4) **Submissive** = 2 meanings
- a) Ready to obey – one thought = to obey God
 - b) Being reasonable & easily entreated. Not being stubborn & rigid
 - (1) Being open to reason & yielding to persuasion.
 - (2) Being open to other ideas & willing to learn from others rather than being stubborn & closed minded.
 - (3) Being willing to change when in the wrong
- 5) **Full of mercy** = an active concern for the suffering
- a) More than just feeling pity – doing something about it
 - b) Merciful even if the trouble is their own fault
- 6) **Full of good fruits** = practical acts of kindness
- a) Christian pity is more than emotion, it acts – 1 Jn.3:17-19
 - b) Full = presence of something in a large degree
 - c) A Christian teacher like Jesus would go about doing good.
- 7) **Impartial** = Two meanings
- a) **Not vacillating** – acting one way in a circumstance & another in a different one.
 - (1) One who is to be consistent, doesn't waver or hesitate
 - (2) Has convictions & lives by them
 - b) Without making distinction or being partial.
- 8) **Sincere** = genuine, without pretense or hypocrisy
- a) Never claims or pretends to be what it is not
 - b) Not conceal its real aims & motives
- c. **Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness**
- 1) Peace is the condition where righteousness can flourish
 - 2) Strife, jealousy & selfishness do not produce righteousness
 - 3) Rom.14:17

Putting God First

Introduction

James has been discussing the results of godly wisdom – peace & righteousness. As he begins chapter four his discussion turns to the cause behind strife & conflict among people. His answer is twofold – a love for self rather than a love for God; a friendship with the world & not with God. God must have 1st place in our lives or chaos & division are the result.

James 4:1-10

1. The results of giving self 1st place – vs.1-3

a. The source of fights & quarrels.

1. As we look at society we often see a continual barrage of hatred & war & strife even in times of peace. Why is this a continual problem?
James has the root – desires that battle within us.
2. Fights & quarrels are in the plural indicating they are not isolated events but continual problems.
3. **Among you** – he is not talking about the world around them, but the lives of Christians. Personal struggles & tensions within the body of Christ.
 - a) This could be rendered “in you” & thus refer to inner personal struggles & tensions within the individual Christian.
 - b) It doesn't matter because the person who is not at peace within himself cannot be at peace with others.
4. Moralists have often asked themselves the source of human discord; but are not willing to point the finger at the real cause – their own lusts. They want to blame the environment people live in & everything else, but not the individual themselves.
5. **James points the finger at the desires that battle within us.**
 - a) **Greek word** – hedonism – refers to a self-seeking philosophy where pleasure takes first place in life. “If it feels good do it” philosophy. To crave pleasure & gratification.
 - b) **Desires battle** – wage a relentless war. Worldly pleasure is portrayed as soldiers in a battle out to win.
See 1 Pet.2:11 – fleshly lusts wage war against the soul

b. The lust for pleasure never gives full satisfaction

1. It is a hunger & thirst that are never satisfied
2. The NT is clear that the lust for pleasure damages our spiritual life
 - a) Mt.13 – cares & worries about riches chokes out the word
 - b) Passions for pleasure only enslave – Titus 3:3
 - c) Lust is strong & difficult to control – most don't control it
 - d) Man is a walking civil war – Rom.7

3. A pleasure-dominated life has certain irrevocable consequences

a) It sets men at each other's throats

- 1) When we desire money, power, and prestige, life inevitably becomes a competitive arena.
- 2) Men trample one another & will do anything to eliminate their rival in order to get their desires filled.
- 3) Obedience to the will of God draws men together while obedience to the craving for pleasure drives men apart.

b) It drives men to shameful deeds

- 1) Envy, jealousy & even murder
- 2) A person may restrain themselves for a while, but the fact remains that as long as that desire for pleasure remains in his heart he is never safe.
 - (a) At any time it may explode in a ruinous action
 - (b) David's lust for Bathsheba led to Uriah's death
2 Sam.11:2-17
 - (c) Ahab's coveting of Naboth's vineyard led to Naboth's murder – 1 Kings 21:1-13

c) Constant craving for pleasure shuts the door upon prayer

- 1) When man's prayers are essentially selfish it is impossible for God to answer them. He would be contributing to man's sin.
- 2) **James assigns two reasons for an unsatisfied life**
 - (a) You have not because you don't ask
 - (b) You ask with the wrong motives – spend on self
 - (c) A satisfied life can only come from a right relationship with God. True satisfaction comes in asking God.
- 3) **Ask not** = in the present tense & indicates a repeated failure to ask.
- 4) **Several qualifications for answered prayer**
 - (a) James 1:6 – in faith
 - (b) James 1:6 – nothing doubting
 - (c) Jn.16:24 – in Jesus' name
 - (d) 1 Jn.5:14 – according to God's will
 - (e) 1 Pet.3:7 - While in a right relationship with others
 - (f) Ps.66:18 - When there is no iniquity in our hearts
- 5) James is writing to those who have their own selfish ends in view when they pray. They are not necessarily praying for sinful things, but rather they are praying out of selfish motives – to spend it upon themselves.

