



NZYC24

LIVING THE WORD

The Epistle of James

STUDY GUIDE



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Introduction

Welcome to the NZ Youth Conference 2024 Study Guide on the Epistle of James – Living the Word.

Within his concise Epistle, James repeatedly emphasizes the core principle of manifesting God's character in our lives. It's not just theory; it's a call to action. As James insists that we must not just hear the Word, we must put it into practice (1:22) - "faith without works is dead" (2:26).

James the Just

James, a revered figure in the Ecclesia, provides guidance on various aspects of life. As you will see in the section The Writer on pg. 7, we will see that James practiced his own teachings in his own life – he had an unwavering commitment to living out God's Word.

James the Epistle

This Epistle was penned during a transitional period for the Ecclesia, moving from the Law of Moses to the freedom found in Christ. James helps us align our lives with God's will in the Ecclesia and in our interactions with the world. James is direct and compassionate, acknowledging our human weaknesses while inspiring us to reach for the heavenly high calling.

An important note for you

These notes are tailored to resonate with your journey towards God's kingdom, addressing our struggles, and offering insights into conquering our nature on our path toward the promised crown of life. Think of these notes as tools to enhance your Bible study skills and, most importantly, to bring about life-changing transformations.

With that in mind, we want you to be aware of something different with this Study Guide and Conference. We have made verses of the Conference Study Guide required. There are two reasons for this:

1. We want you to be able to study and meditate on the words of James, and then be able to consider how you might apply that in your life. We can't be a doer of the Word if we aren't putting the time in to our understanding of it.
2. We want everyone to be on the same page when they get to Conference. Discussions and sessions will be that much deeper and empowering if *everyone* has studied the content.

Please note that only sections of the Study Guide are required, not the whole thing. It roughly works out to be about 50-60 pages. We believe this will be a manageable amount to get through before NZYC24. The list of required portions is on pg. 6 under Required Study. As this is a new concept in New Zealand, there will be plenty of support available, with both a mentor system and online sessions to facilitate guidance.

Your NZYC24 experience depends on your active participation. We look forward to exploring God's Word and living out the message of being "doers of the word" together.

With love in the Lord's service,

The NZ Youth Conference Committee 2024

STUDYING JAMES

When we begin Bible study the answers don't automatically come to us. Proverbs 25:2 says, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter". The Bible is designed to stimulate our thoughts as we study to know God and His ways.

Study Tips

Here are some tips:

- Have a specific time set aside for study each week when you will not be disturbed or interrupted.
- Have a specific quiet place where you do your study, free of distractions.
- Utilise the study timetable on page 6.
- Before you start, have everything you need close by - Bible, pens, notebook, reference books etc. This way you won't get distracted when you need to get up to find them.
- Always begin Bible study with prayer.
- Sit down and read the whole letter through all in one sitting. Read it out loud, slowly and carefully with emphasis. Read it as if James has written this as a personal letter to you. Figure out what he is trying to get across to you and try to compare your life with how he portrays you should be living it.
- Note verses that you find interesting or confusing. Note key words. Note down words or themes that continue to appear.
- Use different versions like the ESV, RSV, NIV and the Diaglott, to get a different perspective.
- Bible study is all about asking questions - Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Think of questions to ask your friends, especially if you can't figure them out. Talk to them about your study.
- Mark up your Bible. Choose a method that suits you. It doesn't matter what method you use. What does matter is that you can understand what you have written.
- MOST IMPORTANTLY - ask yourself how it applies to you. What lessons are there which will change your character to be like God's?

Symbols

Note that we have used symbols through the book for you to quickly understand what we have asked you to do.



Required study: these verses are required for Conference. Please refer to the Introduction for more information.



Reference book: use or read another Bible version or translation or Reference book to understand more about what the passage is saying.



Living the Word: this is a thought or action that you need to consider in order to make God's word live in your life.

Study Tools

NZYC24 Website Resources:

We have compiled a few references that you may find useful in your studies of James. Please visit www.nz youthconference.org.nz to find these.

Further Reading:

- “*From James to Jude*”, H. P. Mansfield, Logos Publications
- “*The Epistle of James*”, J. Martin, C.S.S.S. Study Notes
- “*The Epistle of James*”, N. Smart, The Christadelphian

Further Listening:

- “*James the Lord’s Brother*” – R. Lewis (www.christadelphianbibletalks.com)
- “*James*” – J. Martin (www.christadelphianbibletalks.com)
- “*James*” – J. Gelineau (Good Christadelphian Talks Extended podcast on Spotify)

Suggested Reference Tools:

- A Bible app or website that uses Strong's Concordance with Hebrew and Greek Lexicon (for Greek and Hebrew meanings), and has good Bible dictionaries, e.g., Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words. We suggest e-Sword or Online Bible, or www.blueletterbible.org.
- Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible
- Pioneer works, such as *Eureka* or *Elpis Israel*
- Historical works - *Josephus*, *Eusebius*

Translations Used in These Notes:

- AV Authorised Version (King James)
- RV Revised Version
- ESV English Standard Version
- RSV Revised Standard Version
- Roth Rotherham's Emphasised Bible
- Diag Diaglott
- NIV New International Version
- Moff Moffatt's Translation of the New Testament
- Wey Weymouth's New Testament
- Young Young's Literal Translation
- LXX The Septuagint

Acknowledgements:

- “*The Epistle of James*”, 22nd Australasian Christadelphian Youth Conference 1993. These notes were immensely useful and a significant part of the study material in this study guide has been drawn from this source.
- The NZYC 2010 Study Guide on the Epistle of James. This study guide has been adapted from these notes.

REQUIRED STUDY

As noted in the introductory letter, sections of this Study Guide are required to be completed prior to attending Conference. This timetable is provided to help you to plan your study of the required verses so that you can complete the study guide before Conference.



Please note that it will be worth skimming over the verses you don't read, so you can get the context.

Required verses will be denoted throughout the study guide by this symbol:



Start Date	Section	Date Complete
	Read 'The Writer' section	
	1:1-2, 8	
	1:14-15	
	1:22, 25, 27	
	2:1-3	
	2:5, 12	
	2:14-17	
	3:1-2	
	3:4-5	
	3:9-10	
	3:13-18	
	4:4, 7-8	
	4:9-10	
	4:13-17	
	5:7-10	
	5:13-18	
	5:19-20	
28 March 2024	CONFERENCE	1 April 2024

The Writer



In any sort of Bible study, a study of the background is a must. There is usually an historical setting to which the words have been specifically applied. If you are able to understand the background to a subject, the more power you can gain from the whole study and the force of what is said is not missed.

Who was James?

Who was this man? What was his background? What was his character? Why was he chosen to write this letter?

A good place to start is the salutation (opening remarks) at the beginning of the Epistle (James 1:1). A greeting in the epistles normally gives the whole key to what the letter is about. Consideration of the opening remarks often helps us to understand the whole message and spirit of the book.

So, what can we find out about the writer here?

James actually tells us quite a lot. Not only does he give us his name, he also reveals how he views himself in relation to God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the title of the epistle and the first verse you'll know that the writer's name is James. However, there are at least four men called James in the New Testament. How do we know which one is this writer, since he keeps so quiet about himself? Is it significant that he does, and if so what is the principle involved?

So how do we answer these questions? One way is to use Strong's and list the unique references into columns (some references in the various gospels will refer to the same incident). However, we have done the hard work for you here, and listed the verses and the four James' that are cast in the gospels:

1. the son of Zebedee (Matt 4:21);
2. the son of Alphaeus (Matt 10:3);
(both of these were members of the twelve disciples)
3. James "the little", the son of Mary and Cleophas (cp Mark 15:40; John 19:25); and
4. James "the Lord's brother" (Matt 13:55; Gal 1:19).

It was James the Lord's half brother who was the writer of James. This will soon become apparent when you put together the information of his life. The son of Zebedee died before the Epistle was written (Acts 12:2 - about AD 44), and there is no evidence that either of the other two wrote this letter.

In coming to this conclusion you need to have worked backwards. In Acts 15, we find a James who is a leader in the Jerusalem ecclesia. A comparison of the letter and the speech show some remarkable similarities -

James 1:1 "Greeting" - "*chairo*" - "wisheth joy". This word is only used as a salutation outside the Gospels in two other places - Acts 23:26 (Lysias to Felix) and Acts 15:23.

James 2:5 "Hearken brethren". These words are only used together elsewhere in this way in Acts 7:2 (Stephen's defence), in Acts 22:1 (Paul's defence in Jerusalem) and in Acts 15:13.

James 2:7 "Name ... called" - This phrase is only used elsewhere in this way in Acts 15:17.

James 2:7; 5:10,14 James places an emphasis upon "the Name". Compare Acts 15:14,17,26.

These comparisons show a strong link between the writer of the Epistle and James, the leader of the Jerusalem Ecclesia. By examining the information on James the leader, you will discover that he was James the Lord's half-brother (cp Gal 1:19). This opens up a whole new area for discovery. What can we find out about Christ's brethren? What was it like to grow up in the same family as our Lord? What was it like to have him as an older brother?

As we go through the life and character of James, try to build a picture of James' early life from these references and his later life from the verses mentioned above. Remember that this was a real man, who lived in a real family, facing the same trials as you do. As you construct his life, think about the principles that come out and how you can apply them in your own life.

James the Just

His childhood and instruction



James was probably the second eldest in a family of seven (cp Matt 13:55). He was also the brother of Jude (Jude 1), and the half-brother of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 1:19; Matt 13:55). His parents were obviously then Joseph and Mary, the mother of our Lord, who were both very faithful to God (Matt 1:19; Luke 1:28,30; 2:41). Their guidance and instruction to their children created a family who knew the Law backwards. Having an elder brother who would test his parents' knowledge of the Scriptures to their very limit and more, would have given James a keen thirst to understand the Law thoroughly. He was also taught not just the academic side of the Law but the practical. He urged Christ to action (John 7:2-5) and he wrote an epistle full of belief in action; "DO" was the key word of his life. Above all, his parents instilled in him a

love for his brethren. This is shown in his references to Leviticus 19 which serves, among others, as a basis for his Epistle. Overall, he had great respect for the Old Testament (cp Acts 15:19-21; 21:18-25).



It would have been a simple life in the carpenter's house. James ate, played, worked and slept with Christ and would have seen him develop and manifest a character quite different from the other children.

His attitude to Christ during our Lord's ministry

Christ's brethren were with him early on in his ministry (John 2:12; 7:3,10; see also the repeated allusions to the Sermon on the Mount. This testifies that James was amongst the multitude), but they misunderstood his zeal (Psa 69:8-9) and did not believe in him (John 7:5). They couldn't get past the fact that Christ was their natural brother and therefore couldn't elevate him to the Divine relationship he had with his Father. They were "without" (Luke 8:20) - they had to learn to come TO Christ, not desire that he come to them.



In fact, James seems to have remembered this one incident for the rest of his life, as he refers to the principle in his epistle. His mother, his brethren and himself had stood "without" the crowd and had passed the message to Christ that they wanted to speak with him. James heard the reproving answer as Christ stretched forth his hands to his disciples and exclaimed, "Behold my mother and my brethren! for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt 12:49-50). That would have offended James to the utmost for he would have thought Christ had dishonoured his mother. Even worse than this was the fact that his brother had elevated himself to be the Son of God! However, when he later came to understand his brother's true relationship with God, he would apply those words in

every facet of his life. Luke quotes this incident in a slightly different way: "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it" (Luke 8:21). James later exhorted the readers of his epistle: "be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only" (Jam 1:22).

The fact that James quotes extensively from Christ shows that the Lord's words had made an impact on him. Due to his brothers' attitude towards the Law and their respect for the elders, they objected to some of Christ's activities (Mark 3:21; cp Mark 2:24; 3:2). Christ warned them of the consequences of their action, that their family would be divided (Mark 3:25,31-35), but it seems that they had little to do with him from then on except to try to force his hand six months before his crucifixion (John 7:2-9; cp John 2:3-5). Christ had expected his family to reject him (Mark 6:4). James would have viewed Christ's death with sorrow but would have seen it as an inevitable outcome of Christ's actions. We know he wasn't there at Christ's

crucifixion because John was commanded of our Lord to take Mary as his mother and to care for her from that time forth. He would have stuck to the letter of the Law and prepared the Passover.

His conversion

Although James grew up with Christ, it appears that he was not converted until after Christ's resurrection became a reality to him. Imagine James' reaction when Christ made a special appearance to him (1 Cor 15:7). Christ chose James because he was going to be ideal in bringing together the Jewish and Gentile believers. Having seen the resurrected Lord, James would have bemoaned his lost opportunities of learning from Christ. Being humbled, he now saw the need to look beyond the letter of the Law to the true spirit of its teaching (Gal 3:23-26).



The Bondservant of the Lord Jesus Christ

We next read of all Christ's family gathering together in the upper room (Acts 1:14). As the eldest it is possible that James was the one who had moved the family against Christ and now that he was converted, he brought them back again. They become associated with the apostles (1 Cor 9:5).



This was the turning point for James. He became a pillar in the Jerusalem Ecclesia (Gal 2:9,12). The apostles showed great respect for him. He was the only person seen initially by Paul apart from Peter (Gal 1:19). It was James that Peter requested to be told of his release from prison (Acts 12:17). James presided over the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:13,19) and it was to James and the elders that Paul reported the work that was being done amongst the Gentiles (Acts 21:18). Jude uses his name to give authority to his letter (Jude 1). James was so well known that he didn't need to specify which James he was in writing the Epistle of James.

James was a man of dignity and authority. He was the one who concluded the Jerusalem Conference after Peter and Paul had spoken, and it was through the misuse of his name that Peter was influenced to cease fellowship with Gentiles (Gal 2:12). When he spoke, it was the summary of what had been said, and what was then acted upon (cp Acts 15:13-21,28-29). The Jews themselves were so impressed by his manner of life that they gave him the title of James "the Just" (Josephus - Antiquities of the Jews 20.9.24). To them, to be a "just" man was to be a holy and strict upholder of the Law. Such was James' attitude to the Law that even the Jews honoured him.



In his letter, James showed his modesty in referring to himself as a bondservant of Christ (See notes on Jam 1:1). He did not call upon his relationship with Christ as his authority because he knew that God is not a respecter of persons (cp Jam 2:1-9). He placed his authority on the spirit and not the flesh (cp Mark 3:35; John 6:63; 2 Cor 5:16). The contribution his flesh had made was to reject Christ's work.

In his epistle, he recognized his position to his Lord:

1:1	James calls Christ by a title that he would never have used for his brother before his conversion - "the Lord Jesus Christ"	James now recognises Christ's Messiahship
2:1	James sees Christ as God manifest - "THE Glory"	He acknowledges Christ's resurrection, splendour and glory
5:7 - 9	James realises Christ will return in judgement - "the Judge"	He declares Christ's authoritative return

James was a man who had been zealous for the Law and had come to see it as the schoolmaster to lead the Jews to Christ. He recognised that salvation was extended to the Gentiles (Acts 15:14-15). In his conduct he had developed a balance between the Law and liberty (cp Acts 15:19-21; 21:18-25), yet he did not claim to be perfect (cp Jam 3:2). He was practical in character, strong and assertive, earnest and sincere, yet not lacking warmth. He had a great understanding of human nature, which is shown in his letter and he gives help

and guidance to overcome the fleshly tendencies within us. These qualities made him ideal to preside over the centre of Jewry in Jerusalem and to strengthen the believers both in Jerusalem and scattered abroad.

His Death

According to Josephus (Antiquities of the Jews 20.9) and Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History - Book 2, Chapter 23) the Sanhedrin raised false accusations against him, and he was stoned to death in about AD 62 (cp Heb 11:37).

“... They cast down the just man, saying to one another, ‘Let us stone James the Just’. And they began to stone him, for he was not killed by the fall; but he turned and knelt down saying, ‘I entreat thee, Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do’. And while they were thus stoning him, one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, a son of the Rechabites spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet, cried out saying, ‘Cease, what are you doing? The Just One is praying for you’. And one of them, a fuller, beat out the brains of the Just One with the club that he used to beat out clothes.”

“Thus he suffered martyrdom, and they buried him on the spot where his tombstone is still remaining, by the temple. He became a faithful witness, both to the Jews and Greeks, that Jesus is the Christ.” (Eusebius Book 2, Ch 23, quoting Hegesippus).

The following table shows some of the events recorded in James' lifetime.

JAMES' AGE	YEAR	EVENT	REFERENCE
Late 20's	AD 30	Christ's death and resurrection	1 Cor 15:3-7
Mid 30's	AD 35-36	Saul's conversion	Acts 9; Gal 1
Early 40's	AD 44	Peter's imprisonment	Acts 12
Mid 40's	AD 44-46	The Epistle written	James
Late 40's	AD 49	Jerusalem Conference	Acts 15
Mid 50's	AD 57	Paul in Jerusalem	Acts 21
Early 60's	AD 62	Death of James	Josephus/Eusebius

Analysis

Usually you will find that one verse summarises the main message of a book. This is known as the Key Verse.

For James it is -

1:22 "But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

This is where we have adapted our Conference title to be "**Living the Word**". We want you to be able to go away with a good understanding of how to make God's word live in our lives, as we await our Lord's return.

When was the Epistle written?

The Epistle of James was probably written about AD 44-46. There is no mention of Gentiles at all in the Epistle. There is also no mention of the Jerusalem Conference and its result. Allusions to Christ's words and not direct quotes suggest that this letter was written before the Gospels. These all indicate that it is an early letter (cp 1 Peter which was written to the same people but does refer to Gentiles (1 Pet 2:12,14; 4:3)). Sufficient time needed to elapse for his authority to be established and to be known by name only (cp Gal 1:19 - AD 35-36). At that stage he still needed to be distinguished from the son of Zebedee). Therefore we can suppose that the letter was written after the death of John's brother (AD 44) and before Paul's first missionary journey to the Gentiles (AD 46-48) and the Council of Jerusalem (AD 48-49). This means that it was written only 14-16 years after Christ's death and resurrection.

Who was the Epistle written to?

The first verse in James gives us the clue to this question as well. It was written to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad". The original dispersion was of the ten tribes of Israel by Assyria (the dispersion of the remaining two tribes of Judah was to be finally completed by the Romans in AD 70). Representatives of the tribes were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:5). They took the Truth back to the cities of their dispersion (cp Acts 2:8-11). The Jews maintained their contact through the great feasts. The work of Pentecost was later supplemented by the dispersion of the Jerusalem believers due to persecution (Acts 8:1; 11:19; 15:21). This is why James writes to the TWELVE tribes - he is only concerned with the true twelve tribes of God (cp Rev 7:4).

Why was the Epistle written?

The epistle satisfied the needs of believers from the time of the first conversions at Pentecost until the ecclesias were completely separate from the Synagogues. Here were new ecclesias in need of sound instruction to make their foundation firm. The Epistle was written to advise and encourage, and many issues were addressed in the letter. There was persecution to be endured. There was a need to match their faith with deeds, and act beyond the rituals and formalism of the Law (1:26-27; 2:14-26). James covers the problem of riches (1:9-11; 2:1; 4:13). He warns against misusing the tongue (1:19,26; 3:2-12; 4:11; 5:12). He deals with contentious spirits within their midst (3:13-4:10), and he provides advice on overcoming sickness through the use of prayer (5:13-18).

The Epistle of James: Chapter Breakup

1:1-12 Enduring Trials

- 1:1 James greets his readers
- 1:2-4 Rejoice! Faith tested gives patience and perfection
- 1:5-8 Seek Godly wisdom in single-mindedness
- 1:9-11 Temporary wealth
- 1:12 The blessing for enduring trials

1:13-27 Overcome Temptation by Living the Word

- 1:13-16 The source of temptation
- 1:17-18 The unchangeable Father has called us for His purpose
- 1:19-21 Word received, not flesh, accomplishes righteousness
- 1:22-27 Living the Word

2:1-13 Respecting Persons

- 2:1-4 Partiality leads to wicked reasoning
- 2:5-7 Favouritism is inconsistent with God's calling
- 2:8-11 Lesson from the Law
- 2:12-13 The need to keep whole Law of liberty

2:14-26 Faith and Works

- 2:14-17 Faith without works is dead
- 2:18-26 Faith shown by works

3:1-12 Taming the Tongue

- 3:1-2 Responsibility of teachers
- 3:3-5 Small things can control large objects
- 3:6-8 The tongue is a dangerous force
- 3:9-12 Inconsistencies of speech unacceptable

3:13-18 Wisdom: Below and Above

- 3:13 Wisdom shown in way of life
- 3:14-16 Selfish pride brings envy and ambition
- 3:17-18 Attributes of wisdom from above

4:1-10 Contention versus Humility

- 4:1-5 Cause of contentions
- 4:6-10 Solution is to submit to God

4:11-12 Judging Others

- 4:11 Warning against speaking evil or judging
- 4:12 God is the only judge

4:13-17 Who is in Control?

- 4:13-14 Vanity of relying on future
- 4:15 Life in perspective
- 4:16-17 Arrogance of our plans

5:1-12 Abuse of Wealth and Encouragement to Victims

- 5:1-6 The rich rebuked
- 5:7-12 Endurance and Encouragement

5:13-20 Effective Prayer

- 5:13-18 Sickness and healing
- 5:19-20 Responsibility towards erring brethren

Chapter One

Begotten by the Word of Truth



1:1-12 | ENDURING TRIALS

James greets his readers before launching into a message of encouragement for when we endure trials. Because it is the first thing he writes, it is most likely to be something he wants us to understand before he deals with other matters. The whole chapter becomes the basis for the principles found in the rest of the epistle.

1:1 | James greets his readers



Verse 1: James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

James: James was the Lord's half-brother - see Matt 13:55 and notes on The Writer (pg 7).

Servant: *doulos* - 'slave'. Like Jude (Jude v1), who was also Christ's half-brother (Matt 13:55), James does not announce his natural relationship with Christ, having learnt the principle of Matt 12:46-50.

James also doesn't mention his position of authority in the Jerusalem ecclesia (Gal 1:18-20; Acts 12:17; 15:13-21; 21:17-18). Instead, he humbles himself as Christ did (Phil 2:5-8) and emphasises his servitude to God and to Christ.

What are the characteristics/qualities of a servant that we should have?

Matt 24:45-46

Luke 17:10

Gal 1:10

Eph 6:6

Phil 2:5-8

2 Tim 2:24-26

A slave has no rights of their own. We must choose between being servants to sin or servants to God (this same word *doulos* appears in Rom 6:16-23). Being a servant to God is first shown in being baptised, but it should continue to be exhibited every day of our lives. We can show our servitude to God and Christ by willingly serving others (Jam 1:27; Matt 25:34-40; Jn 13:12-17).

How can we serve each other in our daily lives?

And of the Lord Jesus Christ: This is a reminder that we are not only servants of God but of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Master (John 13:13-14). This was a concept that was still causing division amongst the Jews (Matt 16:13-15; John 12: 42-43; Acts 18:28). It also highlights the change in James' attitude towards his brother prior to his death and resurrection.

Why do you think the full title of Christ (the Lord Jesus Christ) is used? See Acts 2:36; Philippians 2:9-11.

Twelve tribes: See page 11 for “Who was the Epistle Written to?”.



Scattered abroad: *diaspora*. This word is used for the Jews scattered all throughout the Roman Empire (see John 7:35 - ‘dispersed’ and see 1 Pet 1:1 which is talking about the people from Acts 2:5-11). The Jews were so scattered, that by the end of the first century AD, Josephus could write: “There is no city, no tribe, whether Greek or barbarian, in which Jewish Law and Jewish custom have not taken root”.

This epistle was the first one written and it was written almost exclusively for the Jews (presumably since not many Gentiles had been converted yet). Therefore, the Epistle has a distinctly Hebrew tone. This illustrates that James had not ceased to be a Jew despite also becoming a Christian.



Greeting: Look this word up in a Strong’s, and write down the Greek word. What does this word mean?

1:2-4 | Rejoice! Faith tested gives patience and perfection

Because it is something that causes us to feel pressured, James begins by addressing how we should approach the trials we face. He attempts to lift our minds above the immediate sufferings and towards the effect of our trials - the development of patience.



Verse 2: My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;



Look up this verse in the ESV. Do you find anything challenging about this statement?

Brethren: *adelphos* - from the same womb (applied literally, nationally, or in cases of other common bonds). The brothers and sisters in the ecclesia are united by the same spiritual birth (cp John 3:3,5; 1 Pet 1:23).

What is the chief characteristic of Christ’s brethren? (cp Matt 12:46-50)

Joy: *chara* - from the same root word as “greeting” (vs 1). Cheerfulness, gladness, delight.

Fall: *peripipto* (4045). What do you think it means to “fall” into temptations? It might be useful to look up the other two places this Greek word is used in the New Testament.

Divers: *poikilos* - various. There will be lots of different trials that we must deal with.

Temptations: *peirasmos* – putting to proof, trial. This word is generally used for the way God will test our characters. The sense here is different from 1:13-14 as here the phrase ‘fall into temptation’ means to experience outward pressure, persecution or pain. However, as we shall see in verse 13 onwards, the phrase relates to the desire to sin. Verse 2 relates to the aspect of testing character as shown in the context in vs 3-4.

The Purpose of Trials

What are some things we can learn about trials and their purpose in our lives?

- Deut 8:2-3 _____
- Acts 14:22 _____
- 2 Cor 1:3-7 _____
- Phil 3:7, 10-11; _____
- 2 Tim 3:12 _____
- Heb 5:7-8; cp Phil 2:8-9 _____
- Heb 11:32-40 _____
- Heb 12:5-11 _____
- 1 Pet 1:6-7 _____
- 1 Pet 4:12-13 _____
- 1 Pet 4:16 _____
- And of course... James 1:2-4 _____

What is the reward for overcoming trials? (Jam 1:12; Matt 10:22, 1 Pet 1:6-9, Acts 14:22)

LIVING THE WORD

Do you suffer trials because of your commitment to God, or are you such a good friend with those in the world that there is no conflict (cp John 15:18-19)?

Are you happy to go through trials knowing God is working with you, or do you complain bitterly and impatiently about them?