2. The error of establishing wrong priorities – vs.4-6

a. One cannot be faithful to God & the world at the same time.

1) The two are diametrically opposed to each other – vs.4

- (a) **Adulteresses** – common OT figure of unfaithfulness to God
 - (1) The breaking of a covenant
 - (2) Both God & the world are wooing the Christian
 - (3) The longing for pleasure leads to disobedience to God
- (b) **Friendship** – Greek word phileo = Love
 - (1) 2 Tim.3:4 – lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God
 - (2) Lk.16:13 – no servant can serve two masters
- (c) **Neutrality is impossible** – Rom.8:5-8
 - (1) Mind focused either upon God or the flesh
 - (2) Result – allegiance to world = enemy of God

2) The Spirit gives us the power to be wholeheartedly devoted to God

- (a) God jealously desires the loyalty of His people
- (b) The Spirit continuously battles with the flesh – Gal.5:17
- (c) God does not want to share our affection – we are in a covenant with Him.
- (d) God is gracious – He knows our struggle & is merciful – yet His grace is for the humble
 - Heb.4:16 – grace in our time of need
 - Rom.5:20 – where sin increased grace abounded
- (e) Yet to the proud – God resists – stands against. If we won't join Him in the battle against worldliness, He resists us; fights against us. However, if we humbly submit to His sovereignty, He is full of grace to meet our every need.

3. Practical exhortations to make God our 1st priority – vs.7-10

a. Each exhortation is in the aorist tense suggesting urgency & decisive action

b. Exhortations

1) **Submit to God** - voluntary subordination (a readiness to submit)

- a) God does not force us to obey Him
- b) He desires voluntary allegiance & devotion
- c) Submission is a key concept in the Christian life
 - (1) 1 Pet.2:13 – to the government
 - (2) 1 Pet.3:1 – wives to their husbands
 - (3) 1 Pet.5:5 – younger people to elderly
 - (4) Titus 2:9 – slaves to masters

2) **Resist the devil** – take your stand against

- a) 1 Pet.5:8,9 – he is our adversary – seeks to devour us
- b) Eph.6:10-12 – do everything to stand
- c) **Comforting promise** – he will flee
 - (1) He has been rendered powerless – Heb.2:14
 - (2) As we put on the whole armor of God we too will be victorious over Satan & his hosts – Eph.6:11-18

- 3) **Draw near to God** – as a worshiper (see Heb.10:19-25)
- a) **His promise** – He will draw near to you
 - b) **Preparations need to be made to worship properly**
 - (1) In The OT the priest went through a ritual of responsibilities – Ex.30:19-21
 - (2) James gives two parallel imperatives
“Wash your hands you sinners;
purify your hearts you double minded”
 - (3) Ps.24:3,4 – who may ascend the hill of the Lord
 - (4) Both hands & heart are defiled & need cleansing
 - (a) Hands – outward deeds
 - (b) Heart – the inner life – thoughts
 - (c) A godly lifestyle flows from a pure heart
- 4) **Grieve, mourn & wail** – outpourings of inner misery
- a) Sin is serious & cleansing must not be taken casually or lightly heartedly or in a frivolous manner.
 - b) Rom.7:24 – “O wretched man that I am”
 - c) Have an inner feeling of shame & misery because of your sin
 - d) Mourning is the outward expression of deep grief – intense hurt that cannot be easily disguised
 - e) Wailing is the tearful expression of mourning
- 5) **Change your laughter to mourning, your joy to gloom**
- a) Laughter is not sinful (Ps.126:2); but a flippant laughter of unconcern about sin is sinful. True joy is a fruit of the Spirit, but irresponsible frivolous joy is not considered Christian behavior.
 - b) **Gloom** – downcast appearance due to a heavy heart. It suggests dejection because of shame.
- 6) **Humble yourselves before the Lord**
- a) Voluntary humiliation – acknowledge & deplore your utter unworthiness – undeserving of His grace & gifts
 - b) **Promise** – He will lift you up – Lk.14:11; Mt.23:12
 - c) Self-exaltation leads to ruin, but humility brings divine exaltation

Judging Brothers In Christ

Introduction

Man cannot have a wrong attitude toward his fellow man & a right attitude toward God at the same time. 1 Jn.4:20,21 - If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. (NIV) In these verses James seeks to correct a specific sin which grows out of strife – the sin of evil speech & judging others. When man is proud & pleasure seeking, he ends up criticizing others & emphasizing their faults. God hates all sin, but there are few sins that are as strongly condemned in scripture as the sin of judging.

James 4: 11,12

1. Do not slander one another

- a. **Slander** = to speak evil of someone in that person's absence; to criticize or insult someone when they are not there to defend themselves.
 - 1) Carries the idea of running someone down; lowering them in someone else's estimation. To criticize & grumble against another.
 - 2) Often the motive is to exalt oneself at another's expense
 - 3) It is the sin of those who meet in corners & gather in little groups to pass on confidential tidbits of whispered information which destroys others.
 - 4) Sadly, there are few activities in which the average person finds more delight than in telling & listening to spicy gossip.
- b. **In the present tense** - in Greek indicating the action is habitual & ongoing
- c. It is expected for non-Christians to speak against Christians, but not for Christians. It is inappropriate & irresponsible. It is a sin.
- d. When true humility goes lacking, malicious backbiting occurs. We think we have arrived & stop examining ourselves & go to finding fault with others.
- e. **One another** = suggests the situation was not one sided – those being slandered were themselves slandering in return. There was no turning of the other cheek.
- f. The sins of slander, insult & evil speaking are condemned throughout scripture.
 - 1) Ps.15:1-5
 - 2) Ps.50:16-21
 - 3) Ps.101:1-8
 - 4) Prov.6:16-19
 - 5) Rom.1:28-32
 - 6) 1 Cor.6:9-11
 - 7) 2 Cor.12:19-21
 - 8) 1 Peter 2:1
- g. **The reason is clear** – we are brothers & our focus ought to be caring for, encouraging & looking after the spiritual well being of one another.

2. Why is it that people judge & slander one another

- a. Criticism boosts our own self-image. Pointing out someone else's failure and tearing him down makes us seem a little bit better, at least in our own eyes. It adds to our own pride, ego, and self-image.
- b. Criticism is simply enjoyed. There is a tendency in human nature to take pleasure in hearing and sharing bad news and shortcomings about others.
- c. Criticism makes us feel that our own lives (morality and behavior) are better than the person who failed.
- d. Criticism helps us justify the decisions we have made and the things we have done throughout our lives. We rationalize our decisions and acts by pointing out the failure of others.
- e. Criticism points out to our friends how strong we are. Criticism gives good feelings because our *rigid beliefs* and *strong lives* are proven again. Proven how - By our brother's failure.
- f. Criticism is an outlet for hurt and revenge. We feel *he deserves it*. Subconsciously, if not consciously, we think, "He hurt me so he deserves to hurt, too." So we criticize the person who failed.

3. James condemns this activity for two reasons

- a. **It is a violation of the law** – James 2:8 = royal law is love neighbor
 - 1) You can't love your neighbor & speak slanderously of him at the same time – 1 Cor.13:4-8
 - 2) Jn.13:34,35 – new command – love as I have loved you
 - 3) Lev.19:9-18 – laws concerning actions toward others
 - 4) **Such actions show** that you are sitting in judgment upon the law & saying that it (the law) is not good or valid.
 - a) It can sometimes be neglected, abused & violated & it's OK
 - b) When **you know** that **you are in violation** of the law & **justify violating it**, you are **setting yourself above** the law. We are making our will more binding than the law.
 - c) Our duty is not to judge the law, but to obey it
- b. **We are infringing upon God's prerogative**
 - 1) Only God has the right to judge another human being
Mt.7:1; Lk.6:37; Rom.14:13
 - 2) God gave the law & He is the only one above the law; to seek to change or violate the law is to seek to take the place of God.

4. Only God is able to save & destroy – who are we to judge one another?

- a. God gives life & He takes it away – Deut.32:39; 2 Kings 5:7
- b. God is the one who gives the verdict – not us
- c. He alone has the say in who is saved & who is destroyed

5. There are several reasons why we should never criticize another person.

a. All the circumstances and all the facts are never known.

- 1) There are always many behind-the-scene facts. Things happen when they are alone behind closed doors.
- 2) Unfortunately there is something seldom remembered: when people emerge from the closed doors and enter the public, the one who does the talking does not always reveal the true facts. 3

b. All people—religious as well as non-religious—come short, fail, and fall.