Thinking of problems we might face - can you think of some Bible characters that faced trials that they worked with God to overcome?

Reference	Name	Problem	Solution
1 Sam 18-24	David	King Saul wanted to kill David because he was jealous	God was with David during this time. David learnt by prayer and patience that God would make him King in God's time, not by David's hand. Despite Saul's death threats, David chose to respect the Lord's anointed.

Perhaps these people's lives could be something that you could look at in more detail or listen to a talk about in your own time to see how God worked in their life to help them overcome trial.

Verse 3: Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.



RSV: "For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness".

Trying: *dokimion* - a testing, (by implication) trustworthiness (cp 1 Pet 1:7).

Faith: Look up faith in Strong's. What is the definition?

How do these four New Testament quotes describe faith?

Rom 5:1-4

Rom 10:17

Heb 11:1

Heb 11:6

Worketh: *katergazomai* - to work fully, effect by toil, accomplish, finish. It has the idea of being thorough, of bringing something to a state of completion.

When we work hard to overcome trials believing that God will ultimately reward us for seeking Him, it produces in us patience (cp Rom 5:3-4). But why do you think it is patience that is developed, rather than say, mercy or justice?

Persecution often requires us to make a clear choice between the world and God. Through it our faith is tested. If we continually overcome our trials now by reading God's word to understand and reflect God's character, we will find it easier to overcome them in the future because we will have been trying to develop the character of God and the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives.

Verse 4: But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

James now emphasises the patience that is required in overcoming trial and encourages us with the joy set before us.



Look up and write down the Rotherham and RSV translations.

Roth:

RSV:

Perfect: *teleios* - mature, complete, brought to an end. (Cp Jam 1:17,25; 2:22; 3:2).

It is important to understand that 'perfect' in English means "Something that is perfect is as good as it could possibly be" (Collins English Dictionary). As we see from the definition in the Greek above, it refers to maturity, not perfection.

What do you think maturity is?

Why do you think it is important to understand that this word means mature or complete, rather than the word 'perfect'?

How does this affect how we view our spiritual trials and developing our relationship with God? Look up 2 Tim 3:15-17; Eph 4:12-15)

Christ was made perfect through suffering his death (Heb 2:10; 5:8-9) and we also have an example of the maturity we are striving for in the Father Himself (Matt 5:48).

The word *teleios* is used especially to signify the maturing of the mind and spirit, which should be outworked in our lives now (Phil 3:14-15) but will ultimately be accomplished at Christ's return (Phil 3:11-12; Heb 12:22-24) if we have been found worthy of eternal life.

Entire: *holokleros* - complete in every part, i.e., perfectly sound (cp Acts 3:16; 1 Thess 5:23). The word is used to signify the perfecting of our physical body, which will be accomplished at Christ's return (Phil 3:21) if we have been found worthy of eternal life.

James is starting to bring in his key concept: faith is connected to our actions (commonly called "works" in the Bible). Our patience must be shown in our actions for us to be whole. We must act in belief that the Kingdom will come. Our works will be judged (cp 1 Cor 3:12-15), and there are great rewards for those who even through trials, continue to show good works, faith, and patience (Jam 5:7-11; Heb 10:32-39; Rom 2:6-7; 1 Cor 15:51-58). We must also remember that patience is just one quality among others that we must learn, in order to be perfect and entire, and to lack nothing (cp 2 Pet 3:12-14).

We may lack much materially but we have no excuse to lack things spiritually (cp Matt 4:4). Salvation will not be attained by those who have not tried to continue to mature by growing in their learning, and understanding of who God is and what He has promised. As we grow older in the Truth, we should be developing a mature faith and patience which will help us to endure to the end (cp Matt 24:13).

1:5-8 | Seek Godly wisdom in single-mindedness

To overcome trials, we need to understand the purpose of them so it is necessary to look upon them from the Divine perspective and not the human (cp 1 Cor 2:11). Therefore James brings to our attention the need for God's wisdom and the need to seek it in faith at its source.

Verse 5: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

Wisdom: *sophia* - insight into the true nature of things, theoretical (as opposed to wise actions). This is God's wisdom - the "hidden wisdom", which is in opposition to man's wisdom (cp 1 Cor 1:17-2:16).

Look up these references to see the requirements for obtaining God's wisdom when we ask for it.

Job 28:28; Prov 9:10

Matt 7:7-11

Matt 21:21-22; Jam 1:5-6

John 14:13-14; 15:16

John 15:7

1 John 3:22 (contrast with Jam 4:3)

1 John 5:14-15

Liberally: *haplos* - bountifully, openly, with singleness (of heart) (i.e., the single thing the heart wants to do. Cp Eph 6:5; Col 3:22). God will willingly help us - we just need to ask for His help!

Upbraideth not: means "without reproaching" (RSV). God will not reproach us for seeking His guidance.

LIVING THE WORD



To overcome problems in this life we need to look at them from God's perspective. We might ask: 'Why might I be going through this? What can I learn, and how can I then use these experiences to help others through their problems?' We need to pray to God and ask for wisdom to deal with our problems. God is willing to give wisdom to those who ask him in faith, believing that He will get us through the problem we face.

But those who doubt that God can help will **not** gain His wisdom. How often do we pray to God about something and then continue to be anxious about it? A question we should ask ourselves is "have I prayed about it as much as I've talked or thought about it?" Why are we still anxious about what we have prayed about, if God is all powerful?"

Verse 6: But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.

Ask in faith: We must be certain that we want what we have prayed for and be completely confident that God will answer (1 John 5:14-15; Matt 21:21-22; cp Heb 11:1.). Faith creates confidence. It gives substance to hope.

How does Heb 11:1 help our understanding of James 1:6?

Wavering: "To be at variance with oneself, hesitate, doubt" (Grimm-Thayer). "This verb suggests not so much weakness of faith, as lack of it" (Vine). The idea is that of schizophrenia (Like Legion in Mark 5:1-13). This is picked up again in vs 8 with the double mind of which will bring about a doubting heart.

Who did or didn't waver in their faith?

Matt 14:23-33

Rom 4:20

Heb 10:23

LIVING THE WORD



How often do we pray to God about something and then continue to be anxious about it?

For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

Wave: *kludon* - a billow, a surge, violent agitation of the sea, raging (cp Luke 8:24-25). There is nothing steady in a surging wave. A person with doubt is the same - unstable and uncertain (cp Eph 4:14). The picture James is painting is a believer who rises in hope like an advancing, surging wave, and then sinking in despair, and then breaking down like the foaming water on the shore. We must be careful to learn to trust in our God, who can calm the raging seas (Mark 4:35-41).

James is emphasising the agitation of the double-minded man. Agitation means that the patience of vs 3-4 is not being achieved. Our lives will be similar if we are double-minded - agitated and without order or stability (vs 8). Trying to be at home in the world as well as in the Ecclesia means that we will be uncomfortable in either camp and our faith will waver. Single-minded belief in God can overcome this agitation, just as Christ's single-minded belief in God had the power to calm the troubled sea (cp Luke 8:23-25).

Verse 7: For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

Though God will freely give us what we need (cp Matt 6:25-26,32), James is telling us to be careful in how we ask. God still offers His gifts (vs 17) but we must be in the right frame of mind to be able to accept it (cp Psa 37:4-5). Doubt implies that we don't believe that God can help us (cp Heb 11:6).



Verse 8: A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Double minded: *dipsuchos* - two-spirited ("souled") - (swaying in opinion or purpose)

Unstable: *akatastatos* - inconstant, restless (this word only appears in James - it is derived from the word "*kathistemi*" - to set in order; unruly (Jam 3:8); "tossed with tempest" (LXX) (cp Isa 54:11).

What does double-mindedness look like in our lives today? How do you think this relates to what James has been talking about?

In the verses on the next page, you'll see that there is a competition between God and something else... who or what is the opposition in each case?

1 Kings 18:20 - 39

Joshua 24:14-25

Matthew 6:22-24

James 4:4

Be honest with yourself: What are the things in your life that prevent you from being fully focused on God and His ways?

Being double-minded is like having two lives pulling us in different directions. The reason for wavering is given in vs 6. Inner debate is caused by conflicting purposes. To be called God's sons and daughters we need to be clear in our mind that we are serving God, and not sin (cp Rom 6:16-23). We cannot blur the line (cp 2 Cor 6:14-18). There are many who condone serving both. If we serve God with a single mind, we will prosper in the Truth. If we serve God half-heartedly, God will pronounce us unstable, and will not hear our prayers (vs 7).

1:9-11 | Temporary wealth

Poverty and riches are a common cause of double-mindedness (cp Prov 30:7-9; 1 Tim 6:6-10). The love of money affects both the rich and the poor. The rich fail to acknowledge God in their lives, while the poor are anxious about their money issues, or envy those who have more than them. James puts worldly riches into perspective before continuing with the greater riches promised to those who endure trials (vs 12).

Verse 9: Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

Low degree: *tapeinos* - depressed, humiliated, humble (cp Jam 4:6). This is a characteristic of Christ (cp Matt 11:29).

Exalted: *hupsos* - elevation, high station.

Can you think of verses that speak about the poor being exalted in God's eyes?

Verse 10: But the rich, in that he is made low:

Rich: *plousios* - wealthy (abounding in material resources). The rich man should not boast in his riches, but rather they should boast and glory in their understanding and knowledge of God. He has also come to understand the true worth of his riches (see Jer 9:23-24; 1 Tim 6:17-19).

The cares of this life can distract us from focusing on God. Whether we are poor or rich, James compares the fleeting nature of worldly riches, with the eternal prize promised to those who love Christ and have endured temptation.

Why do you think the poor need to be made higher and the rich need to be brought lower? (Hint, see Luke 3:3-6)

Why is the example of the ruler Jairus (Mark 5:22-24, 35-43) and the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34) a good example of this comparison between rich and poor? What was the result for each of them?

Both rich and poor can glory in the things of God and both are brought together in the Ecclesia. Regardless of our physical wealth we need to remember that God has given us exactly what we require to develop our characters, that we might enter into His Kingdom.

because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

No matter how many riches we might possess, the end of our mortal lives is death. If we have not been humbled by our relationship with God, then we shall not enter the Kingdom of God.

Flower: *anthos* - blossom.

Grass: *chartos* - court or garden, pasture (including the wildflowers as well as grass itself, cp Matt 6:28,30).

Earthly riches are as temporary as the grass of the field (cp Matt 6:19-20). Spiritual riches as provided in the Word of God, are forever (cp 1 Pet 1:23-25).

Verse 11: For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.



Give the Diaglott's or Rotherham's translation for this verse:

This verse is in the past tense (see Diag, Roth). It gives a vivid description - the rich will also soon become a past event.

Why is this imagery used to show the 'fading away' of the rich man and his wealth?

Sun: *helios* - ray, sun, light.

Burning heat: *kauson* from a root word - to set on fire. "Scorching wind" (RV). (Cp Psa 103:15-16; Isa 40:7).

Withereth: *xeraino* - to desiccate, shrivel, dry up.

Fade away: *maraino* - to extinguish (as fire), to pass away, cause to wither.

What do these references say about what will happen to those who focus on their riches?

Psa 37:35-36

Psa 49:6-20

Psa 73:1-20

Jer 17:9-11

Luke 12:15-21

Jam 4:13-16

Rev 3:17-18

What do these references say about what will happen to God's people?

Isa 49:10-11

Luke 12:27-34

Jam 1:12

1 Pet 1:3-4; 5:4

See Matt 13:3-8,19-23. The rich man who regards not God may be likened to the three unfruitful soils in the Parable of the Sower, though particularly that of the stony place. He doesn't truly understand the depth of the riches that are contained in the Word (way side), he falls away from the Truth in times of scorching trial because he finds the Truth easier to give up than his riches (stony places) and he has no time for the things of the Truth because his riches and worldly activities take priority (thorns).

Unlike the seeds in the other three grounds, the seed in the good ground is not devoured by the ways of the world, it is not scorched or devoured by the sun in time of trial, and the cares and riches of this life do not choke it. The reason why it is able to overcome these things is because the ground that it is in has a suitable composition (a willingness to hear the Word of God) that enables the seed's roots to firmly sink in. The good ground takes the time to read God's Word and because it does this consistently, it understands the things that are therein, and thus it is able to help the seed flourish and give it the ability to overcome.

LIVING THE WORD



We live in a rich and materialistic society. Do we struggle with any of the symptoms of being one of the unfruitful soils? Or are we trying to focus on our daily readings, Bible study and putting that into practice?

1:12 | The blessing for enduring trials

Having considered the need for Divine wisdom to understand trials, the single-minded approach to God that is needed to obtain that wisdom, and the distracting nature of this world's riches to single-mindedness, James now brings our minds back to his opening thought - the blessing for enduring trials (vs 2,4).

Verse 12: Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Blessed: *makarios* - extremely blessed, fortunate, well off (cp Jam 5:11; Matt 5:10-12).

Endureth: *hupomeno* - root word of "patience" (vs 3-4), to bear up courageously.

The true believer has a unique privilege in that he is able to extract happiness from situations that normally might be considered tragic (cp 1 Pet 4:12-14; notes on vs 2). We also learn to be grateful for the chastening

of our Father in heaven as we know he is growing His character in us (Psa 94:12; Prov 3:7-18; Heb 12:5-12). We have a hope that has been promised to us, and so we can see our trials from a higher perspective (cp. Matt 10:22; 2 Cor 4:6-10, 14-18; 2 Tim 2:10-12).

Look up the word "crown" in Strongs. What sort of crown is James referring to?

Where else is this Greek word used in Scripture?

In the passages found above that relate to Jesus, what are the meanings behind his crown?

Promised: *epaggello* - to announce, promise (cp 1 John 2:25; Tit 1:2).

This is the first time chronologically we hear about the promise of a crown. However, James could be referring to one or more of several possible places:

1. Matt 19:21 (but no mention of "crown").
2. Prov 4:7-9 (cp Jam 1:2-5).
3. Zech 6:14 - "the crown shall be for them that endure" (LXX).

Abraham's faith and obedience was tried under pressure (Gen 22:1-2). He was able to see that there must be a greater purpose behind the trial he had to suffer (cp Heb 11:17-19), and so, at the correct time, there was (cp Gen 22:11-18).

Love: *agapao* (25) (cp Jam 2:5; Matt 22:36-40; Exo 20:4-6). Our love for Christ shows that we are children of God (cp John 8:42). It is a reaction to the love that God shows to us (1 John 4:19) and a hatred of those things of the world (1 John 2:15). Part of that love is to love our brethren (cp 1 John 4:20-21). Loving God involves keeping God's commandments (1 John 5:1-3).

LIVING THE WORD



Is the crown of life in the forefront of our minds each day, so that when trials or difficulties arise, we see the hidden blessings behind them?

We are but clay in the hands of the mighty potter (Isa 64:8). See Isa 43:1,7 - He has created us for His glory, but in order for this to be outworked, He forms or presses us into shape by putting us through trials to examine and prove us (Psa 26:1-2; cp Jer 17:10). Finally, in the last trial of all, He tries us with fire in the kiln (1 Pet 1:7) and (if we have overcome the previous trials) approves of us as a fit image of Himself. He can then appoint us a position in the Age to come and give us that crown of life and righteousness.

Do we allow ourselves to be malleable before God through trial, or do we resist God and give way to the world?

1:13-27 | OVERCOME TEMPTATION BY LIVING THE WORD

1:13-16 | The source of temptation

James now discusses the difference between being subject to trials and temptation and giving in to temptation. Our internal sinful desires cause us to be tempted by sin and to succumb. Pride can lead us to blame someone else for our failing. This can result in the wrong conclusion that since God allowed the trial to arise, God is responsible for the sin which followed. But this is wrong. God provides trials in our lives so that through patience, we can develop and strengthen our faith. It is our lust to do wrong which causes us to sin, not God. Trials/tests of all sorts are needed to examine our attitude.

Verse 13: Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man:



See Prov 19:3 (LXX) - "The folly of a man spoils his ways: and he blames God in his heart". It is typical of human nature to blame others for our weakness, just like Adam blamed Eve and then Eve blamed the serpent (cp Gen 3:12-13).

"God is incapable of being tempted" (Diag). There is nothing in God's nature to respond to temptation. The temptations that are in the world, and God, are mutually exclusive (cp 1 John 2:15-16).

In contrast, it is important to note that Christ, God's Son, was able to be tempted, though he did not give in and sin (cp Heb 4:15; 2:18). This perfectly prepared him to be the mediator between God and mankind (cp 1 Tim 2:5).

Where does do our sinful desires come from?

Mark 7:14-23

Rom 7:13-25

Gal 5:17-21

James 1:14

What do we know about God to know that He doesn't tempt us?

What does God do for us with temptation?


Psa 34:7

Matt 6:13

1 Cor 10:13-14

Eph 2:3-7

2 Thess 3:2-3

 **Verse 14: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.**



Weymouth: "But when a man is tempted, it is his own passions that carry him away and serve as a bait".

SIDE NOTE: If there was a supernatural devil leading people to sin, here would be a logical place for James to warn us about him (but he doesn't because a supernatural devil does not exist).

Drawn away of his own lust: Look up the word lust in a Strong's concordance. What does it mean?

Lust is the problem, not necessarily the object being lusted after. When we are enticed and drawn away from doing the right thing, this is where we are being tempted to sin. We must try to avoid situations that will lead us to be tempted to give in to our lusts that are part of the weakness of our nature.

Instead of being drawn away by our own lust, use the following verses to understand what we can do instead:

- Rom 6:12-13 _____
- Rom 12:21 _____
- 1 Cor 10:13-14 _____
- 1 Cor 13:4-5 _____
- Gal 5:16, 22-25 _____
- Phil 4:8 _____
- 2 Tim 2:22 _____
- Heb 3:12-13 _____

Look at Christ's example. How did he overcome temptation in the following instances?

The temptation (Matt 4:4,7,10):	
Opposition to Peter (Matt 16:22-23):	
The Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:39,42):	

Find some examples of other people in the Scriptures who went through this same process of temptation (vs 14-15) and **succumbed** to it. What lessons can we learn from their mistakes?

Scriptural Reference:	Who:	Lesson:

Find some examples of other people in the Scriptures who were faced with temptation and yet **did not succumb** to it. What lessons can we learn from the way they overcame?

Scriptural Reference:	Who:	Lesson:

Think of situations that are temptations to us. How can they be overcome? List practical steps rather than just principles (For example "Attend CYC every week" rather than "Keep separate from the world").

Situation:	How to overcome:



Using Vine's, find out where "*epithumia*" (lust) is used in a positive sense. What are the things we should long for? When can these be fulfilled?

However, the word "*epithumia*" is used so predominantly in the New Testament in a negative sense so we must be careful to scrutinise our thoughts where we 'want' things that do not feel like they are from above. We must carefully consider our motives.



Verse 15: Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.



NIV: "Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death".

James is describing the natural progression of events of conception, pregnancy and birth. It is likely that James is picking up on the 'strange woman' metaphor of Proverbs 7:11-27 who depicts wickedness as a woman who leads those who are trying to follow God away from him. You can almost make out the striking picture of a woman called LUST conceiving. A child is born called SIN, who when it is grown up, also produces a child. Inevitably, this child's name is DEATH!

Conceived: *sullambano* - to clasp, seize, conceive. If we do not resist the temptation, the seed of sin has been planted. See Job 15:35; Psa 7:14; Isa 59:4 - 'conceiving mischief brings forth iniquity'.

Bringeth forth: *tikto* - to produce, bear, give birth (cp Gal 6:7-8).

Sin: *hamartia* - state of sin. Committing sin is a transgression of God's Law (1 John 3:4). Each time we sin, it becomes harder and harder not to submit to the temptation of our lusts, until sinning becomes a habit (cp John 8:34). See 1 Tim 4 v 2 - "having their conscience seared with a hot iron". A very hot object may sear a fingertip, which becomes numb to feeling for a few days .

Sin appears in many an attractive garb. It is very often camouflaged and can often be excused as "relaxation" or "fun" or "important", but it's true description is SIN and the result is death. Remember also that Christ is careful to show us that even lusting after a woman, or thinking evil of another person is a sin. What we intend to do does not necessarily need to be achieved to have committed sin (cp Matt 5:27-28; 1 John 3:15).

When it is finished: *apoteleo* - to complete entirely, bring to maturity. This is when the state of sin becomes complete - when we willingly sin with a total disregard of God and a complete lack of faith that He can work in our lives.

Look up the following quotes which seem to say that there are sins that we can't come back from. Is there is no way to reverse this (use Scripture to prove your argument)? See 1 John 5:16; Matt 12:24,31-32 - Pharisees; Heb 10:26 - us?

Bringeth forth: *apokueo* - to breed forth, to generate (from "kueo" - to be pregnant). This phrase is used in a very unusual sense - in unusual births, multiple births or where the children are deformed in one way or another. The unwise action of vs 14 therefore produces the hideous family of children called "sin" and "death". This word only occurs elsewhere in vs 18 which shows that God is working for exactly the opposite result - to bring forth a family whole and perfect (vs 4), unusual to the world but who reflect His glory and despise the flesh (vs 19-21). An impending birth is obvious for all to see. Like the process of birth, the process of sin causes much pain. This is brought about by the enmity created in Gen 3:15.



Using doctrinal books (e.g., *Christendom Astray*, *1st Principles Bible Marking Course*) find at least five other quotations that show that sin leads to death:

The source of temptation is common to all of us. The method to avoid the outcome of lusts is also the same for all of us - crucify the flesh and do the works of the spirit (cp Gal 5:16-25; 6:7-8). It is dangerous to have anything to do with the enticements of the world. Just because something is popular, does not mean that is in accordance with God's will and purpose.

Verse 16: Do not err, my beloved brethren.

Err: *planao* - to be deceived, to roam, to go astray, to wander (cp Jude 11,13). James gives a warning against a deception which is natural to us. Because our nature is so deceptive, we can even deceive ourselves into thinking that it isn't. This happens when we do not understand God's Word (cp Prov 6:20-24; 7:1-5; Mark 12:24; 2 Tim 2:15-19), and it can also be corrected (cp Jam 5:19-20).

This phrase is used 3 times. How is it used?

Gal 6:7

Col 2:4-8

Heb 3:7-13

Beloved brethren: Where else in James does he specifically say "beloved brethren"? What is it used in relation to?

James is showing his devotion to the brethren. Even when he is rebuking them, James tempers his warnings with tender affection. It is a reminder to us that when baptised we are all brethren in Christ and all subject to the same temptations (Rom 3:23).

1:17-18 | The unchangeable Father has called us for His purpose

God has singleness of mind and only gives what is beneficial for us. Therefore, to accuse God of causing us to sin is blasphemous against His character. In fact, His desire is for us to be regenerated through His Word, that we might manifest His character as children of light and be able to resist temptation when it comes.

Verse 17: Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,

Good: *agathos* - "describes that which being good in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect" (Vine).

Gift: *dosis* - a giving (the act of giving); endowment.

Perfect: *teleios* - complete, mature. When God's gifts have attained their purpose, they certainly do not bring forth death (cp Rom 6:23; contrast Jam 1:15).

Gift: *dorema* - a bestowment (the thing given); e.g., wisdom (vs 5).

Using 2 Pet 1:3-4 also, what do you think these good and perfect gifts are in our lives? How has our Heavenly Father blessed us in this life?

Good Gifts:

Perfect Gifts:

Above: *anōthen*. This word is used of things which come from heaven, or from God in heaven and also in the sense of "again", or "anew". It is used in:

- John 3:3,7 (mg) to show that man must be born again (from above) in baptism.
- John 3:31 to show that things which come from heaven are far above the things of the earth.
- Jam 3:15,17 to show that God's wisdom is from above.
- Col 3:1-2 to show that we should seek the things above.

God is the only One who is truly good (Matt 19:16-17). We can only expect good things from Him (cp Matt 7:11; 1 Chron 29:10-16).

and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Lights: *phos* - (source of light) to shine, make manifest.



Using Strong's and Vine's and any other helpful resources, what can you find out about light in relation to God? What key biblical principle does this point to? What does this mean for those who desire to be children of light? (Hint: Follow the theme of light making manifest).

Variableness: *parallage* - transmission from one condition to another. This word is used to describe the sun's apparent change of position in the sky. How does God demonstrate the absence of this?

Num 23:19

1 Sam 15:29

Mal 3:6

Rom 11:29

Tit 1:2

He wants us to demonstrate this same attribute - see Jam 1:6-8.

Shadow: *apokiasma* - shade cast by one object onto another. Just like the sun, God cannot cause shade to occur, because He is the source of light and He is everywhere. It is other objects which cause the shade.

The natural sun seems to move about the sky and cause moving shadows to be cast. But we know that the sun does not move. It is our position in relation to it that does. God likewise does not change, but our relation to Him can change depending on our endurance in trials. Sometimes we may feel that God has withdrawn from us when we are experiencing trials (cp Psa 10:1). But God is always there. If we are in the shade, it means that something has come between God's light and us. God does not place those obstacles in our way (vs 13; cp Isa 59:1-2). If we draw close to Him, and dwell in His light, we will not be in the shadow of temptation and sin (cp 1 John 1:5-6; Jam 4:8).

Verse 18: Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Of His own will begat He us: *boulomai* - be willing, deliberately, have a purpose (cp 2 Pet 3:9). God purposely created us and called us because God wants us to serve Him. By God's own will, we have been born into a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead (1 Pet 1:3). God Himself did it - not us! (cp John 1:12-13; 6:44). God's will is to fill the earth with His glory (Num 14:21). Contrast this with human nature in verse 14 - "of his own lust" sin occurs and it brings forth death. Only God can bring forth life everlasting.



See *Elpis Israel*, pgs. 144-146 for an excellent description of the process of being born again. (If you have a different edition, look up Jam 1:18 in the index and find the closest page numbers).

Word: *logos* (3056). (Cp Matt 13:18-23; 1 Pet 1:23-2:2). God's Word is needed to overcome the flesh. The Word of Truth is God's message to us that is entirely true and will always come to pass (John 17:17) In Genesis 1, God spoke, and the physical world was created. This is the same with the spiritual - it is the gospel of salvation and whosoever hears and believes the Word shall be saved (Matt 13:18-23; Eph 1:13).

Firstfruits: *aparche* (536) - an offering of firstfruits. Do some research on 'firstfruits' to find out what being 'a kind of firstfruits' means? *Delight in God's Law* Chapter 24 by John Carter might help.

The lesson of these two verses is that God – the Father of Lights – has provided us with all good and perfect gifts in this life now, so that we may learn from His Word how to glorify Him by walking perfectly before Him (vs 4). Only then will we be part of that multitude of firstborns or firstfruits in the Age to come (Heb 12:23).

1:19-21 | Word received, not flesh, accomplishes righteousness

It is not natural for us to manifest God's character as our natural mind cannot submit to God (Rom 7:14-23; 8:5-7). The way to learn of God's character is to hear His Word, realising that we do not always know what He wants us to do, and to accept what He says without being resentful. This will also help us to overcome trials.

Verse 19: Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

As a result of knowing God's goodness towards us, and having His word for daily guidance, we should not manifest the works of the flesh but manifest righteousness as the children of God (cp Gal 5:19-24; Eph 5:1-11). For this verse, we want to take some time for self-reflection on these characteristics: hearing, speaking and anger.

Swift to hear: If we want to know the Truth that God has given us, we actually have to focus and to listen! (vs 5). Find some verses that talk about hearing God or listening to others and write down some steps that you can take to be swifter to listen. There are plenty in Psalms, Proverbs and in the Gospels.

Slow to speak: It is important not to speak too rashly (cp Eccl 5:2-7). Again, find some verses in Proverbs regarding speaking with purpose. James 3 would also be helpful. Take some time to reflect on how quick you are to speak and write down some steps to become slower to speak without careful thought.

Wrath: *orge* - desire, violent passion (translated anger, indignation, vengeance, wrath). "Originally this word meant any natural impulse or desire. It came to signify anger as the strongest of all passions. "Orge" suggests a more settled or abiding condition of mind, frequently with a view to taking revenge" (Vine).

Anger is the subject of many proverbs. Starting from the marginal references in Jam 1:19, find as many quotations in the book of Proverbs as you can which deal with anger. Can you think of situations where any of the proverbs apply to you?

Note that anger is not totally condemned in the Scriptures. There is such a quality as righteous anger (cp Num 25:1-13; Psa 7:11; Matt 21:12-13; Mark 3:5; John 2:13-17; Rom 1:18; 2:8-9; Col 3:6; Rev 19:15) but care still needs to be exercised so that we don't offend with intent (Eph 4:25-26).

What is significant about the order of the phrases in this verse? Is this sequence of hearing, speaking, and feeling anger natural to us?

Verse 20: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.



Moff: "Human anger does not promote Divine righteousness".

Righteousness: *dikaioisune* - a characteristic of equity or justice. It is a process of growth – carnal or human nature's wrath impedes the development of God's righteousness.

Man's wrath is the result of his natural thinking and needs to be put away (cp Eph 4:31; Col 3:8; 1 Tim 2:8). It is self-centred and seeks its own vengeance (cp Acts 9:1; 2 Tim 2:24-25). In contrast, God's righteousness is shown in being just to all parties. If we show carnal wrath, we are, by our actions, denying that we are born of God. God's righteousness requires reverence coupled with a working righteousness (cp Acts 10:35). Doing righteousness is a sign that we are born of God (cp 1 John 2:29). If we truly desire His righteous character, we shall obtain it (cp Matt 5:6). We cannot accomplish God's righteousness if we manifest human anger.

Verse 21: Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness,



Diag: "Therefore, discarding all impurity and overflowing of malice". Because the works of the flesh do not accomplish God's righteousness, we should cast them away (cp Matt 5:29-30).

Lay apart: *apotithemi* - to cast off, to put away (e.g. clothing Acts 7:58; Rom 13:12). "It is used of those things one gives up or renounces" (Grimm-Thayer).

What filthiness are we told to lay aside or crucify?

Rom 13:11-14

Gal 5:19-26

Eph 4:20-32

Col 3:5-10

Heb 12:1

1 Pet 2:1-3,11; 3:21

Superfluity: *perisseia* (4050) - superabundance (cp Matt 12:34; 2 Cor 10:15); We should seek to abound in other areas (e.g. 2 Cor 8:2).

Naughtiness: *kakia* - malice, ill will, desire to injure others (cp Rom 1:28-31). No, this is not just something that you have done that your mum would be angry about though if there has been ill intent, then it is included!! This attitude of malice spreads like yeast (cp 1 Cor 5:8). We need to replace it with the attitude of the Spirit as little children (cp 1 Cor 14:20; 1 Pet 1:14-17; 2:1-3).

and receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls.



Receive: *dechomai* - to have offered to one (subjective or passive). "Embrace" (Diag). Rotherham shows that laying apart (negative) and receiving (positive) are part of the same action - "Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of baseness, in meekness welcome ye the Word".

With what attitude should we embrace/receive the Word of God?

Matt 13:18-23

Mark 10:15

Acts 17:11

1 Thess 2:13



Meekness: *prautes* - mildness, gentleness. A condition of mind and heart. "That temper of Spirit in which we accept (God's) dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting" (Vine). (Matt 21:5; 1 Pet 3:4; Matt 5:5; Jam 3:13).



Engrafted: *emphutos* - "implanted" (RV), "fitted for inward growth" (Roth). This word is used for the planting of seeds for growing plants. The seed that is sown is an incorruptible one (1 Pet 1:23). Compare the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:23).

Word: *logos* - purpose, reasoning. The knowledge of God's purpose is not enough. We need to accept it and submit to its power for it to have effect (cp Rom 6:17-23). It is a basic principle that seed will reproduce after its kind (Gen 1:11). Our fruits will show whether we are engrafted with the Word or not (cp Matt 7:16-20).

Able to save your souls: God's Word is able to overcome the flesh and its desires and to save us from sin and death.

What does it mean that God's word is able to save our souls? Use the following quotes as a help.

Eze 18:21

Acts 2:40-41

Acts 13:26

Rom 1:16

1 Cor 15:1-2 (RV)

2 Tim 3:14-17

Heb 2:3

1 Pet 1:9

Islip Collyer: "The living of a good life without a foundation of good doctrine is impossible. In every case of intelligent action, the thought must precede the deed and thus sound doctrine is the foundation of sound morality".

1:22-27 | Living the Word

Although the Word has been implanted into our hearts and we have received it, it is still necessary that it brings forth fruit pleasing to God (cp Matt 7:16-20). This involves continually looking into God's Word and applying the lessons practically in our lives. We have slowly been brought to the key verse of James and the basis for our theme: Living the Word!



Verse 22: But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.



Moff: "Act on the Word, instead of merely listening to it". We have to **live** the Word, not just talk about it!

But be ye: The word "But" is a small but vital word --- a change is needed in ourselves as it is not natural to outwork the Word in our lives. Being doers of the Word must replace the emptiness caused by casting off the flesh (or else something worse will - cp Matt 12:43-45).

Doers: *poietes* - a performer. From a root word "*poieo*" - "to adopt a way of expressing by act the thoughts and feelings" (Vine) (cp vs 23,25; 4:11; Rom 2:13). Just like the firstfruits bear the same character of the tree that produced them, likewise we must outwork our Father's character as His children (cp 1 Pet 2:9; John 1:14, 5:36; 8:39).

What does it mean to be a "doer of the Word" in your life? Who in your life are personal examples to you of "Living the Word"?

Hearers only: It is no use just enjoying reading or listening of God's Word if we don't respond. Study is necessary (cp Rom 10:17; Psa 119:15, 2 Tim 2:15) but study is not an end in itself. The real purpose is that it might convert us into doers of the Truth - see the references below:

Exo 15:26

Deut 7:12-15

Eze 33:30-32

Matt 28:19-20

Mark 3:35

Luke 11:28

Luke 12:47-48

John 13:15-17

Rom 2:17-23

1 John 2:3

Rev 1:3

James is leading up to another theme "Faith without works is dead" (Jam 2:14-26). The Word must be the motivation for our actions, as actions need to be built on a proper foundation (cp Matt 7:24-27).

Deceiving: *paralogizomai* - misreckon, delude, reason falsely. "Reasoning yourselves astray" (Roth) (cp vs 13-16). This word only appears elsewhere in Col 2:4. See also 1 Cor 6:9,10; Gal 6:3, 7 for similar ideas.

The Ecclesia in James' day had the same problem here as with their reasoning on the source of temptation. They were not clear as to understanding the character of God and His desire for us to manifest it. The consequence of not doing the Word once it is heard, is sin (cp Jam 4:17). We must not deceive ourselves into thinking that we shall be saved just because we know God's purpose. We must adopt that same purpose for ourselves and express it in our actions for us to partake in that purpose (cp Matt 7:21-23).

What are some of the things we might do which are not morally right but we convince ourselves that it is OK to do them? (E.g. driving over the speed limit to get to CYC on time).

James illustrates the deception by presenting two men looking in a mirror (representing the Word of Truth). Complete the table below to show this clearly.

The First Man (vs 23-24)	The Second Man (vs 25)
Sees himself as he is.	Looks intently into the Word.
	Continues with the Word.
	Acts upon the knowledge he gains.
No change.	

Verse 23: For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:



For: "Because" (Roth, Diag, Young). James explains how we can deceive ourselves.

Beholding his face: *katanoeo* - to observe fully.

James does not condemn his readers for being guilty of a mere careless hearing of the Word, for they had been properly instructed by reading it. Rather he condemns those who carefully listen to its instruction, and yet neglect to carry into practice what was heard - an attitude of mind notoriously evident in some Jewish believers.

Glass: *esoptron* - mirror ("eis" - into, "optomai" - to gaze). The mirrors of James' time were made of polished metal (brass or steel). The user needed to concentrate on the reflection to be able to make out the finer details, as it gave an imperfect image, unlike today's silvered glass mirrors.

Paul uses mirrors in his epistles as well. To what does he liken them to?

1 Cor 13:10-12 _____

2 Cor 3:18 _____

The more then we look into the mirror, or have the Word in us, the more we recognise the degree to which we have sinned, and the greater incentive there is to overcome (cp 1 John 1:6 - 2:5).

Verse 24: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

Beholdeth: This is the same word as vs 23. But this time the Greek is in the past tense - "he viewed himself and went away" (only a momentary act).

Goeth his way: *aperchomai* - to depart. He goes HIS own way - not God's. In many cases this is because we don't like what we see.

Forgetteth: *epilanthanomai* - to lose out of mind, neglect (from a root word - to escape notice). A lack of looking is associated with a lack of remembrance (2 Pet 1:8-9).

What manner: *hopoios* - of what kind, sort or quality (cp 2 Pet 3:11). He is deceiving himself in thinking that he is acceptable to God.

This man sees his natural self for what it is, but with a deceitful heart (cp Jer 17:9), and poor logic, he deceives himself into thinking that nothing else is required (vs 22). He is double-minded (vs 8), and reasons himself astray from the Word. He exercises his freedom of choice, without serious thought for the consequences.

This man's religion might have been intellectual to a point, but he does not truly appreciate his real self. He is not progressing in the Truth (Like the Pharisees - Matt 23:3; Rom 2:17-23). Through not being constantly reminded of his blemishes, he forgets they exist. There is no point in studying about the wrath of man for example (cp vs 19) if we continue to be wrathful. We must meditate upon the principles and do something about it. Actions speaking louder than words?

The problem this man has is his attitude to the Word. It has not been given to us just to stimulate us intellectually but to show us what we are, what we can become, and how we can get there. It is a Law of Liberty that frees us from our nature to do God's work.

LIVING THE WORD



How do we view God's Word? What is our attitude to study? Do we study because it is expected of us, or because we want to learn of God's character so that we can bring glory to Him by manifesting it in our lives?



Verse 25: But whoso looketh into the perfect Law of Liberty,



Looketh: *parakupto* - to bend beside, lean over (so as to peer within - cp John 20:5,11), to look carefully into. "Looks intently" (Diag), (cp Prov 14:15; Heb 12:15).

To see our full nature we need to continually look at the Word. Note that stooping down is not an exalted position - it is one of humility. Looking into the Word will also show us Christ - the Word made flesh, begotten of the Father - who is the example for us to follow.

Perfect: *teleios* - complete, mature. The perfect Word (1 Cor 13:10; Psa 19:7) is able to show us our blemishes (vs 23), and if we acknowledge these and fix them, we also, like Christ, will become perfect (see notes on vs 4).

Law: Law implies a rule of life. James later contrasts it with the Law of Moses (Jam 2:8-13). The Mosaic Law showed up man's moral deficiencies (cp Rom 3:20; 5:20; 7:13) and was a shadow image (Heb 10:1; 2 Cor 3:13-15) but did not provide the perfect image to copy and could not save man from their sins. Christ shows us himself as that perfect image of the purpose of God in human flesh (cp John 1:14). Looking at his image will transform us into the same image (cp 2 Cor 3:16-18) and this, through faith in the cleansing process, leads to salvation. Little children watch their parents and copy them. Likewise we should learn from the one who begat us - God.

Liberty: *eleutheria* - freedom (not restrained or under bondage). The liberty given is freedom from the bonds of sin so that we can take on the bonds of Christ (cp Rom 6:16-18).

Look up these references and write down what the perfect Law of Liberty for us is:

John 8:32,36

Rom 6: 14-22

Rom 8:15,21

2 Cor 3:17

Gal 5:1,13


Jam 2:12-13


1 Pet 2:16

Look up Deut 15:16-17. Why is this appropriate given the context?

 **and continueth therein,**

Continueth: *parameno* - to stay near, remain, permanent, persevere. (Contrast vs 24 "goeth his way"). It is important to maintain our gaze on the Word (cp 2 Tim 2:15; Col 3:10) and then continue to live the Word! This includes attending CYC, Memorial meetings, Bible classes, Public lectures and discussing the things of the Word with others. The Word must be with us, in us, and in all that we do (Cp John 8:31; 15:3-10; 1 John 2:24; 1 Tim 4:16; see Deut 11:18-21).

 **he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.**

 RSV: "being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing".

Blessed: See notes on vs 12.

In the following verses, how are we blessed in our actions?

Psa 1:1-2

Psa 19:7-11

Psa 106:3

Psa 119:1-3

Luke 11:28

John 13:17

Rev 1:3

By reading and then living/doing the Word, what will we be constantly reminded of, and what will we be learning?

The next two verses explain what James means when he says, “doers of the Word”. James does not want us to think that he was merely endorsing ritualistic observances (cp the legalistic background of the Jewish readers). James shows that the external aspect of our worship should be morally motivated (cp Matt 23:23). This is not a summary of Christian religion but an illustration of it. James gives the basis for us to determine if we are religious in a Christ-like way.

Verse 26: If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

Seem: *dokeo* - to think, suppose, to seem. James anticipates that we might think and say that we are doers of the Word, even when we're not.

How can the following quotes help us regarding what we think?

Luke 8:18

1 Cor 3:18

1 Cor 8:2

1 Cor 10:12

Gal 6:3

We must be careful that our religion is not focused on what others see us do (cp Matt 6:1,5,16; 23:5), but is shown in our lives consistently every day. This will be because we are so convinced that what God says in His word is true, that we *must* live by it.

Bridleth: *chalinagogeo* - to lead by a bridle, to guide, restrain (cp Psa 39:1; 32:8-9; Jam 3:2-12). A bridle is what is used to guide and control a horse by its rider to turn the horse's head in the desired direction.

Our inner thoughts quickly lead to our spoken words, and so to bridle (or control) our tongue is to control the mind. This can only be done by constant and conscious action in our lives led by the Word of God.

Tongue: Speech is a reflection of our thoughts (cp Matt 15:18; 12:34-37). An unbridled tongue shows that our thoughts are not motivated by a Godly character (cp vs 19-20).

How should we use our tongue?

Eph 4:29; 5:4

Col 4:6

1 Pet 3:10; 4:11

Deceiveth: *apatao* - to cheat, to delude, give a false impression (see 1 Tim 2:14). “Deceiveth” especially signifies to deceive with empty words whilst ignoring the true character of sin (e.g., Eph 5:6). The unbridled tongue will philosophise to convince a person that sin is not sin, but relaxation of morals or ‘doing it my way is the best way’. James refers to deceit three times in this chapter (cp vs 16,22), and all are related to those who hear the word, but do not do it.

A deceived heart causes a gradual decline back to the ways of the flesh (cp Col 2:8; Heb 3:12-13; 2 Thess 2:10; 2 Pet 2:13; cp Jer 17:9). We need to compare our thoughts and intents with the Word, so that our true character and weaknesses may be revealed (cp Heb 4:12).

Vain: *mataios* - useless, of no purpose, void of result.

How is this word used?

Acts 14:15

1 Cor 3:19-20

1 Cor 15:17

Tit 3:9

1 Pet 1:18

"Vanity" can also be used in relation to a Godly practice such as those offerings offered to God in the wrong spirit (Isa 1:13; cp 1 Sam 15:22; Mic 6:6-8).

Our works in the Truth should have a solid foundation. They should be governed by our knowledge and understanding of the Word of God, and not by our heart - where our thoughts and feelings can be deceived by the flesh. Here, this man allows his emotions to overrule his better judgement, and having failed to listen properly, he doesn't try to bridle his tongue and fails to avert a wrathful conflict. The result is clear - this man has failed to manifest the righteousness of God and so his religion is vain (cp vs 19-20). Mere theoretical knowledge of the Truth is useless if we don't outwork it in our lives. We must learn meekness and realise that our actions must not be to the glory of self, but of God (cp 1 Cor 3:18-23).

LIVING THE WORD



Examine yourself. Is your life in the Truth merely a vain show, a façade, an image which you present to everyone else, but which you don't really fulfil to the glory of God? Or is your life a living and breathing manifestation of the Father's purpose?



Verse 27: Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this,

Pure: Look up the meaning in Strong's.

Using the following quotes, where does purity come from, and what must be purified?

Matt 5:8

John 15:3; 17:17

Eph 5:26

2 Tim 2:22

Heb 9:14

Jam 4:8

1 Pet 1:22

1 John 1:7

Undefiled: Look up the meaning in Strong's.

To be undefiled before God is to be free from the moral defilement which comes from within man (Mark 7:14-23). Our High Priest had this quality (Heb 7:26). Contrast our High Priest with the Jews and their High Priest (John 18:28). They were careful to avoid ceremonial defilement by refusing to enter a Gentile court of law, but suffered the severest form of moral defilement possible, by staining their hands with the blood of the Son of God.

LIVING THE WORD



Examine yourself. In your way of thinking and in your type of actions. Are you a follower of say, the Pharisees, or of Christ? Do you live the Truth only really when others are watching? Or has it affected your heart, and the way you reason morally?

James now highlights two aspects - **visit** (positive) and **keep** (negative). Pure religion is aligned with visiting the fatherless and widows; undefiled religion is aligned with keeping ourselves unspotted.



To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,



Look up the meaning of the word 'visit' used here. How exactly should we be helping these people?

Fatherless: *orphanos* bereaved, parentless, comfortless. This word only occurs elsewhere in John 14:18.

Widows: *chera* - widow (from a root word "chasm" - "to lack").

How has God looked after the fatherless and the widows?

FATHERLESS AND WIDOWS	
Exo 22:22-24; Deut 24:17; Isa 10:1-2; Jer 22:3; Zech 7:8-10; cp Job 6:27; 24:3,9,21:	
Deut 10:18; Psa 10:14, 17-18	
Deut 14:28-29; 26:12-13	
Deut 16:11-14	
Deut 24:19-21	

Who are the "fatherless" and "widows" around you? They aren't just the actual orphans or widows.

Commit to 3 different ways you can help people at the Sunday meeting for the next month. For example, maybe a mum carrying too many things, the sister preparing the bread and wine, a lonely person you could chat to, or the visitor from another Ecclesia. Make this your own commitment to look out for those in need.

What will I do?	How will I make sure this happens?

Affliction: *thlipsis* - pressure. Pressure was to come upon all the Ecclesia (cp Matt 24:21; John 16:33; Acts 14:22). God has helped us through our tribulations; therefore we should outwork the same characteristics to those in need (cp 2 Cor 1:3-4).

James is showing the attitude that is necessary to be a true doer of the Word. Provision for those who need help is an unseen act. Under the Law of Moses the giver didn't even know exactly who was to benefit (e.g. Deut 24:19; cp Matt 6:1-4). The little things of ecclesial life have the greatest significance (cp Matt 25:34-46).

God as the Father and We as the Fatherless

God was a father (cp Exo 4:22; Deut 32:6; Isa 64:8) and a husband (cp Isa 54:5-6; Jer 3:14; 31:32) for Israel. He promised that He would be with Israel if (among other things) they looked after the fatherless and the widows (Jer 7:6-7), but if they didn't, He would withdraw His overshadowing hand and punish them (Jer 5:28-29; 22:3-5; Zech 7:8-14). Finally, AD 70 was prophesied in order to purify the nation in part because of their failure to do this (Mal 3:1-5).

He has now also visited us (cp Luke 1:68, 7:16 with Acts 15:14) who were without hope (cp Eph 2:12) to become our Father (cp Eph 2:18; Rom 8:15-16; 2 Cor 6:17-18), and who were without a husband to provide us with one (cp Rev 19:7). God watches over the fatherless and widows (cp Psa 146:9; Psa 68:5; Jer 49:11), therefore if we are to manifest His character (and learn from Israel's error) this should also be a part of our life (cp Isa 1:16-17; Jer 7:6-7 with 1 John 3:17-19; Matt 5:44-48).

The first principle in this verse that James is teaching us is that we should aim to DO GOOD to all, especially those who need help.



and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Keep: *tereo* - to watch over, to guard from loss or injury by keeping an eye on (idea of observation) (cp 1 Tim 5:22; Rev 16:15).

Unspotted: *aspilos* - not morally blemished, unstained. See 2 Pet 2:13; 3:14; Eph 5:26-27; Jude 23; Rev 3:4; Jam 3:6.

List some ways in which, upon reflection, you are spotted by the world. With each way include a practical solution, which will help you to overcome.

How are you spotted?	How can you keep yourself from similar issues?

World: *kosmos* - arrangement. Moral contamination comes from the "world that lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:18-19; cp 1 John 2:15-17; Jam 4:4). We cannot entirely avoid contact with the world (cp 1 Cor 5:9-11) but we need to ensure that we are not stained by its ways (cp John 17:14-17; Rom 12:2).

As God's children we can have no fellowship with the world (cp 2 Cor 6:17-18; 1 John 5:4-5). As Christ's bride we need to remain unstained from the world. This is done through the Word (Eph 5:26-27).

The last "and" in this verse is in italics. If it were omitted, then the flow of the verse would indicate that visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction would be one way to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Life in the Truth is not only about abstaining from evil, but equally filling our life with those things and activities of which God would approve. So then, perhaps James is saying here that by actively filling our lives with good things, the evil things are automatically excluded and conquered.

This second principle in this verse that James is teaching us is that we should **STAY PURE** from this godless world.

LIVING THE WORD



How do we use our spare time? Are our spare hours filled with learning more about the Bible and serving others, or are they dedicated to our own pleasures and self-centred activities, innocent in themselves though some of these might be?

Draw up a timetable for one day of an average school/uni/work day, and a normal Saturday or holiday. Fill in the activities you would typically do each hour:

	Typical Weekday	Typical Saturday/Holiday
8 am		
9 am		
10 am		
11 am		
12 noon		
1 pm		
2 pm		
3 pm		
4 pm		
5 pm		
6 pm		
7 pm		
8 pm		
9 pm		

What are some of the ways in which you “sow to the flesh” each day (Gal 6:7-8)?
 What are some of the ways in which you “sow to the spirit” each day (Gal 6:8-10)?

List some ways in which you could serve others or grow spiritually. Find some spare time in your timetable where these could be slotted in, cross off the old activities and write in the new activities.



Now live your timetable and realise that you’re one big step towards having a pure and undefiled religion before God!!

Truly following God means this:

DO Good to all, especially to those who need help; and STAY PURE from this godless world

Chapter Two

Faith Without Works is Dead



2:1-13 | RESPECTING PERSONS

The main problem which stops pure religion from being practised is respect of persons - of others or of our own self. James addresses this issue first before proceeding to develop his theme further.

2:1 - 4 | Partiality leads to wicked reasoning

James shows that favouritism based on outward appearances is wrong and inconsistent with our faith in Christ. The Pharisees set a bad example for the Jewish believers to follow (vs 2-3; Luke 20:46-47). He reminds us of the nature of the faith we profess to hold.



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



'Respect' is usually a good thing. However, look up this verse in the NIV, and you will better understand what James is meaning. Write the verse here:

My brethren: It is a good reminder to remember that we are all one family in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28). Therefore, there is no room for favouritism.

The faith of our Lord Jesus Christ: Our faith needs to be the same as our Lord's. He lived his faith without showing favouritism to the rich (cp Matt 19:23-24; Luke 6:24), nor did he seek his own wealth or status (2 Cor 8:9; John 8:50 - cp this verse with Jam 2:4). Instead, he taught us to honour the poor (cp Luke 14:7-14). Indeed, he humbled himself completely in the form of a servant (Phil 2:5-11) to die the death that was necessary to save all those who would believe on him, whether rich or poor.

We must keep this same sort of faith by following the commandments of Christ regarding our brothers and sisters (Rev 14:12; cp John 13:13-15).

What are the commands from Christ in regard to our brethren? How did he show these principles in his own life? Here is one example: (Hint: there are quite a few in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7)). Answer these questions by filling in the box below.

His command	His action
Matt 5:44 - Pray for them that use and persecute you	Luke 23:34 - Forgive them for they know not what they do



The Lord of Glory: *doxa* - the honour resulting from a good opinion (Vines). This is translated elsewhere as dignity, glory, honour, praise, and worship.

We see in this opening verse that the title of Christ used here is 'of glory' (the words "The Lord" are in italics, showing us that these words are not in the original). James gives Christ the title of, "our Lord Jesus Christ of Glory". Christ gave God the glory through his life by being a servant who suffered much. As we know from his ministry, Jesus cared for the fatherless and widows and stayed pure from the world (see James 1:27).