- 1) No one is ever exempt from sin. (1 John 1:8, 10)
 - a) It is a continual cycle that is the downfall of mankind.
 - b) The believer must always remember that his righteousness is Jesus Christ, and he is always dependent upon Christ's righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8-16)
- 2) When we criticize and judge, we have a problem: we forget that we are sinners.
 - a) When we acknowledge our own true condition, we act with care and compassion toward all as they come short.
 - b) They are failing now, but we failed before.
 - c) Our friend shall fail later too. No one is ever exempt from sin.
 - d) We must always be seeking God's forgiveness and forgetting those things that are behind.... (1 John 1:9; Phil. 3:13-14).
- e) Now this does not mean that we have license to sin nor that our sin is excused. We are not to continue in sin, not by criticizing nor by doing any other evil. But we must acknowledge our weakness and remember that the person who really knows God is the person who is ever seeking God. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

c. All that there is to know about a person is never known.

- 1) What kind of mother, what kind of father, what kind of friends did the *failing person* have to influence and mould him?
- 2) What kind of genes and temperament has he inherited and developed: fiery, composed, inferior, strict, strong, lovable, shy?
- 3) So much goes into influencing a human life that only God can know a person, know him well enough to judge him.

The Sin Of Presuming Upon The Future

Introduction

Man has always wanted to be the master of his own destiny. Even the basic documents outlining our freedoms as Americans speak of the rights we have to pursue our own goals & ambitions freely. However, man must always remember that he is not in control of his life; in fact so much of his life is beyond his control. As much as we try to predict the future, we are left with the reality that we have no knowledge of what the future might bring.

James 4:13-17

1. The sin of self-sufficiency

- a. It's a terrible sin in God's eyes for several reasons
 - 1) Man is so frail – subject to disease & accidents at the snap of the finger
 - 2) Man is nothing more than a spec before the all knowing & all powerful God who created us.
- b. This is that basis of the philosophy of humanism – we control our destiny
- c. **Self-sufficiency is planning without God.**
 - 1) There is nothing wrong with making plans. We should plan and prepare for the future.
 - a) Scripture is very clear about this: we are not to be slothful in business or in any endeavor (Romans 12:11).
 - b) Believers are to plan and think about their ventures and behavior before they act.
 - 2) Planning before we act is not what this Scripture is talking about; it is warning us *not to plan without God*.
 - 3) Most people just feel little need for God. They feel that their destiny lies in their hands; that they control their future.
 - 4) Man feels self-sufficient, perfectly capable of handling his own life and work.
 - a) Therefore, he lives and works with little meaningful trust being placed in God. Man just does not acknowledge much if any need for God.
 - b) Note James 4:13: it pictures man's attitude rather descriptively.
Man feels so self-sufficient that...
he plans the day of his departure: *today or tomorrow*.
he plans to seek his future in a particular city.
he even plans how long he will seek success in his efforts:
one year.
he plans the details of his endeavor and work: he plans to *buy and sell*.
he plans and projects his costs and profits, the very gain he can expect at the end of the year.

- d. Note the great error of self-sufficiency, of planning without God.
- 1) How can a person ever be sure...
 - that he will ever reach the city or place of his plans?
 - that he will not have an accident or be stricken with some disease?
 - that something will not cut into his plans?
 - that he will be able to continue in his chosen city or place?
 - that people will recognize and support and patronize his work and efforts?
 - that the economy and money and business will hold and continue to be successful?
 - 2) A thousand possibilities exist; a thousand things can happen to our plans. Utter disruption of our future is no farther away than a split second in an automobile accident or within a doctor's routine examination. The future of every person on earth is at most a small boat on the stormy and uncertain sea of life.

2. Background of the text

- a. The Jews were great traders of the ancient world.
 - 1) The dispersion of the Jews gave them connections all over the world & tremendous opportunities for business.
 - 2) This was an age of the founding of cities.
 - a) Often the founders of those cities looked for people to occupy them.
 - b) Favored citizens were given citizenship freely.
 - c) Because where the Jews went, money & trade went with them, they were often given such status.
- b. James pictures a man looking at a map – pointing to a certain spot & saying
 - 1) Here is a new city & a great trading opportunity
 - 2) I'll go there & get in on the ground floor – trade a year or so & make my fortune.
- c. No man has such a right to make confident plans about the future
 - 1) He doesn't even know what today might bring much less a year
 - 2) Man may purpose, but what happens is ultimately in the hands of God

3. Other scriptures

- a. Prov.27:1 – don't boast of tomorrow
- b. Mt.6:19,20 – futility of laying up treasure on earth
- c. Lk.12:13-21 – rich fool

4. Life is so uncertain

- a. We are so limited – no knowledge of or control over the future
- b. Our lives at most are brief when compared with eternity
- c. Life's uncertainty should not be a cause for fear or for inactivity – instead it is a reason for complete dependence upon God
- d. God does not want us terrorized or paralyzed by life's uncertainty

d. Paul's attitude

- 1) 1 Cor.4:19 – come shortly if the Lord wills
- 2) 1 Cor.16:7 – will tarry with you if Lord wills
- 3) **A curious thing** is that there was no such phrase as “if the Lord wills” used among the Jews