It was because of this sacrifice that God promoted him to glory. After his resurrection, he was exalted and given a name which is above every name (Phil 2:9).

It is important to note that Christ is the manifestation of the glory and character of God (John 1:14). That glory was prophesied by Isaiah (Isa 40:5). It involves both physical and moral qualities (Exo 33:18-23; 34:5-7). Christ manifested God's moral glory during his ministry (John 1:14), and God's physical glory during his transfiguration (Matt 17:2; Luke 9:28-32) and after his resurrection (Acts 22:6-8, 11).

Respect of persons: *prosopolepsia* - partiality, favouritism (towards those of better outward circumstances).

Do you know of any references to support the fact that this is not a quality of God or of Christ? Using a concordance may help too.

Respect of persons is often linked with judgement (see Lev 19:15; Deut 1:17; 16:19; 2 Chron 19:6-7; Prov 24:23). Compare this with verse 4 - they had made themselves judges and ones with wicked thoughts at that! We cannot claim to have the faith of Christ if we respect the persons of men at the same time (see 1 Tim 5:21). In fact, people who admire men are described as ungodly sinners (Jude v16)!



Verse 2: For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

Beyond the Threads: A Tale of Favouritism

James' next hypothetical story is going to challenge us in how we view and compare other people who we may or may not understand or relate to. James has already pointed out that the fatherless and widows are groups of people that are often neglected. Yet these people have plenty of interesting lives and they can be very good company if we put the effort in to get to know them. Yet this is not the only group that gets left out or turned away - there are those that we might not see as interesting or popular or successful.

One good way to identify who you favour over others is who you have time for and who you don't. For example, you remember those conversations you have where you might be totally somewhere else in your brain and not giving your full attention to what the other person is saying? Or perhaps you've seen someone else that you need to talk to or you can hear another more interesting conversation nearby? Or maybe you're thinking about what you need to do next and how you can finish this conversation? How horrible are these thoughts when we analyse them! We should be listening to the person in front of us, or on the other end of the phone. If we are not present in that moment for them, concentrating and caring for them, then we clearly do not have respect for them.

Although there are some people we may find it easier to get on with and give our time to, we should learn to do our best to give our time and help to everyone where we are able, putting others' needs above our own preferences. This will truly glorify God.

James now presents his hypothetical story to show the believers the challenge of favouritism.

The doors of the meeting room swung open, and two men stepped inside, each from different walks of life. The first man, adorned in an air of opulence, wore golden rings on his fingers that glistened in the sunlight. His clothing was finely woven, a tapestry of elegance and wealth that caught the eyes of those around him. His presence had an air of quiet confidence that caught the attention of everyone present.

Assembly: *sunagoge* - a bringing together, an assembly, meeting place. This word is used to describe the Jews' teaching place (cp Acts 13:14-15). The early Ecclesia attended the Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath and held their own meetings elsewhere on the following day (e.g. Acts 20:7). The Jewish leaders would not have let them worship Christ in their midst (e.g. Acts 4:1-2; 5:28) so it is unlikely that they were actually meeting at a synagogue. This possibly indicates that believers James was addressing were having meetings that were being conducted more like the Jews in a synagogue.

Gold ring: *chrusodaktulios* - wearing a golden finger-ring, “a gold fingered man” - a man with his hand visibly loaded with rings and jewels. This was a symbol of importance. One solitary ring, however, was a common and almost indispensable item of clothing, as it was a man’s signet. This man, however, was a man of wealth and influence (see Gen 41:42; Esth 3:10; 8:2; Matt 11:8-9; Luke 15:22). It highlights the difference between the two men who enter the assembly place.

Goodly: *lampros* - radiant, magnificent or sumptuous in appearance. The things of this life that look “goodly” shall perish (Jam 5:2; cp Rev 18:14). There is a danger of being aligned with Babylon (cp Josh 7:20-21).

The word ‘goodly’ is also used to describe the splendour of the saints’ clothing in the Kingdom but with different English words. Below is a list of the references where the word is used in this way. How do we obtain it?

Reference	Notes
Acts 10:30 ‘bright’	
Rev 15:16 ‘white’	
Rev 19:8 ‘white’	

Apparel: *esthes* - clothing, raiment, robe.

This word only appears outside of James in four places. Where are they? What kind of people wear “apparel”?

Reference	Notes

What is the significance of the last place it is used?

The second man crept in quietly. He wore attire that whispered of hardship and humility. His clothes were threadbare, faded from years of wear, and he carried himself with a quiet demeanour that seemed to echo the weight of his life’s struggles.

Poor man: *ptochos* - beggar, pauper, destitute of wealth (from root word, “to crouch”).

Vile: *rhuparos* - dirty, shabby. (See Isa 64:6). The believers erroneously saw his physical state as a reflection of his spiritual state, as did the Pharisees (see John 9:34, where they were speaking of the Lord’s heritage). Even if this was correct, Christ is able to change our covering (cp Isa 1:18 - note the context; Zech 3:3-5; Rev 7:14; 19:18).

LIVING THE WORD



A lesson here for us is that even if we think someone may be less spiritual than us, this does not mean that they are. We CANNOT condemn them and exalt our own selves (cp Matt 7:1-5; Gal 6:1-10 and notes on Jam 2:15-16). We must rather give them what is needful for their spiritual renewal and growth. In so doing we will not only help them but be encouraged ourselves. There is a good saying that fits well with this: "Never look down on anyone unless you are helping them up."

Raiment: Same word as "apparel".

The contrast between these two men would have been a very common sight in the first century ecclesia. Today we don't generally see such a difference. However, there are still distinctions and the principles still apply. What are a few comparisons in ecclesial life today like the "rich versus poor", and how can we help to eliminate the problems caused by these?

Rich	vs	Poor	How do we eliminate these problems?
Speakers who are good at holding an audience captive		Speakers who struggle to captivate the audience	We need to try our best to listen to them both. Both have put a large amount of effort into their work. We must be careful to make sure the Bible agrees with the speech of the eloquent speaker, while trying our best to get a few worthy points from the new or 'dreary' speaker. 2 Corinthians 8:13-15



Verse 3: And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:



Roth: "For if there enter ... and ye eye him ... would ye not have been led to make distinction..."
 Moff: "Suppose there comes into your meeting ... if you attend to the wearer ..."

As the assembly hushed in anticipation, a collective gaze turned toward the newcomers. It was in this moment that a choice was made, not by words but by actions that spoke volumes.

The host of the gathering, a respected figure, rose from his seat and approached the two men. With a warm smile and open arms, he greeted the man in fine clothing, guiding him to a prominent place at the heart of the assembly. "Please, my friend," he said, "take your seat here, where all can see and hear you."

Note that James is not condemning riches or poverty but the believers' attitude towards them in making distinctions among the classes. There is a danger of admiring and seeking identification with prominent people and putting them on pedestals. This is a hazard for the person, who is exalted, as it can make them proud. There is also a hazard for the people exalting them - if the person falls, they will fall with them if they don't have any other stable foundation.

Respect: *epiblepo* - to gaze at (with favour, pity or partiality), regard; to look upon (Young). This expresses the manner in which the natural eye would instantly be drawn to the rich, luxurious man. "Ye eye" (Roth). It is those with a poor and contrite spirit that God regards (cp vs 6-7; Isa 66:1-2; Matt 5:3).

Gay clothing: This is the same phrase as "goodly apparel" (vs 2).

The believers had the wrong basis for honour (cp 1 Thess 5:12-14; 1 Tim 5:17). We cannot worship mammon (wealth) as well as God (Matt 6:24; cp Psa 82:2-3). However, James is not saying that we must despise or dishonour those that are rich because of their wealth. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were both men of immense wealth, but it was their spiritual knowledge and wisdom that made them worthy of respect. It was their Christ-like mind that set them apart from their fellow Jews (cp Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-41). The rich, however, in the case of James' epistle, were the oppressors (vs 6; 5:1-6).

Sit: *kathemai* - to sit down, remain, reside.



Good: *kalos* - denotes that which is intrinsically good. "Honourable place" (Diag). These were similar to the chief seats in the literal synagogue (cp Luke 20:46-47; contrast Luke 14:7-11). "These were seats of honour which were prepared for elders of the synagogue and for the doctors of the Law. They were placed in front of the ark. Those who occupied them sat with their faces to the people. These seats were sought by ambitious scribes and Pharisees" (*Bible Manners and Customs* Pg 368). The only genuine "good place" is at Christ's feet (Luke 8:35; 10:38-42).

Stand: *histemi* - to stand in an upright or active position, to cause to stand. They did not want to associate with the poor man (cp Isa 65:5; Matt 9:11-13).

Turning his attention to the man in shabby clothing, the host's demeanour remained kind but slightly distant. "Why don't you find a spot over there?" he gestured, indicating a corner of the room that held less prominence, or, he continued, "If you prefer, you can sit at my feet."

The assembly watched, captivated by this unfolding scene. It was clear that outward appearances had swayed the host's initial interactions, as if a person's worth could be measured by the fabric of their garments.

This is not how Christ or the Apostles command us to treat the poor. Try to find some references of their teaching and example in regard to the poor.

Reference	Example

How can we apply this today in our own personal and ecclesial lives?

Footstool: *hupopodion* - under the feet. Thayer's says, "to subject", "to reduce under one's power", "of placing the foot on the neck of a conquered enemy". See Joshua 10:24-26. The believers were assuming the authority of Christ (cp vs 4; 5:9; 2 Tim 4:1,8; John 5:30)! This word occurs nine times in the New Testament - six times quoting from Psa 110:1, twice it refers to the earth as God's footstool (cp Isa 66:1) and once here in James. The rich were granted the position of the Lord of Glory, and the poor were treated as the enemies of Christ. It was the rich who were the real enemies (cp vs 6-7) and the believers who despised the poor (cp vs 6).

Verse 4: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?



What is Rotherham's translation of this verse?

Partial: Look at this word's meaning in Strong's and then compare with Englishman's below. What were they actually doing?

Strong's: _____
'to separate thoroughly, to withdraw'

Englishman's: _____
'wavereth, doubteth, distinctions'

The meaning? _____

We can sometimes set up distinctions that may not even exist in our own minds. We must have singleness of mind like our Father (Jam 1:17; Mal 3:5-6).

And become: The next step after making distinctions is make judgements based on those distinctions.

Judges: *krites* - from *krino* - which includes the process of trial, passing of judgement and executing the sentence. The Law warned against this (see Lev 19:15) and so did Christ (cp John 7:24; Matt 7:1-5). Christ is the true judge (cp Jam 5:9; 4:12; Acts 10:42; 2 Tim 4:8). There is a danger of classifying people as a certain type due to a previous action and never letting them out of that class. By making themselves judges, they decided that some were more worthy than others, but that conclusion was made based on mere appearances. This was a breach of the Law (vs 9). It was also contrary to the character of the Father who they were supposed to emulate: "for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Sam 16:7; Psa 109:30-31).

James deals with judgement in several places. Where are they? Why does he emphasise this?



Of: "with" (RV, Roth) - They were not judging the thoughts of others but were instead displaying favouritism themselves, on the basis of mere outward appearances. This was a reflection of their evil thoughts.

Evil: *poneros* - hurtful, evil (in effect or influence) - compare James 4:16. This is the kind of evil that causes labour, pain and sorrow, and stirs up strife in the Ecclesia. It needs to be abhorred (Job 28:28; Psa 34:14; Prov 3:7; 8:13; Isa 1:16-17; Rom 12:9).

Thoughts: *dialogismos* - discussion, reasonings (internal = consideration; external = debate). They come from the heart (cp Matt 15:18-19; 12:34-35; Luke 9:46-47; see Jam 1:14). The believers were reasoning themselves astray (cp Jam 1:22). James is not teaching that we must not judge (cp 1 Cor 5:12; 6:5), but that our judgements must be based on the righteousness of God (cp John 7:24).

The believers were setting themselves in the position of judging from external appearances instead of from within (see Isa 11:3-4; Jer 17:10; 1 Pet 1:17). Their problem was that they didn't understand what true religion was (cp Jam 1:26-27). They were, in effect, judging that the principle of true religion was not right (see Jam 4:11-12).

2:5-7 | Favouritism is inconsistent with God's calling

Having highlighted the believers' basis of judgement, James now shows them God's basis and warns that if they do not change their ways they will find themselves in opposition to God, both now and in the day of judgement.

First, James shows how inconsistent their partiality is in regard to God's purpose. He has chosen those whom the world may despise, to be heirs to the greater riches of the future age.

Man's standard	God's standard
Rich of this world	Poor of this world
Rich in appearance	Rich in faith
Receive honourable seat	Heirs of Kingdom
Judges with evil thoughts	Those that love Him

Verse 5: Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?

Hearken: *akouo* - to attend to, consider what is said - see Acts 15:13 ("to understand").

My beloved brethren: see notes on James 1:16.

Chosen: *eklegomai* - see 1 Cor 1:26-31. God (emphasised by Roth, Diag) had chosen the poor but they had dishonoured them (vs 6)! Yahweh has respect unto the lowly (Psa 138:6; Isa 66:1-2; see also Deut 14:2).



The poor: NIV - "who are the poor in the eyes of the world" - that is, those who have been decreed by the world to be poor. The poor are more inclined to accept the Gospel because they have little to lose, and know their own needs (cp Matt 5:3; 11:5). God gives us what we need, not what we want.

World: *kosmos* - arrangement. Possessions can blind us to true spiritual values (see Prov 30:7-9; Luke 12:21). Present poverty is only a temporary state. The called will not be poor in the Kingdom (Matt 5:3).



Consider Luke 12:13-21: What are things we possess in this life that could be detrimental to the vision we have? They aren't limited to tangible things. What are ways we could use them to benefit the Truth, or if we can't utilise them, how can we overcome them so that we may become the poor of this world?



Rich: *plousios*. The Greek word is in the future tense: "to be rich" (see Roth, RSV, and Moff). God is not calling those who **already** have a rich faith (it is not obtained until we have heard the Word of God - Rom 10:17) but those who may **become** rich in faith. It is a process (See Isa 66:2; Rev 2:9; 3:17-18). The value of faith is that it can be shared without loss (cp 2 Cor 6:10; 8:9-15; Prov 13:7).

Heirs: This verse shows that the Kingdom has not literally been set up yet (cp Matt 25:34).

Look up "heirs" in Strong's. Where are some other references with a similar idea? What do they say?

Kingdom: *basileia* - royalty, rule or realm. Thayer's Greek Definitions says:

1. Royal power, kingship, dominion, rule
2. A kingdom, the territory subject to the rule of a king
3. Used in the N.T. to refer to the reign of Messiah

It is God's pleasure to give us the kingdom (cp Luke 12:31-32; 1 Thess 2:12; Eph 1:5,9).

Promised: *epaggello* - to announce upon, to engage to do something. James highlights two promises - eternal life (Jam 1:12; cp Tit 1:2; 1 John 2:25) and a place in God's Kingdom (cp Matt 25:34; Rev 3:21).

Love: *agapao*. Love is essential (cp 1 Cor 13:1-7). (See notes on Jam 1:12).

How do we start to develop this love (see 2 John 6)?

Compare this verse and Jam 1:12 with Psa 37:9; Isa 30:18; 40:31; 64:4; Lam 3:25-26 and 1 Cor 2:9. What are the differences in the references? What does this love also involve, and in the context of James' quote, why do we need this attribute? Compare Rom 8:24-25.

Future blessings will not be granted just because of present poverty. True poverty is being poor in the spirit of this world (cp Matt 5:3; Isa 66:2). We do not necessarily need to be literally poor (see Matt 27:57; 1 Tim 6:17-19), but we need to aspire to the riches of the future age rather than the riches of today's world.



See *Elpis Israel*, Pg 156, paragraph 2.

Compare this verse with Jam 1:12. Both of these references are similar, yet each offers a slightly different reward. Fill in each part of the statements in the table below and then write what reward each verse is talking about in the bolded boxes.

James 1:12	James 2:5
Blessed is the man that endureth [trial]	Hath not God chosen the poor of this world
Tried (faith - 1 Pet 1:7)	
	Heirs to the kingdom
Those who love Him	

Paul says something similar in his last epistle to Timothy (2 Tim 4:7-8). What is it?

Compare the widow of Mark 12 and Luke 21 with this verse. Read the context of all the passages. What comparisons can you find?

The believers were still living within the environment of the Jews with all their favouritism. James warns them not to be influenced by the Jews' actions, nor to bring the practice of respecting of certain persons over others into the Ecclesia.

Verse 6: But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

Despised: *atimazo* - dishonour. The believers were in effect questioning God's ability to choose those worthy of honour (See 1 Cor 1:26-31; Prov 14:31). They found themselves therefore in opposition to Him. Christ himself was despised because he was poor in the things of this world (Isa 53:3).

LIVING THE WORD



Do we consider some in the Ecclesia as having less importance than others? God has chosen all of us for His Kingdom. Should we despise those whom God has chosen? How can we learn to appreciate those people?



Rich men: Rotherham emphasises the action of the rich - "the rich" oppress ... "themselves" drag ... "they" defame. James is referring to the rich Jews as a class of the world in general that had oppressed the believers, not rich men like Nicodemus and Joseph.

Oppress: The oppression began with the Jewish leaders (e.g. Acts 4:1-7,17).



Draw: *helkuo* - "drag" (RV, Diag). Compare Acts 16:19; 21:30. "And themselves (emphatic) drag you" (Roth). They were being persecuted exactly like the apostles!

Judgement seats: This is the place where the believers had been judged against holding the faith of Christ. The believers had been showing respect to these very people - the ones who would also judge with respect of persons.

Verse 7: Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

Blaspheme: *blasphemeo* - to speak impiously, defile, defame. Under the Law it was punishable by death (See Exo 20:7; Lev 24:10-16). There is a danger of the Name of God being blasphemed by a believer's actions (cp 2 Sam 12:14; Eze 36:21; Matt 12:31; 18:7; Rom 2:23-24; 1 Tim 6:1).



Worthy: *kalos* - valuable or virtuous, "denotes that which is intrinsically good" (Vine). Compare vs 3 - "good".

This word is also used in James 3:13; 4:17. Look up and compare "*agathos*" - Jam 1:17; 3:17. Why do you think there is a distinction in the words used?

Name: there is emphasis on this word and phrase throughout James' epistle and his speech in Acts 15.

Look up this phrase and perhaps colour it in and cross reference it. What is James trying to get across to us in this context?

Called: *epikaleomai* - also translated "surnamed". Only a father (cp Gen 48:16; Isa 43:6-7) or a husband (cp Isa 4:1; 54:5) can call another by his own name (cp Eph 3:14-15). Yahweh's name is called upon Israel (cp Deut 28:9-10; 2 Chron 7:14; Jer 14:9; Dan 9:19) and upon the Gentiles (cp Amos 9:12; Acts 15:14, 17). Baptism places Christ's name on us (cp Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38-39). Through baptism we become children of God (cp Heb 2:13; 1 John 3:1) and Christ's bride (cp 2 Cor 11:2; Rev 19:7). God's name can be blasphemed if our actions are not consistent with His character as expressed in His name (Exo 34:6-7; cp 2 Sam 12:14).

It is appalling for believers to show partiality to those of worldly status and who blaspheme the very things that the believers claim to follow; therefore the two groups are incompatible.

James is also implying that by despising the poor and bringing judgement against them, they were acting just like the rich Jews who persecuted the Ecclesia and blasphemed God's name.

LIVING THE WORD



What are the people or things of this world that you look up to, even though their lifestyle or beliefs are against God's name?

2:8-11 | Lesson from the Law

James next anticipates an objection that might be raised - that they were fulfilling the Law of Lev 19:18 in loving the rich by showing honour to them. It is common for human nature to justify itself and to attempt to use the Scriptures to do so.

James points out that under the Law of Moses, breaking just one point cancelled out the good of keeping the rest of the Law. Then he shows that we have greater demands placed upon us by the Law of Liberty.

Verse 8: If ye fulfil the Royal Law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:



NIV: "If you really keep the Royal Law".
Roth: "If ye are indeed fulfilling".

Fulfil: *teleo* - execute. The Jews boasted in their keeping of the Law (cp Rom 2:17) and so James knew they would object to this because they would say they *were* loving their neighbour. However, they didn't love the person for the right things but were rather focused on status and wealth.

Royal Law: *basilikos* - signifies belonging to a king, proclaimed by a king.

This Law is proclaimed by the King of Heaven (Lev 19:18), and declared again by Christ, the King of the Future age (Matt 22:37-40; John 13:34; 15:12; see 2 John 5). Write it out in your own words:

As a Royal Law, it provided the chief principle by which to LIVE life by the Word. In Leviticus 19, it is placed in juxtaposition with a warning against respect of persons (vs 15). Therefore, love and not partiality, should govern our lives. If the Royal authority of the Father and Son is appreciated, this Law should be obeyed by those who claim to be their subjects and by those who wish to be kings of the future age.

Scripture: *graphe*. The whole Scripture must be used as the basis for our life (2 Tim 3:16-17). Notice the emphasis on good works in v17. We can't just use one part. Leviticus 19 covers various Laws relating to conduct towards our brethren.

Love: *agapao* - divine love. This word is seldom found outside the Bible. Love comes from God (cp John 4:7-8) so it is not an emotion of the flesh. It is probably best rendered "self-sacrificial love", for in love God gave up His son (John 3:16) and Christ gave up His life (Gal 2:20).

LIVING THE WORD



Our love to our neighbours is an outworking of God's love to us (cp 1 John 4:9-12). Love is a fulfilment of the Law (cp Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14). Do we say we love someone but then never show it? Is our love *felt* by that person? Do we help them when the going gets tough? Do we do things for them without them asking for assistance (see 1 John 3:18)?

The love which we receive as followers of Christ must be revealed in our attitude to others. It is not action, but it must be *expressed* in action, otherwise it is not love at all. It must not be confused with mere friendliness or affection based on the likings of the flesh, for love must be expressed to our enemies as well (Matt 5:44; Rom 12:20). It is this unique attitude of a believer towards his brethren and the world that separates him unto God Himself. His love must be manifested in our hearts as it is motivated by the power of the Word (Rom 5:5; Gal 5:22-25; 1 Thess 4:9).

Neighbour: Who is your neighbour? Compare Luke 10:29,36-37.

Ye do well: James uses irony here, knowing that their claims were false. This phrase is used again in vs 19. If they were fulfilling the Law they would have been blessed in their doing (cp Jam 1:25).

Verse 9: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the Law as transgressors.

But if we have respect to persons: Here James brings in his sober warning. The command against this is in the same chapter of the Royal Law (cp Lev 19:15). This shows their inconsistency. The Law was regarded by the Jews as a series of detached rules. Those broken were offset against those kept. The final balance determined their standing before God. This way of thinking was totally wrong, as James goes on to point out: our life in Christ is not a series of do's and do not's.

Commit: *ergazomai* - to toil. They were working in sin! This is a stronger word than that used for being "doers" of the Word (cp Matt 7:23).

Sin: *hamartia* - state of sin (cp 1 John 3:4, 9-11).

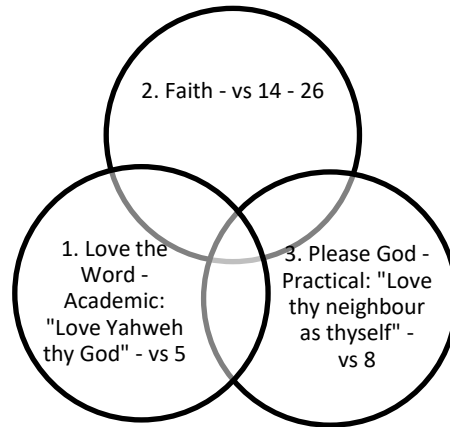


Convinced: *elegcho*. "Convicted" (RV). Compare John 8:46. This transgression was an invasion of another's rights, and humiliating the poor visitor was breaking the Law (cp Psa 82:2-4).

Transgressors: *parabates* - violator. See Rom 2:25,27.

Verse 10: For whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all.

Whole: *holos* - complete. The Law revolved around two main principles - love God and love our neighbours, "for on these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets" (cp Matt 22:36-40; 1 John 4:19-21; Ecc 12:13). A believer requires a faithful conviction to accomplish both these principles as we shall see in verses 14-26. Thus, we have a threefold chain:



These three characteristics of the true believer are inseparable. It is only when these three aspects are intertwined like an unbreakable chain that a believer's life will bring forth praise to God. If one link fails, the chain will fall apart.

In one point: For example, to show respect of persons. It shows a lack of love of a certain class and therefore fails to fulfil the Law.

Guilty: Compare Deut 27:26; Gal 3:10 - these references relate to the breaking of the Law of Moses. James has taken the same principle and shown that it applies just as much to the Law of Liberty.

All: *pas* - every, whole. They broke the chain even though they had only snapped one link. They had not taken care to love their neighbour while loving their God, which showed their lack of faith in Him and so they were found guilty of breaking the whole Law (cp Matt 5:18-19).

This is not saying that a sinner is held guilty as if he violated every ordinance, but that although all other commands are kept, just one sin will separate us from God and we require forgiveness for that (cp Psa 130:3-4).

Verse 11: For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the Law.

Below are Christ's own commandments and commentary on these two Laws. What do they mean to us?

Do not commit adultery	Matt 5:27-28	
	Gal 5:19	
Do not kill	Matt 5:21-22	
	Rom 13:9	
	Gal 5:21	

Commit adultery: See Exo 20:14.

Kill: *phoneuo* - to be a murderer. See Exo 20:13, cp 1 John 3:15.

It is easy to stress certain commandments that we find easy to keep or are our strengths (e.g., the study of God's Word, gospel proclamation, patience), and neglect other commandments (e.g. serving one another,

showing hospitality, putting what we have learnt into practice). This inconsistency is not a characteristic of God and should not be in His children (cp Jam 1:17). We can also show great criticism towards those who do not have the same natural tendencies as us. God will not judge us not only on our natural abilities but on how we have responded to and have been changed by His Word.

LIVING THE WORD



It is our weak areas that God wants us to work on. Ask yourself, "What areas of my character can be improved and how can I improve them?" (Hint - it is God who does the improving if we let him).

Note that James chooses two points (adultery and murder) that he will accuse his readers of later (see Jam 4:2,4).

2:12-13 | The need to keep the whole Law of Liberty

A correct appreciation of the future judgement should dictate our present lives. In everything that we do, it ought to be consistent with the judgement which we expect at His hand.



Verse 12: So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the Law of Liberty.

How often James comes back to this insistence upon the need for actively living the Word!

Speak: Compare Matt 12:36-37; Rom 15:18.

Do: There is a saying, "It is easy to sit up and take notice; what is difficult is getting up and taking action". It is possible to expound the Word and yet live inconsistently with its principles. Our actions must confirm our speech (cp 1 John 3:18) and both must be conducted with Christ in mind (cp Col 3:17). The believers had both spoken and acted amiss (vs 3). See also Jam 1:25 - "blessed in his deed". We need to DO the Truth, not just talk about it!



Look up the NIV version of this verse. In what way is this Law contrasted to the Mosaic Law?

Judged: *krino* - this is the verb of vs 4. Since they had judged others harshly, they would be judged in like manner (Matt 7:1-2; Jam 4:11-12; 5:9).

Law of Liberty: See the notes below, as well as notes on Jam 1:25.

THE LAW OF LIBERTY

The Law of Liberty recognises that all sin and therefore come under the curse of the Law (Gal 3:10). However this Law extends the mercy of forgiveness to us (cp Rom 7:23-8:4), and so we are freed from the curse by a newness of life in Christ (Rom 6:4-6; 7:1-6; Col 2:14). This, however, imposes on us an obligation to walk in the light of that experience of forgiveness. Having received of the goodness of God, we are expected to extend the same mercy to others (cp Matt 6:12; 18:32-33; Rom 14:10,13; Eph 4:32). We have to recognise that "all have sinned" (Rom 3:23), both rich and poor, and thus we have all been reduced to a common ground (cp Psa 62:9; 1 Cor 7:21-23; see also Isa 40:4-8). We cannot show partiality, but should, in humility, treat all as "one" in Christ (Gal 3:28). The basis of the extension of our mercy to one who has wronged us, is that we ourselves have been so graciously forgiven by God Almighty.

The Law of Liberty is based on affecting our conscience – to offend it by not extending mercy and reflecting God (Who has abundantly poured grace on us), would indicate a double-minded person. “The very term ‘Law of Liberty’ shows that the liberty referred to is subject to restraints: it expresses liberty from condemnation, not license to please oneself” (H.P. Mansfield). We must “speak and do as they that shall be judged by the Law of Liberty”.

See also Gal 2:16-21; 3:9-14; 5:1-6, 13-26; 6:14-16. Paul has some interesting points to note in Galatians and sums up the liberty we have in Christ well. When we are baptised we no longer live the life of the person we were before. Christ lives in us and we live by the faith of him, who loved us, and gave himself for us. Thus it is appropriate that we must live like him in forgiving others, for did he not say, “Father, forgive them” about the very ones who were crucifying him? His whole life was ruled by the perfect Law of Liberty, “for all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Gal 5:14; cp Jam 2:8).

Using the above notes, sum up the Law of Liberty in your own words with some quotes for reference (this would be useful to put into your Bible margin):

Verse 13: For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

Without mercy: They were not persuaded even when entreated. Christ gave a similar warning (cp Matt 7:1-2; 6:15).

Contrast the examples of David and Joab in the face of their adversaries. How did they act? How did God respond to that? Compare Psa 18:25-26.

Mercy: *eleos* - compassion (human or Divine, especially active). We will all need mercy in the day of judgement. Therefore, there is a need to manifest those characteristics in this life (cp Matt 5:7; 18:21-35; Luke 6:36).

What do these references below say regarding God’s mercy to us and our mercy to others?

Exo 34:6-7

Psa 18:25

Psa 103:4-13

Prov 16:6

Prov 21:13

Jer 9:23-24

Zech 7:9-10

Matt 7:1-5

Matt 23:23, see v14

Rom 9:15

Rom 11:22

LIVING THE WORD



If we judge ourselves and not our brethren, we will be shown mercy (1 Cor 11:28-31). We proclaim a death sentence on ourselves by judging and not showing mercy to others. By not forgiving people's debts to us, God will not forgive our debts to Him either (Matt 6:12; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13).



Rejoiceth against: *katakauchaomai* - to exult against, "triumphs" (Diag). At the judgement seat, mercy shall drown out judgement, because the mercy that we have shown to others will be advanced to our support. The difference between the ones cast out and the ones found worthy, will be based on their attitudes and actions to their fellow man (Matt 25:31-46).

Mercy and judgement are both aspects of God's character (Exo 34:6-7) which He holds in perfect balance (cp Rom 11:22). This is shown in the Law of Liberty, for it recognises the curse of the Law of sin and death upon us (judgement) but frees us from this curse through the forgiveness of sins (mercy). We shall be judged by how we have reflected this balance in our own lives. By reflecting these characteristics of our Father, we will truly be keeping the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory.

God manifestation is: Us living in a way that others can see God living in Us.

Note Gen 12:3; Josh 2:12-14. This very principle was acted out in Rahab's life, and Abraham was promised this as well (see Jam 2:21,25).

2:14-26 | FAITH AND WORKS

2:14-17 | Faith without works is dead

James follows on from “speak ye and so do” (vs 12) to develop his main theme further by showing that faith without works is of no use. Our works are an outward testimony of our faith.



Verse 14: What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?



Diag: “What advantage, my brethren have any one, though he say he has faith, but have not works? This faith is not able to save him”.

Profit: *ophelos* - to heap up, accumulate. After considering all that James has written so far, this question should have burnt deeply into the hearts and consciences of his readers. They were not laying up treasures in heaven (cp Matt 6:19-21), but rather trying to make a profit in this world.

Say: *lego*. The believers were all talk and no action (cp vs 16). This problem is addressed in the next chapter.



Faith: “That faith” (RV, Moff).

The age-old question must be asked: what is faith? Use Strong’s concordance and study this word, its related words and roots. Where does it come from, what does it lead to, how do we hold onto it? Find where else it is used in the chapter and where “that faith” occurs. What is the difference between these two words? Why does James use both terms?

Greek:

Meaning:



Bro John Thomas’ translation of Hebrews 11:1 is as follows: “Faith is a confident anticipation of things hoped for, a full persuasion of things not seen” (*Elpis Israel*, pg 173).

As we shall soon see, **faith is a living conviction that will motivate action**. Faith is necessary for Living the Word! It is necessary for salvation (cp Rom 1:16-17) but not “that faith” which is based merely on the knowledge of a set of doctrines (cp Matt 3:7-10). It must be believed and then acted upon (cp Rom 2:13).

Works: *ergon* - to toil, occupation. In the context of James’ letter, he is referring to works of faith shown in trial. Trials are necessary to produce an enduring faith (cp Jam 1:2-4).

“Work” is another key word in this section. List the different things that James mentions concerning “works” and note how we can apply them to our lives.

An interesting parable to consider in the light of the subject of Faith and Works is the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders (Matt 7:21-27; Luke 6:46-49).

James answers this question in three stages. The first is a simple analogy.



Verse 15: If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

Naked: Have a look at the following references. Is nakedness limited to physical nakedness?

Exo 32:6,25

Prov 29: 18 (see margin)

2 Cor 5:2-4

Heb 4:12-13

Rev 3:17

Rev 16:15

Destitute: *leipo* - to leave, that is, to fail or be absent, (see Jam 1:4 - "wanting"; vs 5 - "lack"). (Compare Acts 11:28-29; 1 Cor 11:21-22; Rom 15:26).

The Law demonstrated how they should have been cared for (see notes on the Fatherless and Widows - Jam 1:27).



Verse 16: And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?



Wey: "I wish you well; keep yourselves warm and well fed".

Peace: *eirene* - to set as one, prosperity. This was a common benediction used when one's needs had been satisfied (Luke 7:48-50; 8:46-48; Acts 16:36; 1 Sam 1:17; 20:42; 2 Kings 5:19). The Jewish greeting "shalom" was empty and useless as a mere word. However, it is derived from a root word, "to be at one" and hence implies a "sharer". James teaches us to use even the most common words with full meaning, and not to use words that sound beautiful and eloquent but not actually mean them.

No amount of faith can substitute for the requirements of a person in need. This would be a hollow blessing.

Ye give them not: if we do not help our fellow brethren, whether with physical or spiritual help, we ourselves are spiritually naked and lack a vision (Prov 29:18, see vs 15 "naked"). We are destitute of faith, found wanting (Jam 1:4) and lack wisdom (Jam 1:5) before the God above Who has given us all things that are needful for the life we live now, and in the age to come. If we do not share this blessing, we do not appreciate Him (cp Isa 58:6-14; Luke 14:12-14). He will switch the places of the rich and poor (Psa 68:5-6; Isa 10:1; Luke 1:52-53).

Things which are needful: Compare Prov 3:27-28; Luke 3:11.

What doth it profit?: Nothing - to either the possessor of that faith or to those in need. James is using a small incident to illustrate his point. It is the small things that Christ desires us to act upon. The future depends on what we do in the present (Jam 1:27; Matt 25:31-46; 1 John 3:16-19).

However, all these actions must be done in love (1 Cor 13:1-3; Gal 5:13; Col 1:4-5; Heb 10:23-24; 1 Thess 1:3), otherwise it is of no value (cp vs 8). Love must be the motivating force of the works of faith (Gal 5:6).



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



NKJV: "Even so, if it does not have works, faith is dead, being by itself".

Dead: nekros - From a primary word "nekus" - a corpse. Faith or conviction must be living and active to be of advantage to anyone. This point is emphasised in vs 20 and vs 26. A mere assertion of principles is not enough. Paul also teaches this (Rom 2:13).

Why does God require works as well as faith? He is looking for those who not only believe what He says, but are also obedient (Mark 16:16; cp Heb 11:8). These works of faith are a manifestation of God's character and thus reflect that we are truly His children (cp 1 John 2:4-6).



H.P. Mansfield has a good description of what faith should do: "Faith that expresses itself only in word and not in action is dead. A living faith will motivate action. Otherwise belief is a mere academic exercise of no practical value. A real faith will change a life. The RV renders the final clause (of verse 14) as: "can that faith save him?" the answer is NO. Faith must motivate action, and bring forth fruit to the glory of the Father." (*James to Jude Expositor*, Pg 44).

LIVING THE WORD



Do I do the works of faith? Is my conviction real? Does it motivate me to action?

2:18-26 | Faith shown by works

James moves on to the second stage of his answer to the question at the end of vs 14, by showing that a belief in doctrine without a corresponding change in the way of life, is not sufficient.

Verse 18: Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

James outlines the problem that the Ecclesia had - they had been separating faith from works.



ESV: But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

It is impossible to show our faith without works. We can say as much as we like about the Truth and how much we believe it, but if we don't have the actions to show it, no one will believe us (cp Job 1:8-11). We can have works without faith, but we cannot have faith without works.

A real faith will automatically manifest itself in works. The works themselves testify of a greater force than that which is natural. Hebrews 11 gives numerous examples of faithful brethren who showed their faith by their actions (cp Heb 11:4,7-8 etc). Faith is the motive force behind our action, and by which we are able to overcome the world with God's grace (1 John 5:4).

LIVING THE WORD



The Truth must be our obsession, and it must be known by others to be our obsession. What do people in and out of the Truth think your passion in life is? Is it consistent with the Truth? If not, how can you change that? If so, how can you make it stronger, and help others to be as enthusiastic as you are about the Truth?

Verse 19: Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Thou believest: *pisteuo* - to have faith. This is the verb for "faith". This is "possessing conviction".

That there is one God: This is the first article of the Jewish and Christian faiths (Exo 20:1-5 ; Deut 6:4; Isa 45:5-6; Mark 12:29; John 17:5; 1 Cor 8:4-6; Eph 4:4-6; 1 Tim 2:5).

We do believe the doctrine that there is only one God, but what effect does it have on us? What does, "God is one God" mean to you personally and ecclesially?

Thou doest well: James again uses irony (cp vs 8). Sound doctrine is important but is not an end in itself.

Devils: *daimonion*. Those mentally or physically unsound whom Christ healed recognised the Divine power in his healing work (cp Matt 8:28-29, Mark 5:7-20; Luke 4:41). However, their utterance of this fact was not enough to save them. Their faith, once they were healed, would have to be expressed in actions in order to obtain salvation (cp Luke 17:12-19).

Also believe: If one were to believe that faith was enough without action, this would mean, says James, that the devils could also be saved because they had a conviction, but no works.

Tremble: *phrisso* - to bristle or chill, that is, shudder (fear). Their belief is a source of terror, not salvation. They merely uttered a truth without it truly affecting them.

Knowledge alone is not acceptable to God. Sometimes all it does is frighten. True doctrine will develop within us a love for God and it will affect the way we act. It is important to have a true living faith to please Him (cp Heb 11:6).

The final stage of James' argument is in giving two examples from the Old Testament to illustrate his point - firstly the man Abraham, the father of the faithful, and secondly the woman Rahab, a sinful Gentile whose faith was shown in her support and assistance in the work that Yahweh was about to accomplish in her city. The contrast between the two shows the universality of the principle. Abraham was under the trial of obedience as a saint - obey or disobey. Rahab was under the trial of opportunity as a sinner - accept the Truth or reject it. They were both blessed to find a place in Christ's lineage, because of their faith (Matt 1:2,5).

Verse 20: But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?



Look up the verse in the RSV:



Dead: The Diaglott renders this "unproductive". Faith that is not followed by works produces NO glory to God, for there is no fruit (cp Tit 3:8,13-14). Paul taught this same fact: "He will render to each one according to his works: ... For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified." (Rom 2:6,13).

James presents conclusive evidence for those who have ears to hear (cp Matt 13:9) and wish to become true, profitable servants of God.

Verse 21: Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Abraham our father: He is the father of the Jews, but more significantly he is the father of the faithful (cp Rom 4:12, 16; Gal 3:7-9; Isa 51:1-2).

Justified: Look up this word in Strong's and write the meaning:

These "works" sprang out of his faith, and were not merely actions in obedience to a command without motivation. This work was motivated by the promise that "God would provide" (see Rom 4:12-25). For this, God rewarded him, not only with sparing his son, but with a future blessing confirmed by an oath (Gen 22:16-18; Heb 6:12-20).

Offered Isaac his son upon the altar: Once there is belief (Gen 15:6; Jam 2:23), there must be obedience (see Gen 22:16,18).

Verse 22: Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?



Wey: "You notice that his faith was co-operating with his actions, and that by his actions his faith was perfected".

Wrought: *sunergeo* - to be a fellow-worker, co-operate. It is also from the verb "*energeo*" - to be energised. Thus faith energised Abraham to act. This act was not performed without faith but rather was the outworking of it. The faith Abraham showed in Genesis 15:6 that God would fulfil His promise was the motive force behind his actions in Genesis 22 (cp Heb 11:17-19). That faith is motivated by love (cp Gal 5:6). A living faith helps us to love and long for life eternal.

Perfect: *teleioo* - mature, brought to completion. Abraham's faith developed over time through trials (cp Heb 6:12-15; Jam 1:3-4). True children of Abraham will also manifest the same works (John 8:39).

In Hebrews 6, note the words "faith and patience" (vs 12) and "patiently endured" (vs 15). Compare these with the similarity of thought of James 1:2-4. What can we learn from this?

Verse 23: And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Fulfilled: *pleroo* - to bring to completion. The Scripture was Genesis 15:6. The events of Genesis 22 completed the process. God then confirmed the covenant by an oath (Gen 15:5-6; 22:16-17).

Believed: The very act of belief itself is a work of righteousness. This hope against hope (Rom 4:18) is a remarkable act of faith which invariably manifests itself in works (see Heb 11:8-19).

In what type of works can our faith manifest itself?

Friend: *philos* - dear, fond, friendly. Compare 2 Chron 20:7; Isa 41:8. Declaring His Friendship with Abraham was a token of God's approval because Abraham obeyed God (cp Gen 18:17-19; John 15:14). Contrast this with James 4:4 - James was writing to some who were exhibiting the very opposite! Friendship is to have fellowship with someone. We come into fellowship with God at our baptism. The more we try to grow to understand Him and His ways, the more our fellowship will grow and strengthen. It is a gradual process, but this will finally be outworked when we share true fellowship with Him in the Kingdom Age and see His face.

Friendship also has another basis. There is always something we have in common with our friends. What was the thing that Abraham and God had in common (See Gen 22:12; John 3:15; cp John 8:56)?

Summary of Abraham's Justification			
Part One/Cause	vs 23	Gen 15:5	"Belief that He is" (Heb 11:6)
Part Two/Effect	vs 21	Gen 22	"Belief that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Heb 11:6)
Outcome	vs 22-23		"Faith is made perfect" = Abraham becomes the Friend of God

Thus we get the complete picture: Abraham's belief had a powerful effect on his way of life, and therefore he was called, "the Friend of God".

So how is this significant for us? We go through the same process:

1. Faith that Christ died and rose for us (vs 23);
2. Baptism in response to that faith (vs 21);
3. Our faith is made perfect - we become friends of our God and His Son since we have obeyed (John 15:14).

LIVING THE WORD



We are God's friends on the basis of our obedience. We can only obey if we know of Him and His ways. However, this is not the final thing that we have to do to be accepted into God's family. We have to continually seek for the maturity of our faith, and the understanding of God and His ways throughout our mortal lives. Our baptism is only the beginning of the journey. It is a continual process toward an end. We must strive for the mark of the high calling, so that in His glorious kingdom, we may truly become a "friend of God," being in fellowship with Him and with His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 24: Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Not by faith only: James is emphasising vs 17. He has shown that faith and works are not only necessary, but they are an integral part of each other. The word "only" means "alone". Strong's gives the meaning as "merely". Compare this with Jam 1:22 - "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers **only**". Faith/hearing must be accompanied by works/doing.

Verse 25: Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way?

Justified by works: Many in the land believed (see Josh 2:9-11; 5:1) but she alone acted in faith (Heb 11:31). She believed in the one God (cp Josh 2:11 with Deut 4:39) and acted (contrast Jam 2:19). Rahab held her faith before the spies arrived (cp Josh 2:8-11 - Her explanation of why she hid them was a confession of her faith). Her faith was acted upon in hiding the spies, sending them another way, and staying in the city until Joshua (Yah shall save) arrived. Her example showed that Gentiles also can be justified (cp Rom 3:29-30). Her faith, therefore, found expression in action, and though a Gentile, she was privileged to be both the ancestor of David and Christ (Matt 1:5). Her faith appeared to be stronger than the nation of Israel.

Verse 26: For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.



Spirit: *pneuma* - breath. Compare the Diaglott - "the body without breath is dead" (compare the AV margin).

Consider Adam. Until he was given the breath of life, he was not able to fulfil his purpose - to multiply and fill the earth with a Godly seed (see Mal 2:15). A lifeless body is a corpse - inactive and ineffective. It decays and ceases to exist (cp Psa 104:29-30). Faith that bases its substance on doctrinal truth alone has no life and is incapable of showing it. In the same way that action shows that a body is alive, so works of faith show that a person's faith is alive.

In order to make our faith come alive in our action so that we can live the Word, we must make a conscious choice to put what we read in our Bibles into action in our lives. What are 3 principles you have learnt from James 1 and 2 that you can start to action?



"A person who believes, but in action fails to respond to that belief lives a lie. So, according to James, faith without works is as good as a corpse. It is faith in action that provides life and vigour" (H. P. Mansfield, *James to Jude Expositor*, Pg 48).

Chapter Three

Who is a Wise Man?



3:1-12 | TAMING THE TONGUE

James urged restraint while speaking by setting forth the virtue of hearing (Jam 1:19), before concluding chapter 1 with a warning about bridling the tongue (Jam 1:26). Through chapter 2 he showed that the believers' speech was not in accordance with the Law of Liberty (Jam 2:12) and that their tongues were active but not their faith (Jam 2:14). Now he addresses the issue of the tongue directly, particularly regarding teachers in the ecclesia. There was a danger that those who held the false belief concerning faith and works would actively promote it in the Ecclesia.

Although the chapter deals with teachers, the warnings and exhortations still apply to everyone. We must be careful about how we speak.

3:1-2 | Responsibilities of teachers

Teachers are the mouthpiece of the Ecclesia. James warns the believers about the responsibility of teachers and the danger of seeking an office for which a person is not suited.



Verse 1: My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.



Diag: "Do not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive a severer judgement."

Masters: *didaskalos* - an instructor, teacher.

James, himself is a teacher which you can see by his phrasing, "knowing that **we** shall receive the greater judgement."

Why do you think a teacher or instructor would receive greater judgement? See Lev 10:1-3; Mal 2:7-9,12; Matt 23:14; Luke 12:48; Heb 13:17.

Using scriptural or examples, what are the various ways believers can be teachers in the ecclesia? We have given some examples:

1 Tim 2:12 Teaching in the memorial meeting is the responsibility of brothers

Titus 2:3 Older women to teach the younger women to love their husbands and children

Teaching others about the Word is an important and essential role in the work of the Truth, and although hardships may result from it, these too are to be gloried in (Acts 5:28,40-42; 1 Tim 4:10-11).

James has no wish to discourage those who single-heartedly desire to serve the Ecclesia as a guide and instructor in the things of the Word. There are many ways we can do that, such as preaching the word, teaching Sunday School, mentoring others, and of course publicly speaking to the ecclesia from the platform. One on one conversations with people that we know at school and at work can reap results, even years later on.

Those who wish to take on the more formal work to teach the ecclesia are encouraged in Scripture and are to be given respect for their labour in the Word and in teaching (cp 1 Thess 5:12-13; 1 Tim 5:17).

However, some may seek this public role for the wrong motivation - for pre-eminence and pride rather than a desire to serve to the glory of God (Num 16:1-3; Matt 15:3-9; 23:5-8; 3 John 9). We must all learn that

although teaching is important, **it is only one way** in which we can serve the body of Christ. Other important duties exist for those who are unable to teach or have abilities in other capacities (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:27-29).

The problem in the time of James was probably partly brought about by the influx of priests converting to the Truth (Acts 6:7). The priests were the religious instructors of the nation (Mal 2:7), used to a life of honour and respect. Their conversion to Christianity would not change their conditioned expectation of receiving these things. The result could have been a number of teachers in the ecclesia who were using their authority unwisely, to the point that James felt an urgent need to rebuke them, as Paul does later on (Rom 16:17-18; Tit 1:9-2:1), an example Peter follows (2 Pet 2:1-2,18), as does John (3 John 9-10) and Jude (Jude 4,8,10,16). The problem has *never been solved*. It still exists today!

When founded on the wrong motivation, the authority of a teacher can easily be abused. See what the following verses say about those who could serve as wrongful or proud teachers in the ecclesia.

Romans 16:17-18	They cause divisions, create obstacles and seek to deceive others
1Tim 1:6-8	They desire to be teachers but make confident assertions about what they don't know.
Titus 1:10-16	They preach myths, professing to know God but do not do His works
2 Peter 2:1-2	They bring in heresies, even denying Christ

Instead, we should look to elect people for speaking duties based on the following characteristics:

1 Tim 4:12-16	_____
2 Tim 2:24-25	_____
Titus 1:9-2:1	_____

LIVING THE WORD



Do you seek to be a teacher? (You do not have to give talks or lead Sunday School or CYC discussions to reflect on this question). If you do, what do you feel are your underlying reasons for teaching and guiding others in the Word? Examine your heart for any traces of pride.

Condemnation: A teacher's greatest responsibility lies in the use of his tongue (cp Matt 12:33-37). He may injure or heal (cp Prov 12:18). He can influence for good (cp 1 Tim 4:12-16; 2 Tim 2:24-26; Tit 2:6-8; 1 Cor 11:1) or for evil (cp Matt 18:6; 1 Tim 1:6-7; 2 Tim 4:1-4; 2 Pet 2:1-2). Any who aspire to be teachers in the ecclesia ought to listen closely to the things which James now writes.



Verse 2: For in many things we offend all.



Diag: "For in many things we all are faulty".

Offend: *ptaio* - to trip, err, stumble, fall. All humans, apart from Christ, sin (cp 1 Kings 8:46; Prov 20:9; Ecc 7:20; Rom 3:23; 1 John 1:8-10). This is emphasised by man's inability to control his tongue. Even Moses had this problem (see Psa 106:32-33).



If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body.

Word: *logos* - reasoning, teaching. Teachers must ensure that they understand and practise what they preach to avoid adverse judgement against them (cp Matt 5:19; 1 Tim 3:1-7; 1 Cor 2:1-5). This also includes teaching the right things at the right time (cp Prov 15:23; Heb 5:11-14; 1 Cor 3:1-2) and learning to refrain from speaking when the words are motivated by evil (cp 1 Pet 3:10).

Perfect: *teleios*. This is the same word as Jam 1:4. Control of the tongue is a mark of maturity (cp 1 Pet 2:21-23; Isa 53:7) and is especially important when teaching the Word that we do not lead ourselves or others astray (2 Pet 3:16). If we teach others nothing but the perfect Word of God, including the hope of glory offered in Christ, then they too will reach spiritual maturity (cp vs 18; Col 1:25-29).

Bridle: *chalinos* - cp Jam 1:26.

If we can control the tongue, then we have gathered sufficient moral strength to control the rest of our carnal impulses (cp vs 3,6). Likewise, mature teachers will be able to bridle the ecclesial body, especially if they have sound doctrine, and know when to administer milk and when to supply meat. Man alone, without the help of God through His Word, is unable to do this (cp vs 8).

The more we mature as a hearer and doer of the Word, the better we will be able to control our tongues. Our tongues reflect our true spiritual condition (cp Matt 12:34). Christ was able to control the tongue through the influence of his Father (cp Isa 50:4; John 7:46; 12:49).

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Is our tongue under control? Are we firmly rooted in the Word so that we can see a biblical and God-centred way ahead in every strife or problem?