5. **The person who plans for the future without God is guilty of arrogant boasting**

- a. **Word describes** the character of a wandering quack – offering cures that are not cures & boasting of things he is unable to do.
- b. James ends with a threat – know wrong & continue do so = sin
 - 1) You have been warned – such arrogance is sin
 - 2) The future is not in your hands – God controls it
- c. Consequences of presuming upon the future
 - 1) Worry, Anxiousness, Fear
 - 2) Tendency to build life around things – greed

6. Discuss Lk.12:13-21

- a. Man asks Jesus to settle a dispute between him & his brother
 - 1) Law gave 2/3 to the older & 1/3 to younger
 - 2) He felt that he didn't get his legal share
 - 3) Mans focus was the world – Jesus' was spiritual
- b. Life does not consist in things
 - 1) Beware of covetousness – desiring more & more
 - 2) The covetous man was aggressively self centered – I = 6X; my = 5X
- c. See the man
 - 1) Tremendously blessed but unthankful
 - 2) Called the fruit of the ground his possessions
 - 3) Even called his soul his – not given to God
 - 4) Extremely puffed up thinking bigger & bigger
 - 5) His sole purpose to be at ease
- d. See Deut.8:11-14
- e. Wealth is not a permanent possession – someone else gets it
 - 1) Man left every penny behind – 1 Tim.6:7
 - 2) We take with us only what we lay up in heaven – 1 Tim.6:17-19

The Sin Of Hoarding Wealth

Introduction

Over & over in scripture the wealthy are warned about the temptations that face them because they are rich. Almost everyone wants to be rich, to have as much wealth as possible. We see the lifestyle, the luxury etc. but not the temptations that plague them. One of those temptations is to hoard their wealth & not share it with those in need or use it to meet the needs of a lost & dying world. Having riches is not sinful, but hoarding them & failing to use them for the good of mankind is sinful. James has some strong condemnation for those who have chosen to spend all their wealth selfishly. Looking at the context James appears to be condemning the wealthy individuals outside the church.

Note that brethren in vs.7 are mentioned in contrast to these rich oppressors.

James 5:1-6

1. **Weep & howl** = burst into weeping & howl with grief; to shriek & howl as those condemned by God. Sob bitterly as one weeping for the dead. If the rich understood their fate they would indeed howl in pain & grief.
 - a. **Miseries coming upon you** – wretchedness, distress & trouble. The same word is used to describe the mental distress of the unjustified man in Rom.7:24 (O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me)
 - b. **The trouble coming upon them can be one of two things**
 - 1) Their final condemnation at the judgment
 - 2) The upcoming judgment upon Jerusalem & the Jewish people in AD70
 - c. **James is not addressing the rich indiscriminately**, only those who are acquiring wealth at the expense of the poor.
 - 1) Wealth in & of itself is not sinful, but hoarding wealth creates a false sense of security.
 - 2) Here wealth was obtained through unjust & sinful means at the expense of others – the poor.
 - d. Although James addresses non-Christians, the wealthy believer is not exempt from the temptations associated with riches.
 - 1) Prov.30:7-9 - "Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God. (NIV)
 - 2) 1 Tim.6:9,10,17 - People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grief's. (NIV) ... Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, (NIV)

2. The coming judgment upon the rich – vs.1-3

- a. In the ancient world there were three signs of wealth – food, clothing & precious metals. James mentions each deteriorating.
 - 1) **Rotted** – Their foodstuff such as grain & oil have become worthless, of no value.
 - 2) **Moth-eaten clothes** – a moth eaten garment is practically worthless – filled with ugly holes.
 - 3) **Gold & silver have rusted** (must be figurative - these don't rust)
- b. These would be a witness against them & consume their flesh. James is picturing the ruin that would come upon all who put their hope & security in wealth. Their covetousness would eat at them & destroy them as rust destroys metal. Mt.6:19-21 – Don't lay up for yourselves treasures on earth
- c. **Like fire** – rapid destruction coupled with excruciating pain.

3. Charges against the rich – vs.4-6

- a. **They had not paid their employees.**
 - 1) 1 Tim.5:18 - Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." (NIV)
 - 2) Matt 10:9-10 - Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep. (NIV)
 - 3) Deut 24:14-15 - Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin. (NIV)
 - 4) In delaying paying the wages due them they were defrauding them. The Lord Almighty hears the cries of His people.
- b. **Lived in selfish extravagance**
 - 1) Luxury & self indulgence – suggests wastefulness & squandering
 - 2) James uses the picture of fattening up an animal for slaughter – like an ox gorging himself not realizing he is preparing himself for the slaughter.
 - 3) They were filling their life with wasteful worldly pleasure seemingly oblivious to the slaughter that was coming.
- c. **They used their influence to condemn & kill the righteous.**
 - 1) They pervert justice for their own gain
 - 2) They take away another's livelihood – murder of the innocent
 - 3) These rich oppressors, rather than using their influence to champion what is right, choose to make the poor Christian the object of their evil.