3:3-5 | Small things can control large objects

James gives two illustrations of how powerful small things can be in steering larger objects. This power can be used for good or for evil.

Verse 3: Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

Who controls the bridle to turn about the horse?

What do these verses say about horses and bridles?

Job 39:19-25

Psa 32:9

Psa 39:1



Verse 4: Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.



NASB: "Look at the ships too: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are nevertheless directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot determines."

The "governor" is the captain or pilot of the ship, and "listeth" refers to leaning over or to be steered in the desired direction.

Who controls the helm that directs the ship in fierce winds?

Though we can be misguided by “every wind of doctrine” (i.e., false doctrine), we can look to Christ who is our head and captain, who can guide us to sound doctrine (Ephesians 4:14).

Who has control of your mind currently?

Who should have the control of your mind?

In Isaiah 50:4, we see that Christ was woken morning by morning by the word of his Father, so that he could learn to speak with the tongue of the learned and know how to speak to those in need. God also taught him to listen and not to answer back when others mocked or provoked him (v5-6). As 1 Peter 2:21-23 says, we are called to follow in his footsteps. We should let our minds be filled with Christ’s teachings and his examples which will mean that Christ is at the helm, controlling and directing our thoughts and therefore, our tongues.



Verse 5: Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things.

Tongue: The tongue is generally described as a tool for evil (cp Job 15:5; Isa 3:8; Jer 9:3-9; Rom 3:13-14). It has the power of life and death (cp Prov 18:21; Matt 12:36-37).

Little member: The tongue is not even noticed until someone speaks.

Boasteth great things: *megalaucheo* - suggests haughty speech which stirs up strife. The tongue boasts constantly but leaves it up to the other members of the body to carry out its boasts. The rest of the body becomes tired in performing the work, but the tongue continues to boast. Speaking great things is a characteristic of the apostasy (cp Psa 73:8-9; Dan 7:8,11,20,25; 11:36; Rev 13:5; 2 Pet 2:18; Jude 16; cp Rev 16:13-14). It was the serpent's use of the tongue that encouraged sin initially (cp Gen 3:1-5). God hates boasting of any sort (cp Psa 10:3; 12:2-4).

In both of James' illustrations there is a force controlling the small thing (a rider controls the bit; the governor decides which way the rudder will turn). Likewise, it is the mind that controls the movements of the tongue. We must remember that our speech comes from our hearts (Matt 12:34-35; cp Jam 1:26). If the teachers control their tongues for good, then the whole body will follow.



Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!



RSV: “How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!”

Matter: *hule* - wood, forest, fuel. Representative of the ecclesia - composed of “the planting of the Lord” (cp Jam 1:18,21).

Fire: A destructive influence, see vs 6.

Kindleth: See Luke 12:49.

Speech has been used to stir up crowds to do good and evil. Teachers especially can influence the Ecclesia by their words. A careless word or comment can be the cause of terrible destruction to others. Many years of labour can be destroyed in an instant, and often the person causing the carnage is supremely unaware that it is they who ignited it (just like the notorious Australian bushfires).

Proverbs 18:21 tells us that “death and life are in the power of the tongue”. Our words clearly have consequences.

Find examples in Scripture where speech has been used for good or for evil. For each of your examples, note down the consequence, whether good or evil, of their speech (Hint: Genesis is always a good place to start).

Quote	Situation	Good or Evil	Consequence

Human nature tends to remember the bad things said to us, and years later, even though a person might have forgiven the offender for their hurtful words, they still sometimes remember the ill thoughts.

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See Prov 12:18. Can you think of any times when you may have offended someone due to rash or thoughtless words? Can you think of times when you had the opportunity to say something good, but didn't? Have either of these things happened to you? How did you feel when they said what they did, or failed to say anything? How do others feel when you do the same to them?

3:6-8 | The tongue is a dangerous force

Verse 6: And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

There are two parallel ideas about the tongue in this verse. These can be seen in the box below:

A fire	is	A world (a microcosm) of
set on fire by hell		iniquity
(which) setteth on fire		which defileth
the wheel of nature		the whole body

The flow of this verse is easier to understand if brackets are inserted, so that it reads like this: "And the tongue is a fire (a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body), and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell".

The tongue is a fire: We see in the following quotes that fire is likened both to the evil use of words and to something else:

Prov 16:27

Prov 26:20-21

Jer 20:9

Jer 23:29

Acts 2:3

We can see here how the tongue can be used in a positive way when motivated by the spirit, and negatively when it is driven by the flesh.

World: *kosmos* - arrangement - expressive of magnitude and variety. Unrestrained, the tongue is an environment of evil. It is a microcosm of unrighteousness, because unrestricted, no element of evil is absent from it. James' brother Jude likens the fleshly world to a defiling fire (Jude 23).

Iniquity: *adikia* - injustice, wrongfulness. Unfortunately, expressions of the tongue cannot always be taken at face value. Sometimes things are said (for example - in anger, or in flattery) that are not meant, or that are simply not right, and so some discernment is necessary (cp Ecc 7:21-22). We need to engage the spiritual part of our brain before we open our mouths.



So is the tongue among our members: - "The tongue is so set among our members" (NKJV). This applies both personally and ecclesially. The ecclesia, as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27) has many members, each with their own role which God has appointed (1 Cor 12:18). It is wrong to seek roles to which we are not physically or mentally constituted. In the body of Christ, the speaker (the tongue) bears a great responsibility because of his influential position - thus the warning in vs 1. Speakers have the power to sway opinions, so we need to speak carefully, and for those of us who are listening to have a Berean spirit in hearing and discerning (Acts 17:11). Sadly, incorrect doctrines have been introduced by brethren who have gone astray.

Defileth: *spiloo* - to stain, spoil, spot. A corrupt mind is outwardly manifested in the defiling of the body using the tongue (cp Mark 7:20-23). An undisciplined tongue can stain characters and bring disrepute to the whole body of Christ (cp Jude 23 with Psa 106:32-33).

The whole body: Note the repetition and train of thought of this term:

vs 2 - "control of the tongue" - "bridle the body"

vs 3 - "hold the reigns" - "turn the body"

vs 6 - "lose control" - "stain the body"

Course of nature: "course" - *trochos* - wheel, cycle, circuit, "nature" - *genesis* (1078) - generation (cp Matt 1:1). James is referring to the cycle of man's existence. The damage (or help) done by the tongue may have serious repercussions. It may drive someone away from the Truth (or keep them there), so affecting not only the individual directly involved, but also the rest of their family down to the generation that could have been (or is) in the Truth when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. Truly, we hold the power of life and death in our tongues (Prov 18:21; cp vs 18).

Hell: *geenna* - or 'gehenna'. This is the place where the apostate kings of Judah made their sacrifices (cp 2 Kings 23:10; Jer 7:31; 19:5-6). It became the constantly burning rubbish dump for Jerusalem. Being identified with defilement, disease and death, it was used figuratively for the judgement seat of Christ (cp Matt 5:22; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 12:5). So surely is it destined for judgement for having these filthy characteristics, that James describes the natural tongue as being set alight by the flames of Gehenna in which it will end (compare the stories of Num 11:1-3; 16:1-3,35; Psa 106:18).

The use of the tongue to express false impressions, envy, jealousy, wrath and other such emotions can turn a person's whole life into a destructive force that leaps out and devours those around them. That force is to be judged at the judgement seat (cp Matt 12:36-37). James is to consider this "wisdom" in vs 14-16.

Verse 7: For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

Beasts: *therion* (2342).



There are five words used for "beast" in the New Testament. Look them up in Vine's and write down what the significance is of James choosing this word.

Tamed: Compare Gen 1:28; 9:2.

Mankind: *physis anthropinos* - "nature of man" (mg) in contrast to "the nature (kind) of beasts". Man is able to tame the nature of animals due to his superior ability of the mind (cp Gen 1:26), but if he lacks knowledge of God, or fails to bring his mind into conformity with God's will, he becomes worse than the most brutish of beasts (Psa 92:6; Jer 10:14; 2 Pet 2:12; Jude 10).

Verse 8: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

But the tongue can no man tame: James seems very harsh in saying that the tongue is an unruly evil that no man can tame - it seems very final and resigned. But that does not mean we can sin freely with our tongue (Rom 6:1,15). There is hope! God can tame our tongue, but we must surrender to him.

We must:

1. Put the flesh to death; and
2. Live for God.

This process is shown clearly in Romans 6:11-12; 8:7,13; Galatians 5:16-24. This is how we learn to follow in Christ's footsteps. We need to be conscious that we are living for God by Living the Word, and not for our own selfish reasons. This is the only way that we can start to use our tongue for good. It all comes back to our motivation. When we are living for God, our pride is put in its place. Wanting to speak badly of something or someone else to make ourselves feel better no longer appeals as we are now focused on showing Godly characteristics.

Unruly: *akataschetos* - unrestrainable, restless (cp Jam 1:8). It always wants to speak without restraint.

Poison: Cp Gen 3:1-5; Psa 58:4; 140:3; Rom 3:13-14; 2 Cor 11:3-4. Like the serpent, the tongue is hidden, ready to bite any who disturb it (cp Ecc 10:11).

3:9-12 | Inconsistencies of speech unacceptable

Having shown the nature of the tongue, James next shows that we cannot be satisfied with half an effort to control it. "A man cannot serve two masters". We must be single-minded.



Verse 9: Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

Bless: *eulogeo* - to thank, praise, speak well of.

God, even the Father: It is a basic principle that like produces like (cp Gen 1:11,21,24). We should be manifesting His character after His kind (cp vs 11-12; Jam 1:17-18).

Curse: How inconsistent it is to praise God, and then curse His children.

What do these references say about our relationship with others?

Matt 5:22-24


Matt 5:44

Rom 12:14

1 Pet 3:9

1 John 4:19-21

Similitude: *homoiosis* - resemblance, likeness - denotes mental capacity (cp Gen 1:26; 1 Cor 11:7). If we understand this then it will be a restraining influence in our speech, especially as we are endeavouring to develop His moral image (cp 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:1-17).

 **Verse 10: Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.**

My brethren: This is a tender appeal from James, rather than condemnation. His rebuke is made more powerful by his restraint (he is outworking the very principles he is expounding).

These things ought not so to be: A man made to reflect the moral and mental character of God should not show results that are out of character with that purpose (cp Prov 10:31-32).

James now gives three illustrations from the natural world to show how inconsistent human nature is with creation.

Verse 11: Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?



Fountain: *pege* - "the fountain" (Diag, RV, Roth). This is descriptive of God (see Jer 2:13; 17:13; Psa 36:9); Christ (see John 4:10) and the believers (see John 4:14; 7:38). Fountains are also used to describe corrupt sources (see Jer 6:7).

Bitter: Even a bitter tasting fountain can be changed to sweetness by the power of the spirit of God (see Exo 15:23-25; 2 Kings 2:19-22).

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We may feel that our relationship with God is fine, and that our attitude to our brethren is of no great significance (vs 9). However, praise to God is worth nothing if we do not care for our brethren (Jam 1:27), and if our praise is driven from human emotion rather than being motivated by the refreshing sweet water of the Word (Prov 25:25).

Verse 12: Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

James then illustrates to us that this inconsistency is not found in nature. He echoes the words of Jesus in Luke 6:43-45 (cp Matt 7:16-20; 12:32-37) - a good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit and vice versa. This is a huge warning to us. Are we filling our hearts with God's word so that we may heed and do His commands? This is vital because we need to produce fruits that are acceptable to Him.



Diag: "Neither can a salt spring produce sweet water".

Despite James telling us that we ought only to use our tongue for good, so often we also use it for evil (vs 10).




In Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the words "tongue", "lips" and "mouth" are used synonymously and are used to show both the positive and negative attributes of our speech. Read some of the verses in the Psalms and Proverbs that spring out of the page to you. You can see what strong language the scripture uses to describe the foolishness and destructiveness of our speech when used for evil.

3:13-18 | WISDOM: BELOW AND ABOVE

Having dealt with the fundamental problem of the tongue, James now addresses those who want to teach. True wisdom is shown in a peaceful way of life, not through strife or division.

3:13 | Wisdom shown in way of life

True teachers will display their wisdom by their actions and not by the tongue. Their works will declare where their wisdom comes from (cp Matt 7:17-27; 5:16).

 **Verse 13: Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.**

As we saw in James 1:5, true wisdom comes from God. However, to obtain that wisdom, we must ask for it in faith and humility.

Look up the meanings for the following words. We have also included some related quotes that you may wish to put in your margin.

Word	Meaning	Cross reference
Wise		Dan 2:21; Psa 107:43; Matt 7:24
Endued		Prov 3:13
Knowledge		Prov 4:5-7, 9:10
Conversation		Jam 2:14-18; Phil 1:27; 1 Tim 4:12
Works		Matt 5:16; Jam 2:18; Eph 2:10
Meekness		Jam 1:21; Eph 4:1-2

Now that we understand more of what these words mean, try to rewrite this verse in your own words.

James is possibly drawing some of his thoughts from Jeremiah 9:12, 23-24 (ESV):

'Who is the man so wise that he can understand this? To whom has the mouth of the LORD spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land ruined and laid waste like a wilderness, so that no one passes through? ... Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD."

We must not boast in our own glory, knowledge or strength. Instead, God wants us to boast in our understanding and knowledge of God himself. It is only by coming to know and understand God that we experience God's lovingkindness, His justice and His righteousness. We then seek to reflect it in our lives in humility, knowing God delights in those who manifest his character. Humility, not pride, is vital to do God's work.

Our wisdom and knowledge should be seen in our way of life to the glory of God (Ecc 8:1-5). However, it is so easy to become motivated by human pride and the praise of others rather than the work of furthering God's message. This becomes particularly relevant when we become involved in the work of the Truth, as wrong attitudes can develop by comparing our work with that of others rather than seeking that God be glorified. James is saying that true wisdom must be associated with a meek spirit (cp Prov 11:2; 8:11-13; Jer 9:12,23-24; compare Christ's example - Matt 11:29; Luke 22:26-27; Phil 2:3-8).



Verse 14: But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth.



RSV: "But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth".

Envying: *zelos* - zeal, jealousy (cp vs 16; 4:2; Prov 14:30; 27:4; 1 Cor 3:3; 13:4; Rom 13:13; Gal 5:15,21,26).

Strife: *eritheia* - faction, angry contention, desire to put oneself forward, seeking to win followers (cp vs 16; Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 3:3; Gal 5:20). The way to overcome this is by meekness (vs 13; Phil 2:3; Tit 3:13).

Competition and rivalry among the self-appointed teachers were creating bitter division within the ecclesias. This was the source of their problems. They were motivated by their flesh (cp 2 Cor 12:20; Phil 1:14-17). This leads to personality conflicts and ecclesial factions (cp 1 Cor 1:10-17; 3:3-4; 1 Tim 6:3-5). If it happened at the time when the guidance of the apostles was still available, how much more should we be wary of it in these days!

Glory: *katakauchaomai* - to boast, rejoice against.

Lie: *pseudomai* - to utter an untruth or attempt to deceive by falsehood (cp Psa 66:3). There were people in the ecclesia who only pretended to be part of the Truth, and who went around spreading discord (probably Judaistic infiltrators).

Truth: This term is used to include all elements of the gospel in doctrine, principle and practice, and this is the way we use it today (i.e., we have accepted "the Truth"). God is the God of truth (Isa 65:16), Christ himself is "the truth" (John 14:6; Eph 4:21), and John uses the term in a general sense (1 John 1:6; 3:19; 2 John 1; 3 John 1,8,12). These men were contravening all the principles of the gospel of salvation and destroying the very Truth they were claiming to teach (cp Rom 1:21-32).

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This selfish ambition is easily seen as pride. Often pride can cause us to boast from our own knowledge and lead us to defend a position that may be false, because we feel, "I am right, and they are wrong". Remember that we are begotten by the word of truth (Jam 1:18). By maintaining a false argument, we are not acting according to the word of truth that has given us life in Christ! We must learn to look into the word of truth and examine ourselves where we might be wrong (Jam 1:25)!



Verse 15: This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

This wisdom descendeth not from above: Their wisdom was actually from 'hell' below (vs 6), yet they were claiming that it was from above (cp Rom 1:21-22). This is the wisdom of the flesh.

Look up the following quotes and note them in your margin. What do they say about the wisdom of man:

- Jer 4:22 _____
- 1 Cor 3:3 _____
- 2 Cor 1:12 _____
- Gal 5:19-21 _____
- Phil 3:18-19 _____



See *Elpis Israel*, Pg 93-101 ("The Carnal Mind") for more information on the "thinking of the flesh".

Sensual: *psuchikos* - base passions of animal nature, soulish - the antithesis of the Spirit (cp Jude 19; Rom 7:5-6; 1 Cor 2:14; Heb 4:12; 1 Pet 1:22).

Devilish: *daimoniodes* - madness. They were acting like demoniacs who cause strife and contention (cp Jam 2:19). Later, these same demonic people who spoke lies (cp vs 14) and hypocrisy (cp vs 17) - and who, in the days of James were known as Judaizers (Acts 15:1-2) but whose seducing spirit later became associated with the Catholics - would depart from the Truth, and lead others astray also (cp 1 Tim 4:1-3). This same unclean mad spirit is present in our world today and is the cause of many who stray from the Truth.

The increasing force of these descriptions shows that in stark contrast to what Paul would do, these teachers were sinking lower and lower in their wisdom to become as wise as madmen (cp 1 Cor 14:23) and no better than the wise of this world (cp 1 Cor 1:10 - 2:16; 3:18-21).



Verse 16: For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.



Diag: "For where rivalry and strife are, there disorder is, and every vile deed".

Confusion: Agitation and an unsettling atmosphere exist when this wisdom of below prevails. No one believes that they can trust another, and suspicion hinders unity. God is not the God of confusion (1 Cor 14:33).

James reiterates that envy destroys relationships. In James' day, the Judaizers were those who envied Christ and his ecclesia. They tried to infiltrate the ecclesia and manifested these same qualities (Acts 13:45,50; 17:5). They created confusion and evil. However, like Joseph's brothers, their envy could not harm Joseph like they wanted it to (Acts 7:9), because God was with him. The same thing happened to Christ (Mark 15:10; Acts 2:22-24, 36).

3:17-18 | Attributes of wisdom from above

The teachers had been exposed for what they really were. Now James presents the ideal to strive for. The fire, bitterness, strife, envy and confusion are contrasted with peace, gentleness, meekness, love and unity (cp Gal 5:22-26).



Verse 17: But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

But the wisdom that is from above: It is not until we are born from above (cp John 3:3) that we can possess God's wisdom (cp Jam 1:17-18). It is gained by asking God for it (cp Jam 1:5). (See 1 Cor 2:6-16).

Pure: *hagnos* - chaste, clean, pure from defilement (cp 2 Cor 11:2). The Truth is intrinsically pure and is purifying in its influence (cp Psa 19:7-9; Prov 30:5; 1 John 3:3). It comes from a single-minded source. It cannot be adulterated with the world's wisdom (cp Jam 4:4) - only a double-minded man can be (cp Jam 4:8).

Peaceable: *eirenikos* - from a root word meaning "to be at one" (cp Prov 3:13,17; Rom 12:18; Heb 12:14). It is equivalent to the Hebrew word "shalom". Those who are peaceable do not need to strive or be envious because they are confident that the wisdom they have is pure. True peace cannot be obtained without purity first (cp Heb 7:2; Isa 32:17; Matt 5:8-9).

Gentle: *epieikes* - appropriate, moderate, reasonable, forbearing, patient. It is a quality showing an even-tempered attitude in the extremes of life (cp Phil 4:5; 1 Tim 3:3; Tit 3:2; 2 Cor 10:1; 1 Thess 2:7; 2 Tim 2:24). Having purity and peaceableness means that we are able to gently lead others (not strive with them).



Easy to be entreated: *eupieithes* - compliant, persuadable, "open to reason" (RSV). True wisdom will win its way by gentleness, which characterises the person whose simple motive is the triumph of the Truth and not personality or self-vindication. Those with these qualities show meekness and are willing servants.

Mercy: *eleos* - pity, compassion. This is the outworking to others of God's mercy to us (cp Eph 2:4; Tit 3:5; Matt 9:13; 12:7; 23:23; Luke 10:36-37; Jam 2:12-13). Those with wisdom from above are conscious that all fall short of God's glory, including themselves.

Good: *agathos* - beneficial. The word denotes intrinsic goodness.

Fruits: Good fruits are the proof that the wisdom is from a good tree (cp vs 11-12; John 15:4-5; cp Gal 5:22-23; Eph 5:9; Phil 1:11; Col 1:10; contrast Jude 12). The quality of fruit depends on the water that the tree drinks and the amount of exposure to the sun (cp Jam 1:17-18). All those who fail to bring forth good fruit will suffer the same fate as the destructive tongue (cp vs 6; Matt 3:10-12).

Without partiality: *adiakritos* - a cognate word, meaning both "without uncertainty" (RSV), doubting or wavering (Jam 1:6), and without division, bias or prejudice (Jam 2:4; 1 Tim 5:21).

Without hypocrisy: *anupokritos* - sincere. He is not play-acting a role (cp Psa 55:21; Isa 32:6; Matt 23:3,28; Luke 12:1-2; 1 Pet 2:1-2; 1 John 3:18). Actors may fool men, but they never deceive God (Heb 4:12-13).

Using a concordance and other study aids, find quotations that show that Christ possessed these attributes of wisdom from above.

Attribute:	References:
(Wisdom)	
Pure	
Peaceable	
Gentle	
Easy to be entreated	
Mercy	
Good fruits/works	
Without uncertainty/division	
Without hypocrisy	

The lovely characteristics listed here may be intended as a set of deliberate contrasts with those already repudiated earlier in the chapter.

James 3:17	James 3
Pure	Defiling (vs 6)
Peaceable	Strife (vs 14)
Gentle	Hurtful, violent, destructive (vs 6, 8)
Easy to be entreated (meek)	Untameable, unruly (proud) (vs 8)
Full of mercy	Cursing (vs 9)
And good fruits	Evil work (vs 16)
Without uncertainty/division	Both blessing and cursing (vs 10)
Without hypocrisy	At the same place sweet and bitter (vs 11)



Verse 18: And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

Fruit of righteousness: We reap what we sow (cp Gal 6:7-8; Prov 11:18; Hos 10:12-13).

The fruit of righteousness will only develop if:

1. The seed of the Word is sown (cp Luke 8:11,15; Rom 10:8-10; 1 Pet 1:23)
2. It is watered by the washing of the Word (cp Jam 5:7,18; Eph 5:26; John 4:13-14)
3. It ripens by the power of the sun (cp Jam 1:17; Mal 4:2)

The fruit of righteousness is the result of manifesting wisdom from above. It is God who gives the increase (cp 1 Cor 3:6; 2 Cor 9:10).

Sown: *speiro* - to scatter. Compare this section of James 3 with the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13.

In peace: These fruits will only be produced if they are sown in the right ground (cp Matt 13:3-8). Unity needs to be established with God and our brethren (cp Mark 9:50; 2 Cor 13:11; 1 Thess 5:13; Rom 12:18). This is in contrast to vs 14-16.

Make peace: Blessed are the peace makers, not the peace promoters (cp Matt 5:9; Psa 34:14). The Greek indicates that this is a continual action. Peace must be maintained.

Notice that it is the FRUIT of righteousness that is sown, not the SEED of righteousness. Seed for the next harvest comes from fruit that is ploughed back into the ground. The fruit of righteousness is a person manifesting the character of God in his thought, speech and actions. New life will be brought about through the wise use and bridling of the tongue (Rom 10:8-10; 1 Pet 3:10). This is what a true teacher will be doing. His fruit will be sown back again into an environment of peace, bringing forth further fruit. This is the work of a teacher (cp Gal 6:9-10). Christ, the ultimate teacher, taught the peace of God to all who heard him during his life (Acts 10:34-38), then passed this peace on to his disciples (John 14:27), so that if they continued in him, they too would bring forth the fruit of righteousness (John 15:1-6). A person who makes peace will have his fruit increase in a peaceful environment until the ultimate fruit is harvested - eternal life (Prov 11:30; John 4:36).

Chapter Four

In the Sight of the Lord

4:1-10 | CONTENTION VERSUS HUMILITY

4:1-5 | Cause of contentions

Having identified the striving and envy amongst the teachers (in contrast to the peace of Godly wisdom), James now reaches the climax of his condemnation; revealing that his readers had not been sowing the fruit of righteousness in peace (Jam 3:18; cp also Jam 1:20) but rather that they were in a constant state of war, and that their whole attitude and behaviour was caused by their friendship with the world, thus making themselves enemies of God (and therefore not true children). Notice this time he does not use the term, "My brethren", in order to emphasise his denunciation.

Verse 1: From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?



Wey: "What causes wars and contentions among you? Is it not the cravings which are ever at war within you for various pleasures?"

What are some of the common conflicts or contentions within in CYC or the ecclesia? What are often the causes?

Conflict	Cause
We can tend to gossip about other people	Sharing in gossip can come from wanting there to be drama in other people's lives so your own life feels just a little bit better

Wars: *polemos* - warfare. Thayer's describes this as a "dispute, strife, quarrel". This word denotes "contentions" varying in degrees from verbal controversy to open warfare (cp Matt 24:6; 1 Cor 14:8). This word is used throughout the book of Revelation for literal wars (cp Rev 9:7; 11:7; 12:7; 17:14 etc.).

The Ecclesia was reflecting the turmoil that was happening between the Jews and the Romans. Among the Jews also, there were many factions and great hostility between them. This had obviously rubbed off on the believers, so that a similar spirit had been manifested by them. The submissiveness demanded of Christ's followers is often overlooked in times of strife, as the battle turns from seeking one another's good to a battle of "each for their own" (cp 1 Cor 10:24).

Fightings: *mache* - a battle, striving, controversy. This word is mainly used for verbal disputes (cp John 6:52; 2 Tim 2:23-25; Tit 3:9). Fighting should not have been within the ecclesia but rather kept outside of it (2 Cor 7:5). But as we are likely aware, it is almost impossible.

LIVING THE WORD

There is a time to contend for the faith (cp Jude 3) but only because of faith, not fleshly motives. In defending the faith, one is fighting for God and not for self, therefore the conduct of such warfare must be in a manner He would approve of (cp 2 Cor 10:3-6; Eph 6:10-18).

Lusts: *hedone* - noun: pleasures, (sensual) delights - used again in vs 3 and rendered 'pleasure' in Luke 8:14 and Titus 3:3; see also Psalm 62:10. The worldly pleasures of pride and self-esteem had preoccupied the Ecclesia and this was the actual thing that they lusted after (vs 2).



War: *strateuomai* - to serve in a military campaign. "Taking the field in your members" (Roth). Paul and Peter use the same metaphor for the individual contests between the flesh and the spirit (cp Rom 7:23; 1 Pet 2:11). The Ecclesia was allowing the flesh to fight for them instead of allowing the spirit of Christ to reign over all the brethren and sisters. It is only through Christ that we can overcome such battles (cp Rom 7:24-25), for he has already overcome the world (John 16:33), and it is through faith in him that we can do the same (1 John 5:4).

The question James asks is: "From whence" - i.e. from "above" (3:17-18) or from below "earthy" (3:14-16)? The answer, as he goes on to say, is from your lusts, which are from "below", as are the thorns in the parable of the sower. The cares and riches and pleasures (same word - *hedone*) choke the good seed and bring forth no fruit to perfection (Luke 8:14).

Verse 2: Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.



RSV: "You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and wage war".

Lust: *epithumeo* - verb: to set the heart upon, that is, long for (rightfully or otherwise), covet, desire, lust (after). The noun form of this word is "*epithumia*" (1939) - it is used in Jam 1:14-15 and 1 John 2:16-17. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life had caused them to lust after the pleasures of the world. This is also the spirit of the last days (2 Tim 3:1-7). The believers desired riches and pre-eminence. They should rather have acted with the spirit of Paul who coveted no man's possessions, but rather looked for an inheritance in the future, while supporting the weak in the present (Acts 20:32-36; see also 1 Tim 6:17-19).

And ye have not: God had not answered their requests (vs 3). They had prayed for Him to fulfil their material desires and He had rightly refused. This frustrated desire causes a jealous spirit.

We are exhorted to make our requests known to God (cp Phil 4:6) but there are certain conditions. Look up these quotes to find out what these conditions are:

Psa 37:21-24:

Matthew 21:21-22:

James 1:5-8:

What would be the true desires of our heart if we delighted in God? Compare these with your usual motives in prayer to God.

Kill: *phoneuo* - to be a murderer. From the context (vs 1-3) the word seems most likely to be literal as all James' phrases suggest actual violence (either physically or verbally). Contrast this with the clearly figurative interpretation of "adulteresses" in vs 4. This is not to say that murder was common in the Ecclesia - it would only take one incident to justify James' language. The source of their trouble came from their frustrated personal desires, causing jealousy for another's possessions, and given the opportunity, the ultimate result will eventuate (cp Cain - Gen 4:8; see Prov 1:19; Isa 59:1-14).

Violence is common for mankind (cp Mark 15:7; Acts 21:38; Gal 5:15,19-21). These vices had been brought into the Ecclesia (cp David - 2 Sam 11:15; cp 1 Pet 4:15). They should rather have "crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal 5:24), instead of killing their brethren.

Desire to have: *zeloo*. Strong's definition states, "to have a warm feeling for or against, (from a root word "zelos" - zeal), covet, be jealous over."



Thayer's and the Diaglott however has much more emphasis. Look up the words in the Diaglott translation and in Thayers Greek Dictionary.

Diaglott: _____

Thayers: _____

Obtain: *epitugchano* - to chance upon, that is, (by implication) attain.

This word is only used in 3 other places elsewhere. Using blueletterbible.org, look up the occasions. What should they have been seeking after and trying to obtain?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Covetousness (desiring what others have) was another cause of the Ecclesia's problems. They not only lusted for the things they did not possess, but foolishly, things that were beyond their reach. They forgot the great joy, benefit and incredible riches to be discovered in Christ. They forgot he who "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor" (2 Cor 8:9; cp vs 1-5).

In their efforts to satisfy their fleshly desires, the Ecclesia had become a quarrelling, ruthless battlefield. We need to take heed to Christ's warning in Luke 12:15 and be content with what we have (cp Phil 4:11; 1 Tim 6:6-8; Heb 13:5). God will provide for our needs (cp Matt 6:31-34). We need to focus our desire on being rich in faith (cp Jam 2:5) otherwise we will find ourselves worse off (cp 1 Tim 6:9-12). Faith is necessary to recognise the real purpose in life, to realise how temporary and limited are the things of the present, and how eternal and glorious are those things of the Truth's future (2 Cor 4:18). It makes a reality of hope. It has the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim 4:8; see also Rom 8:24-25; 2 Cor 6:10). Notice that the men and women of Hebrews 11 had little of this world's goods (vs 36-37), but of them it is declared: "of them the world was not worthy" (vs 38).

Verse 3: Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

Ye ask: James anticipates their reply that they have already asked in prayer. They did engage in prayer, but not in the correct manner, nor with the correct motivation.

Receive: *lambano* - to take, to get hold of (what is given). This is the same word as in Jam 1:7. Their prayers were not made in the right spirit (cp Psa 66:18-19).

Amis: *kakos* - badly, diseased, miserably, sick - translated also as "evil, harm, wicked". This fittingly describes the state of their prayer (cp Isa 59:1-2). Their prayers were selfish and iniquitous because, though asking God, they had judged His character by asking for their wants with evil intent. It was for their self-indulgence, and they thought that He was there to provide all their desires.

LIVING THE WORD



A prayer must be given according to the will of Christ (1 John 5:14) and through his name (John 14:12-14). We must pray that we can try to live in the spirit of his life and therefore keep the principles of the Truth. A prayer not acknowledging God's Will, not given in the name of Christ, nor given by a person trying to live as he did, is a hypocritical prayer and will not be answered. However, sometimes God will give us what we ask, with disastrous results (cp Psa 81:12; 106:14-15; Eze 14:1-8).

There was no thought of glorifying God (cp John 14:13; 1 John 3:22). Had they studied the Lord's Prayer, they would have known the essentials of a good prayer that would please God. Instead, they chose to do it their way, like Cain.

LIVING THE WORD



The ideal prayer would be, "Not my will but Thine be done" (Luke 22:42). How often do we pray asking for what we most desire, without taking into consideration that God knows what is best for us?

Compare Christ's prayer in Luke 22:42. What are the things that God wants us to pray for (cp 1 John 5:14-15)?

The above situation of vs 1-3 is what happens when there is only wisdom of judgement and not the wisdom of meekness. It leads on to the next verse - the outcome of such a situation is adultery.



Verse 4: Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.



RV: "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God".

Adulteresses: James is showing that they have become the defiled bride of Christ (cp 2 Cor 11:2-3; Eph 5:22-32; Rev 19:7; cp Israel - Jer 2:2-3,31-37; ch 3; Ezek 16; 23:1-21; Hos 2:1-3). The bitterness and antagonism that adultery causes in a marriage, is indicative of the feelings Yahweh has towards His people when they prove unfaithful. The believers were requesting something that had been prompted from another "husband" - the 'world'. Whyever did they think that God would grant them that??

Christ also spoke of this kind of request in Matthew 12:39-40 where the 'evil and adulterous generation' asked for a sign from God, but none was given. The punishment for adultery under the law was death (Lev 20:10). This will also be the fate of those who are unfaithful to Christ in his absence.

Friendship: *philia* - fondness. From "*philos*" (5384) - dear, friend - actively fond, friendly. This is spiritual adultery. Christ showed what our position with regards to the world should be (John 15:18-19, cp vs 15; cp Jam 2:23).

Can you think of Bible characters who chose friendship of the world over God? What was/will be the end result?

Character	Result

World: *kosmos* - arrangement. This is what the world stands for, its organisation, policies, and beliefs (cp 1 John 2:15-17; John 17:14).

Enmity: *echthra* - hostility (cp Rom 8:7-8; see Gen 3:15). This is a battle that began at the very foundation of the world between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and has continued down through the ages.



See *Elpis Israel*, Pgs 135-146 - "Constitution of Sin" and "Constitution of Righteousness". The Ecclesia was going back to its old constitution. Compare Demas (2 Tim 4:10).

Enemy: *echthros* - hateful, adversary. We cannot serve two masters (cp Matt 6:24; Rom 6:12-13; 8:8; Gal 5:17).

In today's environment, what does it mean to have friendship with the world? Why is it at enmity with God?



"God and the world are sworn enemies. Hence to be 'the friend of the world is to be the enemy of God'. No one who is on God's side can be a friend of the world; he will entirely disrelish the world, and the world will heartily hate him. This arises from mutual incompatibility." - Bro. John Thomas (quoted in *Logos*, April 1944, pg 198)

Verse 5: Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain,



Diag: "Or do you suppose that the Scripture speaks falsely?" (cp RV, Roth).

The Greek is better rendered as a question referring to the previous point concerning the enmity between God and the world (cp Diag, RV, Roth). James asks the believers if they thought that the Scripture had no purpose in stating the principle, that God's children should be hostile towards the world (cp Gen 3:15; Rom 8:7). The answer of course is that there **was** a purpose. The world does not want to manifest God's character and will not bring glory to His name. Far from being the world's friend, we should not have anything to do with its motivation and activities, but rather look to the time when it will be crushed in the head. The principle is emphasised throughout Scripture by the call to separate from the world and unto God (cp 2 Cor 6:14 - 7:1; Rom 12:2; 1 Pet 2:9). The believers were acting as if they didn't believe God's Word to be true. They were not DOING the Word because they hadn't HEARD or understood it (Jam 1:22).

In Deuteronomy 17:28-20, a king was commanded to copy out his own copy of the Law and read it all the days of his life. Why? So that he might "learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this Law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left..." (vs 19-20). If the believers in James' day had done likewise, they would not have had the issues they were having.

The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?



Diag: "Does the spirit that dwells in us strongly incline to envy?"

Dwelleth: *katoikeo* - to house permanently, reside.

Lusteth: *epipotheo* - intensely crave, long for, desire.

Envy: *phthonos* - ill-will, jealousy, "envy, is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others; this evil sense always attaches to this word (cp Matt 27:18; Mark 15:10; Rom 1:29; Gal 5:21; Phil 1:15; 1 Tim 6:4; Tit 3:3; 1 Pet 2:1).

The answer to this second question is another resounding “no!”. James’ point is this: Surely we know that there IS enmity between God and the world. And the spirit of God does not envy or lust like our flesh does!

The believers were acting inconsistently with their calling by manifesting the spirit of the world (and they had blamed God for it! - cp Jam 1:13). The spirit of God and the spirit of man were at war within their members. God had caused the enmity (“I will put enmity” - Gen 3:15), therefore we must fight to resist the devil as God has done (cp vs 7) and then bring ourselves back to our God walking humbly before Him (Mic 6:8).

4:6-10 | Solution is to submit to God

Having highlighted where we go wrong, James now shows us the process that we need to undergo to correct our relationship with our Father. God's way is far more satisfying than what the world can offer. He will oppose those who are proud and refuse to submit to Him, but will exalt those who humble themselves and seek the means to rid the spirit of the world from their lives.

Verse 6: But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

But: This is a point of contrast with the last statement. God’s spirit instead bestows grace to him who humbly returns to Him.

Grace: *charis* - favour, liberality. This answers the question of vs 5. Rather than lusting to the point of envy, the spirit of Godliness develops grace within us. Not only does it give true satisfaction in this life, but also in the life to come.



Wherefore He saith: “Therefore it is said” (Diag) - “It” being the Scriptures (this is a quote from Prov 3:34).

Resisteth: *antitassomai* - to range in battle against, oppose (this is a military term - cp vs 1-2).



Proud: *huperephanos* - “showing one's self above others, with an over-weening (arrogant) estimate of one's means or merits” (Grimm-Thayer). Pride only leads to shame (cp Prov 11:2). God will not force His affection where He is not welcome or loved.

Grace: Same word as above. Though He will fight the proud, God will give grace to those who turn to Him, but on one condition: they must come forward to Him in humility (Psa 10:12-18).

Humble: *tapeinos* - depressed, humiliated. Thayer’s states: “brought low with grief... lowly in spirit” (see Isa 66:2; 2 Chron 32:24-26).

This is a quote (according to the Septuagint version) from Prov 3:34 (cp 1 Pet 5:5-6). God opposes those who are too proud to leave the world (cp Prov 16:5,18-19), hence James' readers were not receiving what they sought (cp vs 1-3). But those who humbled themselves would be blessed by God with His Divine favour (cp Isa 57:15; Matt 23:12). Notice that God's favour is not given indiscriminately. There is a need to submit to His will in humility. When a person does this, God will extend Himself to assist those who seek His help.

What are ways in which we can become humble? How should we show this humility to God, in the ecclesia and in the world?

Can you think of any character that manifested this trait? Can you think of anyone who didn't? What were the results in each case?

Humble character:		Result:
Proud character:		Result:



Verse 7: Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Submit: *hypotasso* - to rank under - thus to endorse the higher status of the one above and submit to the discipline and orders he commands. This is a military term.

What does God command us to do in the battle of faith?

Romans 6:11-13

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Ephesians 6:10-18

1 Tim 1:18

In contrast with submission to human authority, submission to God shows strength of faith. It involves the rejection of our servitude to sin (cp Rom 6:16-19; see also 1 Pet 5:5-11). We are commanded to “depart from evil and to do good” (see Psa 34:13-15,18; 37:27; Isa 1:16-17; Eph 4:27-28; 1 Thess 5:21-22).

Resist: *anthistemi* - to stand against, oppose - another military term. The only way to overcome our lusts is to view them as a bitter enemy. The battle can only have one victor.

Compare Peter's use of the word concerning the Roman authorities (1 Pet 5:8-9), who were arresting Christians on charges of sedition and subjecting them to all kinds of persecution.

Devil: *diabolos*. Why does James use the word devil here? Cp Mark 7:21; Rom 7:23-24; Heb 2:14; 1 John 3:8.

Flee: *pheugo* - to run away.

Constantly resisting our sinful nature and instead submitting to God's will, will gradually minimise sin's influence on our desires. The opposite of this is also true – if we constantly submit to our nature, every battle becomes harder to overcome until we find ourselves submitting to the 'devil' and resisting God. Instead, we must take a positive approach to the battle like Christ did in Matthew 4:1-11.

What key phrase shows how Christ overcame the devil in this passage? How does this relate to our key verse (James 1:22) from which our conference theme is: Living the Word?

What are the practical things we can do to “resist the devil”? What good things can we do instead, to draw nigh to God?

Resist the devil	Draw nigh to God

LIVING THE WORD



Do we follow Christ's example when we encounter temptations and counter every lust with a firm “It is written...!” (Luke 4:8,13)? Are our minds filled enough with the Word for this to occur automatically, or are we deceived because we can't distinguish the Truth from a lie because we have not taken the time to know the commandments of God? Are we actually treating the Truth as a lie, despite knowing what God has commanded?



Verse 8: Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.

Notice the balance of poetry in these verses -

Resist the devil
and he will flee from you
Draw nigh to God
and He will draw nigh to you.

Separation is a two-fold process. We cannot just draw nigh to God – we must at the same time be resisting the devil.

Draw nigh: *eggizo* - make near, that is, approach (cp Jam 1:14; Heb 7:19).

We must draw nigh with a certain attitude (see Isa 29:13; Heb 10:22). What is it?

In Numbers 3 and 4, we see that under the law, only the priests could draw near to God and enter the tabernacle (Exo 19:22; Num 18:21-23). However, through Christ, we now have access to draw near to God in the Holy Place! (Heb 7:19; 10:19-20). What a privilege to be able to come to Him!

However, as we see in Hebrews 10:21-22, we still need to come to God through a High Priest – our Lord Jesus Christ – but we can now come boldly before our God, “that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:14-16).

When we struggle to draw near to God, we can be comforted that He has promised to help those that seek Him (1 Chron 18:9-10; 2 Chron 15:2-24; Isa 55:6-7; Prov 8:17). Once we turn to Him He will hasten to meet us (cp Luke 15:11-32). Our reaction to His call determines our future relationship with Him.



Cleanse *your* hands, ye sinners; and purify *your* hearts, ye double minded.

James uses another parallel -

Cleanse ...	hands ...	sinners	(cleansing outward actions).
Purify ...	hearts ...	double-minded	(purifying inward thoughts).

James is possibly referencing Psalm 24:3-6 to say that both of these aspects of cleaning our hands (our actions) and purifying our hearts (our mind) are necessary in order to draw near to God.

What does Isaiah 1:15-18 tell us are two of the things we must do in tandem in order to receive God's forgiveness?

Cleanse: *katharizo* - translated also as "purge, purify" (see Psa 51:2).

Here are a few relevant occasions where this word is used. What should we be cleansing from ourselves and doing instead of defiling ourselves?

2 Cor 7:1 - "cleanse" _____

Eph 5:26-27 - "cleanse" _____

Tit 2:14 - "purify" _____

Heb 9:14 - "purge" _____

1 John 1:7,9 - "cleanseth", "cleanse" _____

There was little use drawing nigh like they had (vs 2-3) with the blood still on their hands. There was a need to cleanse this attitude of envy that had caused strife. It is the Word of God which cleanses us (cp John 15:3; Eph 5:26).

Hands: Clean hands figuratively denote actions that conform to God's requirements. To wash or clean the hands was emblematic of putting away transgression (Matt 27:24; cp Deut 21:6-9; Psa 26:6)

Sinners: See Jam 1:13-16.

"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners!" This was a call to reform their WAYS.

Can you think of 3 people who cleansed their way from their evil doings? What did they do? Was it an example to other people?

Person	Notes

Purify: *hagnizo* - to make clean (cp 1 John 3:3; 1 Pet 1:22-25; see also Jer 4:14).

Hearts: *kardia* - thoughts or feelings (see Psa 51:6-10; Eze 36:25-28).


Double minded: *dipsuchos* - two spirited. This was a war in their members! (See notes on Jam 1:8). Our mode of thinking must be pure. Their hearts had been corrupted (2 Cor 11:3) because they had not hidden God's Word in their heart that they might not sin against Him (Psa 119:11; see also Psa 37:3). We cannot befriend both God and the world (Jam 4:4; 1 Kings 18:21; cp 2 Cor 7:1). Thus, James urges them to purify their mode of thinking to worship God and to serve Him in singleness of heart (Acts 2:46; Eph 6:5; Col 3:22).

"Purify your hearts, ye double minded!" This was an urge to reform their MINDS.

What are ways in which you can change the way you think? What are things you should not have in your mind? What should you be filling your mind with instead?



Note Psalm 73 in the context of James 4:1-10: We must be careful not to envy the rich and wicked. Though they look as if “they are not in trouble” (vs 5), their end shall be destruction and desolation (vs 18-19). Believers may feel they are slipping (vs 2) but they are guided by God’s counsel (vs 24) and are “holden by God” (vs 23). “It is good for them to draw near to God” (vs 28) instead of going a whoring from Him (vs 27). Christ has given his life to cleanse and sanctify us, that we might no more be adulteresses but rather “holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:26-27).

 **Verse 9: Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.**

Afflicted: *talaiporeo* - verb: to be wretched, that is, to realise one's own misery. Thayer's - to toil heavily, to endure hardship and labours. A related word *talaiporos* (5005) - adjective - enduring trial, that is, miserable - is found in Romans 7:24 and Revelation 3:17 as “wretched”.

What was the difference between the two attitudes found in Romans 7:24-25 and Revelation 3:17?

Rom 7:24-25	Revelation 3:17

To be afflicted was an attitude demanded of Israel on the Day of Atonement. They were expected to review their state and to sorrow over their shortcomings. What do these verses say they needed to do?

Lev 23:27-29

Ezra 8:21

James is exhorting us to expend energy in considering our present state. A complete recognition of our unrighteousness in God’s sight is the first step in drawing closer to God. It is not until we can fully appreciate what we are, that we can be humbled into a state of mind that God can work with (cp vs 10; see Psa 18:24-27; 119:67,71). Israel will be asked to do the same thing when Christ has returned (Ezek 36:24-32).

Mourn: *pentheo* - to grieve.

Weep: *klaio* - to sob, that is, wail aloud. Judah will mourn and weep when they realise who their Messiah is (Zech 12:10-14).

This is our natural reaction when we realise our position before God, and is a necessary part of the process of salvation (cp 2 Cor 7:10). Christ promises comfort for those who mourn (cp Matt 5:4; Luke 6:21).

Your laughter: This is the laughter of the fool (Ecc 7:6).

Mourning: *penthos* - grief.

Your joy: *chara* - cheerfulness.

Heaviness: *katepheia*. Thayer's says: "a downcast look expressive of sorrow". Such was the attitude of the despised republican (Luke 18:13-14).

The laughter and joy of those to whom James wrote was due to their friendship with the world. It is a hollow joy that seeks to forget the realities of life (cp Ecc 7:2-6; Prov 14:13; Isa 22:12-13; Luke 6:25). True happiness can only be found in submission to God (cp Psa 51:1-12; Isa 61:1-3; see also Lam 5:15-16).



Verse 10: Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up.

Humble: *tapeinoo* - see verse 6 (see Isa 57:15).

Sight: *enopion* - in the face of, in the presence of. It is how God perceives us that is important (cp Acts 4:19; Heb 13:21; 1 Pet 3:4; 1 John 3:22). The brethren had left God out of their lives (as we shall see in the rest of the chapter).

Lift: *hupsoo* - to elevate (cp Jam 1:9; see also Job 5:11; Eze 21:26).

Humbling ourselves is the summary of what James has outlined in the previous three verses. It is a Divine principle that humility comes before honour; the cross before the crown (cp Prov 15:33; 18:12; 22:4; 29:23; Matt 11:29; 23:12; Luke 18:14; Phil 2:8-9; 1 Pet 5:5-6). Christ has shown us the way by his example (1 Pet 2:21-25). By humbling ourselves in our own estimation, God will exalt us in His. It is God who is actually exalted (cp Isa 2:10-17). Through manifesting His character, we are lifted up with His exaltation. This is a great source of comfort to those who feel the weakness of the flesh but desire to overcome it.

4:11-12 | JUDGING OTHERS

In chapter 4 verses 11-17 we see James conclude his comprehensive criticising of the human vices arising from pride and ambition. Having shown that contentions reveal inconsistency and hypocrisy, and that the true way of peace is through wisdom accepted in humility, he now turns to the two manifestations of human arrogance which involves the improper use of the tongue:

1. Presumptuous Judgements
 - Vs 11-12 - Uncharitable judgements on our brethren
2. Presumptuous Projects
 - Vs 13-17 - Unqualified confidence in our future plans

4:11 | Warning against speaking evil or judging

Once we recognise our own personal failings, we will better appreciate the failings of others and be less hasty to condemn them. All have sinned and have come short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). There is only one judge who is able to administer true judgement. At the judgement we will all be in need of mercy (see Jam 2:12-13.)

Verse 11: Speak not evil one of another, brethren.

Speak evil: *katalaleo* - slander. This is a characteristic of the flesh (cp Rom 1:30 - "backbiters") and of the Gentiles against the believers (cp 1 Pet 2:12; 3:16). It had entered into the Ecclesia (cp 2 Cor 12:20; 1 Pet 2:1).

The flesh is comforted by the fact that others have failings. It has a tendency to lift itself up by pulling others down. This also takes the focus away from the gravity of sin (cp Matt 7:3-4; see also Psa 50:20-21; 140:11-12). Paul warns against comparing ourselves with others (cp 2 Cor 10:12). Christ is the standard that we are to aim for (cp 1 Cor 11:1; Eph 4:13). We are to love and care for one another, without division (1 Cor 12:24-26).

Brethren: *adelphos*. Used 19 times in this epistle and its related word *adelphē* (79 - "sister") once.

What is James' point in calling them "brethren" and "brother" in this context (see also ch 1:16)?

Think of examples of speaking evil of one another throughout the Scriptures. What would be a better way of speaking about others?

He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother,

Judgeth: *krino* - to try, condemn, punish. This word has the idea of the complete judicial process. The same word is used throughout this verse and in verse 12 (cp Matt 7:1-2; Luke 6:37).

Our brethren are Christ's servants, not ours. Therefore, he is the one who will judge them ultimately (cp Rom 14:4, 10-13; 1 Cor 4:4-5). This is not to say that we do not judge the doctrines or actions of others (cp John 7:24; 1 Cor 5:7-13) but rather to help restore them to the right way in the "spirit of meekness" (Gal 6:1).

James himself did not hesitate to rebuke (Jam 5:1-6). However, the final decision of who will be accepted or rejected lies with Christ. We cannot judge the motives of our brethren; it is impossible for the flesh to do.

If we pass judgement against our brethren, it implies two things:

1. That we have condemned God's law
2. That we have assumed God's position as the one judge

speakev evil of the law, and judgeth the law:

This is the Law of Liberty as expressed in the two greatest commandments (cp Matt 22:36-40). James has already written about this (see Jam 1:25; 2:8-13). In assuming God's authority as Judge they were breaking the first commandment, and in judging their brethren they were breaking the second.

Persistence in speaking evil in effect says that the Law to love thy neighbour is not worth obeying, and therefore implies that God had spoken falsely when creating this law.

This has serious implications for those who do speak evil of it. Christ came to fulfil the Mosaic Law (cp Matt 5:17), for he had "magnified the Law and made it honourable" (Isa 42:21) by himself being perfectly obedient to its requirements and therefore brought into force the Law of Liberty. This was done through his life, death and resurrection, which provided grace and mercy in the forgiveness of our sins (cp John 1:17; Acts 3:26; John 8:31-36; Rom 6:16-18). Because all men have sinned (cp Rom 3:23) those who speak evil of the Law are passing judgement against the very means that is necessary for them to have their own sins forgiven (cp Matt 6:12; 18:21-35; see also Eph 4:31-32).

but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

A judge of the Law sets up his own standards and compares the Law by these. It is the doers of the Law which shall be justified, not the judges of the Law (cp Rom 2:1,13; Jam 1:22).