James 5:7-11

1. Be patient – the Lord is coming – vs.7,8

- a. Patient carries with it the idea of longsuffering in dealing with difficult & irritating people. Persevere in the face of difficult circumstances
 - 1) God is longsuffering – Rom.2:4; 9:22; 1 Pet.3:20; 2 Pet.3:9
 - 2) We are to follow His example – 1 Cor.13:4; 1 Thess.5:14
 - 3) God wants us to put up with difficult situations & people, to restrain ourselves from striking back.
- b. This is not a sign of weakness but of God's character – Jonah 4:2; Ps.86:15
- c. The Lord is coming – He will avenge – Rom.12:17-21
- d. **Example of patience** – the farmer – he does his part & leaves the rest up to the providential workings of God. He expects a harvest in spite of the uncertainties of weather & pestilence.
- e. We too must wait expectantly & patiently for God – the idea is confident hope. In spite of the difficult circumstances we are not to turn to self-pity of complaining, but instead strengthen others & ourselves inwardly. The Lord is at hand.

2. Don't fall into the trap of self-pity & faultfinding – vs.9

- a. Don't grumble – to sigh or groan because of the difficulties
- b. During times of difficulty & oppression it is easy to become impatient & develop feeling & attitudes of criticism & faultfinding.
 - 1) Moral can break down small irritations can cause hard feelings
 - 2) This complaining can become reciprocal & we lash out at one another.
- c. There is a higher judge – He will repay & we will all answer to Him – 2 Cor.5

3. OT examples for our encouragement – vs.10,11

- a. **The prophets** – Heb.11; Mt.5:11,12; 2 Chron.36:16; Mt.23:29-31; Acts 7:52; 1 Thess.2:15; 1 Pet.2:21-24
- b. **Job** – although impatient he remained true to God in spite of his afflictions.
 - Job 1:21,22; 2:10
 - 1) What the Lord brought about
 - a) Conclusion – blessed more than before
 - b) The maturity of Job
 - 2) God wants us to face our difficulties properly so that we too might mature & grow in faith. The rich may not have compassion but the Lord is rich in compassion & tender mercy.

Concluding Counsel

Introduction

The use & abuse of the tongue continues to be a primary subject on James' mind. Believers are not to complain against one another (5:9) but rather patiently endure (5:10,11). James has already pictured the tongue as a restless evil full of deadly poison (3:8). When believers use their tongue improperly they often bring irreparable damage upon others & the kingdom of God. The mark of a truly religious person is to bridle the tongue (1:26; 3:2). Now as James closes his book he again challenges them to correctly use their tongue. This last section can be divided into three parts – the misuse of oaths (vs.12); the use of prayer & praise (vs.13-18) and the restoration of a straying member (vs.19,20).

James 5:12

1. Verse 12 forms a fitting transition from what has gone before. Believers have been counseled about proper behavior when faced with overwhelming adversity.
 - a. Be patient until the Lord's coming
 - b. Don't grumble against each other
 - c. Now instead of swearing, pray when suffering & praise God when cheerful.

2. **Above all** – One of the most heinous of sins is to misuse the Lord's name in an oath.
 - a. Swearing can take several forms
 - 1) Impatience can result in using God's name irreverently. (Profanity)
 - 2) One can seek to conceal the truth by calling upon God to confirm a half-truth. (Blasphemy)
 - b. James echoes the words of Jesus (Mt.5:33-37)
 - 1) The Jews had various subtle ways to distinguish between oaths as to whether or not they were binding. Some even used oaths to cheat (Mt.23:16-22)
 - 2) James like Jesus does not have in mind the rare, solemn & proper use of an oath. It is the misuse that James & Jesus condemns. See the legitimate use of oaths in scripture. Gen.22:16; 1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 3:14; Phil.1:8; Heb.6:16; Rev.10:6
 - c. The basic issue at hand is honesty in everyday conversations. The Christian should have no need to prove the veracity of what they are saying.
 - 1) A man's word is a reflection of himself. He is either true or false. He is either trustworthy or undependable. If his word is untrue, he has lost his trustfulness and worth.
 - 2) There should, therefore, be no need for oaths. His word should stand alone, sure and factual. When it does not, and he curses or swears, he shows a heart that is disturbed, lacking, or evil.
 - 3) No matter who the person may be—how high or low in society—his words reveal the truth of his heart: restful, assured, peaceful, full, and good or else disturbed, insecure, lacking, and evil.

3. There are at least six types of swearing.

- a. There is *swearing by oaths*. Jesus was put upon His oath (Matthew 26:63), and Paul swore by taking an oath (2 Cor. 1:23; Galatians 1:20).
 - 1) What then does James mean by saying, “Swear not”? Simply that a man’s word should be trustworthy in his day to day speech, so trustworthy that no oath is ever necessary. His character should be his guarantee the only guarantee he needs.
 - 2) A second explanation is also possible. Men are evil, so untrustworthy in their day to day dealings that worldly men require oaths. However, as stated above, the believer’s word and character should be his bond.
- b. There is *habitual, frivolous swearing*. The unrighteous are said to have “mouths full of cursing and bitterness” (Romans 3:10, 14).
- c. There is *hypocritical swearing*. There are some who “bless God” in one breath and turn around and “curse men” in the next breath. “Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing” (James 3:9-10).
- d. There is *silent, universal swearing*. Every man is charged with secretly cursing others within his heart. “Your own heart knows that you have cursed others” (Eccles. 7:22).
- e. There is *evasive swearing*. Some do not use words that are foul, dirty, ugly, harsh, or binding. They would never use God’s name in vain. Rather, they choose substitute words—words that are commonly used in everyday conversation, words that would never be considered swearing.
 - 1) Others choose what are thought to be milder curse words.
 - 2) By evading harsh swearing, they feel their word is not so binding. They count themselves less guilty.
- f. There is *ego swearing*. Many swear to boost their ego, their manliness around others. They feel an identity with the crowd by crossing over to the forbidden.

4. James loosely quotes Jesus – let your yes be yes & no be no or be condemned.

- a. A person is to let his word be so true that it is his guarantee. His word is to stand alone and be true. A man is to need no other words to show his character or strength—no curse words and no swearing words.
- b. A man should not have to say anymore than “yes I will....” or “no, I will not....” His life should be so honest and straight that no one would ever question his word. When he speaks, everyone should know that it will be done, that he will see to it that it is done. In fact, Jesus Christ said that anything more than straightforward words are of evil.
- c. Something that is often overlooked is this fact: swearing and cursing do not make a matter more believable; they really make a matter more suspicious. A person swears something because his character or the matter is questionable. What an indictment of depravity! Yet swearing and cursing are the acceptable habits of men.

James 5:13-18

1. Is anyone suffering – let him pray

- a. The individual in trying circumstances is tempted to complain or break out in an impious oath, but the proper response is to turn to God in prayer.
- b. In trouble, joy or sickness the response should be prayer.
- c. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous & His ears are attentive to their prayers (1 Pet.3:12; Ps.34:15)
- d. The situation itself may not change, but God will give the grace necessary to endure (2 Cor.12:9)

2. Is any cheerful – let him sing praise

- a. **Means** – this word is used elsewhere in the NT only in Acts 27:22,25. Here is translated “keep up your courage”

1) **Not mean** boisterous hilarity, nor imply freedom from any form of trouble, but **suggests an inner attitude of cheerfulness.**

2)

In spite of difficult times the believer is to be cheerfully courageous

- b. Whatever the circumstance in life the believer can both pray & praise.
Acts 16:25

3. Is any of you sick – call for the elders

- a. **Means** – illness that debilitates a person
- b. Used primarily for bodily ailments but can also refer to mental, emotional or spiritual sickness & weakness.
- c. The sick person is not to suffer alone
- d. Let him call – sick person is responsible for initiating the summons.

4. Note the four facts given in this passage.

- a. “Is any sick among you?” The sick are those who are so sick that they are *shut-ins*—unable to get out and go to the ministers and leaders of the church.
- b. “Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church.” The sick person is to be so concerned over his welfare and so trusting of God that he knows that God can heal him. He also believes in prayer, that where two of three are gathered together in the name of Christ, Christ will be there in more power.
- c. “Let them [the elders] pray over him, anointing him with oil *in the name of the Lord.*” Two things are done by the elders - They pray for the sick shut-in & they anoint him with oil. And they do both things *in the name of the Lord.*
 - 1) That is, they know that the Lord alone is the Healer of our sicknesses.
 - 2) We are healed by the Lord not by our prayers or by the oil.
- d. “The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up....” The Lord will heal the sick person and forgive his sins *because of the prayer of faith.*

5. Picture the scene of what is being said in this passage.

- a. A dear, dear brother or sister is so sick that they are bedridden.
- b. The sickness is permanent, so permanent that if they are ever going to join us in the worship of the Lord again, the Lord is going to have to intervene & heal them.
- c. What is he or she to do? Just lie there and give up to the trial and temptation to limit God's power?
- d. What should the elders of the church do? Just encourage the dear brother to bear his affliction and suffering—to just lie there and accept his affliction with no hope of ever being healed by God? This passage emphatically says “no!”
- e. We are not to give up to the trial or sickness. Scripture says that we should do two things: Gather around the sick person and pray & anoint them with oil.
- f. But note: they are to pray in faith—pray knowing and expecting God to heal the sick person. And as already stated, the prayer of faith will save the sick person.

6. Now, for a couple of questions.

- a. Does this work? Is this what God expects us to do when one of our loved ones or dear brothers or sisters become sick? Let us answer these questions by asking several other questions.
 - 1) What is there in this passage or in this book that says this is not a clear instruction of Scripture? It would seem that raw honesty before the Lord—without preconceived notions—would require us to say that this instruction stands as the Lord's instructions as much as any other in the Book of James.
 - 2) Why not do this? What is wrong with going to a dear brother or sister—one whom we love ever so deeply and one who has been *among us* as one of God's faithful worshippers and servants—and putting a little oil on his head and praying for God to heal him? He is a dear brother who is hurting and suffering and racked with excruciating pain, and he has been given no hope. What is wrong with us doing all we can for him? What is wrong with praying with all the faith we can arouse within our hearts and minds?
- b. All believers, of course, have to answer these questions for themselves; but as we answer them, we must be honest—honest to God and His Word and honest to ourselves and our loved ones. There is no question—absolutely no question—these instructions are in the Word of God. Their presence and clear instructions cannot be denied. What, then, are we to do? What does God want us to do? Regardless of what men say and do, what does God really want us to do? What does His Word say?

7. Note the instruction to anoint with oil.

- a. Why would Scripture tell us to anoint the sick with oil?
- b. There are two excellent reasons.
 - 1) In the OT oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit & His presence. The oil helps the sick person to focus and concentrate upon the presence of the Holy Spirit and His power.
 - 2) Oil is also a symbol of God's care, comfort, joy & mercy to us. It is the oil of gladness. Therefore, oil actually focuses the attention and stirs the sick to believe in God's will to be merciful and His desire to fill the believer's heart with gladness.
- c. Anointing with oil was also done for medicinal purposes – Isa.1:6; Lk.10:34
 - 1) Mk.6:13 mentions the 12 anointing many with oil & healing them.
 - 2) Some say that this was something that only occurred during the 1st century & was a sign to validate the gospel. If that were so one might expect the apostles & prophets to be summoned not the elders.

8. If he has sinned he will be forgiven

- a. Some sickness is due to sinful actions. There are consequences when we violate God's commands & some of them come upon us physically.
 - 1) 2 Cor.12:7-12 – Paul given a thorn in his flesh (because of pride)
 - 2) Mt.18:34,35 – unforgiving turned over to torturers
- b. Therefore confess your sins & pray for one another
 - 1) Present tense denoting this should be a general practice of believers.
 - 2) Discretion is to be used as to the extent of our confession.
 - a) Not so that they cause injury to others or unhealthy exhibitionism
 - b) The emphasis needs to be on apology & admitting weaknesses so we might heal relationships & bring encouragement to one another.
 - c) Confession to God brings forgiveness, but confession to a friend can be a source of healing.
 - 3) The purpose behind our confession & prayer is that we might be healed.

9. Earnest fervent prayer is effective & works.

- a. Elijah is an excellent example of the power of prayer.
 - 1) He was a man just like us, a human being who had passions and feelings just like we have and who faced the same temptations and trials that we do.
 - 2) Yet Elijah earnestly prayed for it not to rain, and it did not rain for three years and six months. Then he prayed again for it to rain, and it rained and the earth bore its fruit 1 Kings 17:1f; 1 Kings 18:1f.

- b. **Righteous** – one who is right with God; one who acts righteously; practices righteousness – lives a righteous lifestyle.

James 5:19,20

1. Restoring one who strays

- a. There is always the possibility of a person straying away from Jesus.
1 Cor.10:12; Heb.6:4-6
- b. God wants us to be so concerned with one another that we are looking for ways to help them come back to Jesus.
- c. When one has been restored a multitude of sins have been covered & they are saved from death (spiritual death).

A People of the Book

Where Truth and Love Abound



Our Service Schedule

| | | |
|------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Sunday: | 10:00 a.m. | Bible Study (classes for all ages) |
| | 11:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m. | Worship |
| Wednesday: | 7:00 p.m. | Bible Study (classes for all ages) |

Summit Church of Christ
6015 Alexandria Pike
Cold Spring, KY 41076
(859) 635-1141
www.summitchurchofchrist.org