4:12 | God is the only judge

Verse 12: There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?



RV: "Only one is lawgiver."

Wey: "The only real Lawgiver and Judge is He who is able to save or to destroy. Who are you to sit in judgement on your fellow man?"

The brethren were adopting the position rightfully belonging to God (cp Psa 9:7-8,19-20; 50:6; Isa 33:22).

Save: *sozo* - to deliver or protect. This means that God is able to deliver or destroy in the ultimate sense. This implies that God is able to save those whom the brethren were condemning. No man is able to save another in this sense (cp Psa 49:6-9; Heb 7:25).

Destroy: *apollumi* - to destroy fully. God is also able to destroy those who unrighteously condemn others. Man is not able to do this either (cp Matt 10:28).



Another: Roth: "neighbour" - we are supposed to love, not judge, our brethren (Jam 2:8). When all these aspects are considered, there is none who is able to take the position of judge, and condemn the brethren (cp Rom 2:1-13). Our attitude toward each other should be one of humility (cp Phil 2:3).

What is our feeling towards God knowing that He alone has the power to save or destroy us? Which of the two does He most desire to do? Why?

Extra for experts: Find references to prove your answer.

4:13-17 | WHO IS IN CONTROL?

Being aware of our own nature will highlight the uncertainty of life and will prevent us from placing confidence in our own plans for the future (cp Luke 12:16-21). We must remember our dependency upon God (cp 1 Tim 6:17).

4:13-14 | Vanity of relying on the future



Verse 13: Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:



Roth: "Come now! ye that say Today or Tomorrow we will journey unto this city here, and will spend there a year, and will trade and get gain".

Go to now: James is commanding his readers' attention to this point (cp Jam 5:1).

We will go: *poreuomai* - to travel, journey. This hearkens back to James' point concerning the rich man in his ways or "journeyings" (a related word). He is preoccupied with the fleeting things of this life, his mind is full of business pursuits, but he will be swept away into oblivion (cp Jam 1:10-11).

Continue there a year: the exact time is given without consideration to God's providence.

Buy and sell: *emporeuomai* - to travel in trade. The Jews are known for their pursuits in trading. They even broke the Law in trading on the Sabbath (Neh 13:15-17; Amos 8:4-6).

Gain: *kerdaino* (2770) - to get gain. This was the focus of their activities (cp Jam 4:1-3).



"Many of those who display their goods in the Eastern bazaars are travelling merchants. They come from other cities, and after having disposed of their stock in trade, either for money or other commodities, proceed to another city, where they set up in business again. They supply themselves in every instance with the merchandise best suited to a particular market, and thus, after repeated peregrinations (journeys), if successful in their adventures, they acquire a competence (enough money for a comfortable income) and return home to enjoy the fruits of it" (*Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Pg 467).

In the following verses what should we be losing, and by doing so, will gain instead?

Phil 3:4-14

Col 3:1-15

Heb 11:24-26



Verse 14: Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow.

James addresses those people who were planning what they were going to do in a year's time with such confidence. James is reminding them of Proverbs 27:1 – we don't know what will happen tomorrow! There was certain finality about their plans and they had made no provision for the overriding purpose of God. Notice the repetition of the word "and". The brethren were so involved with the things of this life, that they had forgotten that their calling was for a greater purpose. We must be willing to forsake the life we have planned so as to gain the Life that awaits us.

Look up Matthew 6:25-34 and list below the things that God will take care of in our lives. What should we be focusing on instead?



For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

Vapour: *atmis* - mist. This word only elsewhere appears in Acts 2:19.

The analogy James is using is that of the morning mist that floats in the air and is soon dissipated by the sun. Life has little substance and soon disappears (cp Ecc 1:2,14 - vanity = *kebel* - emptiness, vapour).

Can you find other references which show that our life is but a “vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away”? We have given you an example:

Isa 64:6	“we all do fade as a leaf...our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

Realising this fact, we see how important it is that we use our time wisely (cp Psa 31:15; 90:12; Eph 5:15-17; Col 4:5; 1 John 2:17; Luke 12:13-31). We are made by God and He has placed us here to serve Him. It is in that context that we should then think, “what is our life?”

4:15 | Life in perspective

Having brought to the brethren's attention their unbalanced view of life, James next directs their minds to the correct perspective.



Verse 15: For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

Having brought the believer to a realisation that their view of life was unbalanced, James now shares with us the right perspective that we should have.

Ought to say: Prayer should be an important part of our lives, for the success or failure of any venture is subject to His will (Phil 4:6; Acts 2:42; 1 John 5:14-15; Luke 18:1).

If the Lord will: James is not putting this phrase forth as a formula (cp Jam 2:16) but as a principle that we should live by. The apostle Paul sometimes used it (cp Rom 1:10; 15:32; Acts 18:21; 1 Cor 4:19; 16:7; Phil 2:24; Heb 6:3) but not always (cp Acts 19:21; Rom 15:28; 1 Cor 16:5).

LIVING THE WORD

We challenge you to make this phrase, “if the Lord will”, or “God Willing” part of your everyday vocabulary, because in turn it will affect your way of thinking. Our future plans should always be made in consideration of God’s will. Does it align with what we know to be God’s purpose?

Proverbs 19:21 says: “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.”

However, it doesn't just stop there. We must be willing to let God interrupt or cancel our plans for what He has in store for us. We must be willing to forsake the plans we have made so that we can gain the life God has planned for us. “Thy will be done” should be the motto of our lives.

List the things that we usually plan ahead for in our lives. Are they wrong in themselves? Do they take into account God's purpose?



“Life is so full of uncertainties that there are no guarantees; failure is as possible as success; indifferent health as fitness; tomorrow's plans can be brutally overthrown by untimely death, so much so that the wise man, as he looks ahead, seeks for Divine guidance in the spirit of ‘Thy will be done’ and then prepares to accept the offering of each day as it comes” - Bro. W.W. Gillingham.

What we want to do is subject to whether He permits it or not (see Lam 3:37). James brings this point home by showing how much we depend on God - if He wills we shall LIVE!! (cp 2 Sam 15:25-26; Job 34:14-15; see also Num 9:17-23; Job 1:21). We must thank Him for our life before we even consider what to do with it!

4:16-17 | Arrogance of our plans



Verse 16: But now ye rejoice in your boastings:



RSV: “As it is, you boast in your arrogance”.

Rejoice: *kauchaomai* - to vaunt (in a good or bad sense), boast, glory (cp Jam 3:14).



Boastings: *alazoneia* - self confidence. That is, empty braggart talk. According to Vine's it denotes quackery or vain pretensions and arrogant claims based upon nothing substantial (see Prov 25:14; also 1 Cor 4:5-8; 5:6-8). This word only elsewhere appears in 1 John 2:16 for the ‘pride of life’.

James now rebukes them for their arrogance and self-confidence as they were boasting of their plans they had made and what they would accomplish and gain. This is such an easy trap to fall into. Without considering God or His plan, these thoughts become selfish and as James says, ‘evil’.



all such rejoicing is evil.



Rejoicing: The Diaglott refers to this as “boasting”. James refers to their idle and evil arrogance, rather than any kind of joyful rejoicing.

Evil: *poneros* - hurtful, evil (in effect or influence).

This sort of attitude can spread through the Ecclesia, take our minds away from God and focus them on the temporalities of this life, which in the end will “vanish away”.

Have a good look at Psalm 52, as this is a good cross reference. This Psalm has many connections with James 4 as well as the rest of the Epistle. Which of the two attitudes found in this Psalm do we want to be more like?



Verse 17: Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

Knoweth: *eido* - to see, by implication, to know, be aware of.

Good: *kalos* - valuable or virtuous. This is the same word as “worthy” in Jam 2:7. We must do GOOD things worthy of His Name.

Sin: *hamartia* - Thayer's: a missing of the mark (cp Jam 1:15; see also Rom 14:23).

This statement brings James' argument to a natural conclusion. The believers had the issues made clear before them. Knowledge brings responsibility (cp Luke 12:47-48; John 9:41; 13:17; Rom 1:20-21,32). They had no cloak for their sin (cp John 15:22; Heb 10:26). Indifference to God's Law and our duty to others is a sin. It is a sin of omission (see 2 Pet 2:21). Once again James emphasises the point that “doing” is necessary. It is not just a matter of not doing evil. In not doing good, it is just as bad in God's sight. Indifference to God's law is a sin of omission.

LIVING THE WORD



This is something that can be a real conscience-pricker and it's a good one! You will remember those times when you walk past someone or something that needs to be helped or dealt with and you feel your conscience prick you. “Should I go over and say something?”, or “Should I help that person?” That's your conscience knowing that you should do good! Then you might go through a stage of debating with yourself – justifying why you won't or shouldn't have to act. Next time, listen to that voice. Remember that to know you should do good and then not do the good – that is a sin! We must reflect on the character of our Father and try to follow His Son's ways, who when he saw a need, would fulfil that need.

Another way to look at it is this: imagine if it was obvious that you needed help and you saw a prospective helper walking past and they just ignored you as if you were not even there? How would we feel?

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecc 12:13-14).

LIVING THE WORD



Having studied this much of James, how has it affected your understanding of God's character? Have you allowed it to change your life?

Chapter Five

Be Patient Unto the
Coming of the Lord



5:1-12 | ABUSE OF WEALTH AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO VICTIMS

Having dealt with the presumption of the wealthy believers, James now extends his scope to the selfish presumption of the class of rich Jews who were persecuting the Ecclesia (vs 1-6; cp Jam 2:6-7). He warns that the day of judgement was coming, and that riches will have a detrimental effect on those who trust in them. This is a prelude to his words of encouragement to the believers (vs 7-11).

This passage is characteristic of the Old Testament prophets who would deal with the faults of God's nation, then harshly denounce the nations about them, and then return to speak words of encouragement to Israel (cp Eze 24:1-27; 25:1 - 28:24; 28:25-26).

5:1-6 | The rich rebuked

James is not writing for the benefit of the wealthy Jews who were doing the oppressing, but to the believers; in order that they may be comforted by the fact that judgement will come upon those who persecute them, that their suffering might be alleviated. His words also highlight the limited value of wealth for which men of the flesh strive.

Although James is writing to those "scattered abroad", he uses the example of the rich, unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem to illustrate his point. Just as judgement was certain to come upon them in AD 70, so likewise God would bring vengeance upon those who oppressed the believers in other parts of the Roman world. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay" (Rom 12:19).

There are times when the wicked appear more blessed, and we may be covetous of them at times, but their end is sure (cp Psa 73:1-19; Ecc 8:11-14). Riches were not able to save them at the time of judgement on the Jews in AD 70.

James writes of these rich, unbelieving Jews in the same manner that the Lord Jesus spoke of the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23.

Verse 1: Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

Go to now: (Cp Jam 4:13). Between these two sections concerning warnings to those who place confidence on wealth is Jam 4:17. The High Priest and his family were a perfect example of the warning given in that verse. They knew what was right (cp John 9:39-41; 15:22,24; Acts 4:5-21), yet they hadn't done it, therefore judgement was to come upon them. This also gives a warning to those who don't think that the principle of Jam 4:17 is important.

Ye rich men: Riches themselves are not wrong, it all depends on how they are used. Riches are a blessing from God in the first place (Deut 8:12-14; 32:15), and this fact needs to be recognised in the believer's life (Jer 9:23-24) and manifested in the using of this blessing with godly wisdom (1 Tim 6:17-19). However, riches are fleeting, and don't last forever (Prov 23:4-5; Ecc 5:13-14; Jer 17:11). Those who choose to put their trust in riches have their portion in this life (Psa 17:14) and face the consequence of that decision in death (Psa 49:6-20; Prov 11:4,28), and the absence of the hope of everlasting life in the Kingdom Age (Matt 19:24; 1 Tim 6:9-10). This second group is the one that James addresses now. Thus, not all rich are included in this condemnation, only those who are unjust and oppressive.

Weep: *klaio* - (cp Luke 6:24-25). The same word is used in Jam 4:9 (cp also vs 1-5 with Joel 1:3-7 - they had failed to learn from the poor example of their forefathers).

Howl: *ololuzo*. This is the only occurrence of this word in the New Testament, but it is used in the LXX in Isa 13:6; 14:31 and 15:3. In each case the context is of impending Divine judgement. Judgement upon the rich of James' time was to come in AD 70 (cp Mark 12:9). A similar judgement will come upon the whole world in the day of Armageddon.

LIVING THE WORD



How important are our riches to us? What focus do we put on building up our wealth in our lives? Does knowing the fact that Christ's return is imminent and that our temporal riches are about to fade change our view of life and subsequent actions, or would we weep and howl if our worldly treasures were taken away from us?

Miseries: *talaiporia* - This is the same word as "afflicted" in Jam 4:9. There is a message here for the believers as well. It is better to humble ourselves now than to be exposed at the judgement seat (cp 1 Cor 11:31-32).



Come upon: *eperchomai* - "are coming upon you" (RSV). The wealthy Jews were seen as desirable prey for their seditious fellow-countrymen during the period of the sieges before AD 70 (see Josephus' War of the Jews Book V, Chapter X, Paragraph 2), and for the marauding Romans during and after AD 70. They had little opportunity left in which to forsake Judaism and accept the Law of Liberty (see Acts 2:39-40).

Verse 2: Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten.

In Eastern countries gold, silver and clothing were regarded as a person's wealth (cp Acts 20:33).

Corrupted: *sepoi* - putrefying, perishing. James is using graphic language to emphasise his point.

Motheaten: This happens when garments are held onto for too long (either through a lack of use or not being able to find buyers). See also Job 13:28. For an application of the destruction of those who persecute Messiah, see Isaiah 50:9; 51:6-8.

Where in the gospels is James alluding to and what is the lesson to be found in that reference?

Here is a reminder of how temporary "goodly raiment" is (see Jam 2:2).

Verse 3: Your gold and silver is cankered and the rust of them shall be a witness against you,

Cankered: *katiao* - to poison, rust down, corrode. This word comes from the same word as "poison" used in Jam 3:8 and "rust" used later in this verse. As poison destroys living tissues in a human body, so rust eats into and destroys metal. In both cases, its value or functionality is impaired. In a human body, poison can lead to death; in metal, rust can lead to corrosion and worthlessness. Gold and silver do not properly rust or oxidise like iron and steel but will discolour and become tarnished if long stored without use or kept in a damp place. James however is emphasising his point. The Jews thought that their riches would last forever. However, when judgement came upon them, their riches lost their value and power to give enjoyment to them, because they were the ones who were the target of attack for the wealth they possessed (cp Matt 16:26). These rich Jews were in danger of losing not just their riches but also their lives in AD 70, as this verse goes on to say.

Rust: *ios* - poison (of animals), rust.

Witness: *maturion* - a declaration of facts.

The rusty riches were a sign of their own corrupt condition. Money is worthless unless it is used, and when tarnished, is a testament to the fact that it has been hoarded. The wealth stored up could have been used for others who were in need (cp Jam 2:15-16). Miserly attitudes and indifference to the needs of others will be a witness against us in the day of judgement.

and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.

For these rich Jews, their life (flesh) really did consist in the abundance of the things which they possessed (cp Luke 12:15). The poison of selfishness spreads through a person until it destroys him totally. Likewise, the judgement on the Jews in AD 70 affected their very lives in a most painful way. The focus of their life was forcibly taken away from them and didn't provide them with the happiness they sought. Fire is a well-known symbol for Divine Judgement (cp Psa 21:9; Isa 10:16-17; Amos 5:6; 1 Cor 3:13; 2 Thess 1:8), and no other figure could more effectively suggest the swiftness and sureness with which they, and all they had, were to be consumed. Many died in the literal fire that swept through Jerusalem. The idea of eating flesh is also a symbol of judgement (cp Rev 17:16; 19:18).

Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.



Last days: "In the last days" (RV). A term always referring to some completion of God's purpose in the earth, or to the era proceeding that completion (see Heb 1:1-2; Jude 18; see also 1 John 2:18; 1 Cor 10:11; Heb 9:26; 1 Pet 1:20).

Here it refers to the last days of the Jewish people living in the land of Israel before AD 70 when they were scattered.

Not only had they stored up for themselves the wrong treasure (cp Matt 6:19-20; Prov 11:4; Zeph 1:18; Rom 2:5) but it was also in the time just prior to the judgement that they had been warned about (Deut 28:47-57; Jer 19:9; Mic 3:1-12; Matt 24:15-22; Luke 21:20-24; cp 2 Pet 3:3,7,10,12).

Is this warning relevant for us in our present affluent society? What should be our true perspective in life? (See 1 Tim 6:5-11; Psa 73:1-19).

Having denounced the rich Jews for hoarding wealth in a crucial era of the world's history, James now indicts them for specific evils of which they were guilty. Three charges are laid against them:

- Exploiting their fellow man by not paying full wages to their workers (vs 4)
- Living a self-indulgent life (vs 5)
- Condemning and causing the death of the righteous (vs 6)

Verse 4: Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth:

Hire: *misthos* - wages.

Kept back by fraud: This was condemned by the Law and the prophets (Lev 19:13; cp Jer 22:13; Mal 3:5). Note that this Law is in the context of the Royal Law (Jam 2:8; Lev 19:18).

Crieth: *krazo* - to cry out as a raven, to utter an inarticulate cry from fear, pain, or some other emotion. Compare the blood of Abel (Gen 4:10) - which cried out from the ground in protest at the persecution of the righteous (cp Heb 11:4 with vs 6).

Normally it would be the labourers that cry to God (cp Deut 24:14-15 - this is a restatement of Lev 19:13 with additional words), but here the wages themselves witness against the rich (see vs 3)! The money they were hoarding didn't even belong to them and it was needed by the poorer class (there is a principle here for us within the Ecclesia as well - cp the contrasting examples of Barnabas and Ananias & Sapphira in Acts 4:32 - 5:11). The money kept back was the livelihood of the labourers.

and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth

Cries: *boao* - to shout (for help or in a tumultuous way). God's ears are always open to the cry of His people (Psa 34:17; John 9:31). This is encouraging and reminds us that God is always listening to our sufferings and we can rely on Him for justice.

What is the title that James uses for God in verse 4?

Where is the only other time it is used in the New Testament?

What does it mean?

Why is it relevant in this context?

Verse 5: Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.



RSV: "You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter".

Lived in pleasure: *truphao* live delicately, luxuriously, at ease. They were dead while they lived (1 Tim 5:6), like Sardis (Rev 3:1), living deliciously (Rev 18:3,7,9), like Jezebel (1 Kings 21:7).

Wanton: *spatalao* - to live riotously. Instead of helping those in need, they had spent their wealth on their own excesses (see Isa 5:11-12; 56:12; Amos 6:1,4-6).

Nourished: *trepho* - to fatten, pamper.

Slaughter: *sphage* - (cp Acts 8:32; Psa 44:22). Judgement was coming upon a people who were full of their own fatness, as it had done many times before (Isa 34:1-10).

Their heart's desires were being satisfied, while being ignorant that they were fattening themselves like sheep for the slaughter of AD 70 (cp Jer 12:1-3). A similar slaughter of the rich, godless nations, including Israel, will take place at Armageddon (Jer 25:15-38; Eze 39:17-29).

Verse 6: Ye have condemned *and* killed the just;



Condemned: *katadikazo* - to adjudge against, sentence, pronounce guilty. "This word signifies to exercise right or Law against anyone" (Vine). Cp Matt 12:2,7,37; Luke 6:37).

Killed: *phoneuo* - to murder.



Look up this verse in the NIV or ESV. You'll note different phrasing for "the just". Who or what is this verse primarily talking about?

It may seem hard to believe that these wicked rich men would literally be killing people so frequently, but we have horrific examples of this recorded for us in the New Testament (besides of course our Lord).

Who are some of these righteous people that were killed by rich wicked men?

Quote	Person

and he doth not resist you.

Resist: The unbelieving Jews would not understand this. Whoever heard of a Jew who did not resist? Consider the number of faction groups in existence during the destruction of Jerusalem.

We are exhorted not to resist (cp Matt 5:39; 1 Thess 5:15). Christ gave us an example, “when he was reviled, he reviled not again”. It is a very hard thing to be silent and not resist when you’re being accused or treated unjustly. 1 Peter 2:19-25 tells us that by doing this we are following Christ’s footsteps, and this is acceptable before God. As Christ did, we must wait patiently for the judgement of God to come. (See also Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30; Prov 20:22).

This verse could also be alluding to Stephen, a righteous man (Acts 6:3,5,8,10,15), who was condemned (Acts 6:11-14) and murdered (Acts 7:57-60) cruelly and unjustly by the rich Jews, and yet who didn’t resist his murderers (Acts 7:59-60).

James “the Just” himself suffered a violent death at the hands of the Jews and gave an example to the believers of not resisting. In doing so, he showed that he was a true “doer of the Word” that he was asking others to follow.



Interestingly, all three men died with a similar expression of compliance on their lips - “Forgive them, for they know not what they do” - Christ (Luke 23:34), Stephen (Acts 7:59-60) and James (Eusebius Book 2, Ch 23, quoting Hegesippus – see Background Chapter of this Study Guide).

The Ecclesia of Smyrna was likewise being condemned and killed by the authorities. Yet Christ asks them not to resist, but to follow his example and be faithful unto death, with the reward of eternal life at the coming of their Lord if they patiently endured (cp vs 6-11 with Rev 2:10-11).

5:7-12 | Endurance and Encouragement

With Christ's example of non-resistance before them, James now turns to the brethren and gives them encouragement to help them in their time of persecution. Patience can be displayed when the end is focused upon (see Jam 1:2-4,12).



Verse 7: Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.



Patient: *makrothumeo* - longsuffering, forbearing. “It is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger” (Vine). James emphasises this quality, referring to it again later in this verse as well as in verse 8,10.

The characteristic of longsuffering appears elsewhere in Scripture. Look up the quotes below to find out who it relates to and what they have suffered through/will suffer through.

Quote	Person	Suffered/Suffers through
Exodus 34:6; 2 Peter 3:9		
1 Corinthians 13:4		
Ephesians 4:2		
Colossians 3:12		
1 Timothy 1:16		
2 Timothy 3:10		
Hebrews 6:15		

Coming: *parousia* - presence (as opposed to absence). The word also denotes a visit from a King, Emperor, or other person in authority. The coming of the Lord can therefore mean his presence in his official capacity as King.

When the disciples asked Christ concerning the sign of his coming (Matt 24:3), they didn't refer to his return from heaven because they thought the Kingdom of God was about to be set up with Christ as King (Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6). Instead, they asked what sign would show his elevation to and manifestation as King, to which the Lord gave two occasions: one in the first century when the Roman army marched against Jerusalem (Matt 24:27,37,39), and the other in his final coming in Armageddon (Matt 24:30). The coming of this verse was to be initially manifested in the Roman army who unknowingly were to act under the control of Christ as his representatives (cp Matt 21:40-41; 22:7; Dan 9:26). Here then in AD 70, was the manifestation of Christ's power as King - a title he gained after his resurrection (cp Matt 28:18; Acts 2:32-36; 17:7; Eph 1:20-23; Phil 2:9-11; 1 Pet 3:22; Rev 17:14; 19:16).

AD 70 was a fulfilment of the days of vengeance (cp Luke 21:22), and as such, were days of retribution upon those who had killed the Just One, and his followers (cp Dan 9:26; Matt 22:4-7; 1 Thess 2:14-16).

James' exhortation was a real comfort to the brethren, as after AD 70, the opposition of the rich, oppressive Jews towards the believers was significantly relieved.

The things James lists against the rich Jews (vs 1-6) were a constant reminder to God of the plight of His chosen people. As such, the believers could be patient knowing that God would avenge His elect.

What are the things that remind God of our plight in the world? Are they the same as in James' time? How can we gain comfort from them?

James next gives an example from everyday life to encourage them.



Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

Husbandman: *georgos* - a tiller of the ground, a farmer.

Waiteth: *ekdechomai* - to wait expectantly.

Precious: *timios* - accounted as of great price, held in honour, esteemed, very dear.

Early and latter rain: The rain was provided by God (Jer 5:24; Hos 6:3) and was evidence of Divine goodness (cp Deut 11:13-14; Ruth 1:1,6). In Israel, there is considerable rain during the winter months (Song 2:1) but these rains are considered relatively unimportant from an agricultural perspective compared to the early and latter rains.

The early, or former rains occur at the end of summer - in October (Ethanim). They are only for a day or several days duration, but are heavy, and essential for the land - to soak the parched and cracked earth and to break up the soil to facilitate ploughing, sowing and the rest of the agricultural process.

The latter rains occur at the start of spring - during March-April (Nisan). They come just before the long summer drought and are essential for the land - in the filling out of the grain just before harvest (Lev 26:3-4).

The farmer must wait patiently for the sun and rain to work with his seed to bring forth the crop. He has no control over the natural elements just as we have no control over the Divine plan. The grain was planted, and the farmer had to wait until the winter was over before the first harvest was reaped. But he waits in confident anticipation that the fruits will come (cp Psa 126:5-6; Isa 61:11) because of the watering of the ground that God has provided (Jam 1:17-18; Isa 55:10-13). If the husbandman shows this much patience for crops which perish, how much more should we be longsuffering as we wait for the crown of life? We must learn to wait on God (Psa 130:5-6; Lam 3:25-26; Mic 7:7).

God is also a husbandman and is patiently tending the branches of His vine to bring forth fruit (cp John 15:1-8).

In Joel 2:23, both former and latter rains are used in relation to the first and second comings of the Lord Jesus Christ. The former rain was "a teacher of righteousness" who came moderately - "according to righteousness". His work, which included the outpouring of the former rains of the Holy Spirit (cp Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:4,16-21), ploughed and sowed the dry ground - the minds of the hearers - with the gospel seed of Truth, so that the Truth could be spread into the entire world.

Like James and his brethren, we still await the second advent of Christ and the outpouring of the latter rains of the Holy Spirit prior to the day of the reaping of the harvest of the earth (cp Psa 72:1,6,16). This will be a time of much joy (cp Job 29:23), and one that we should be earnestly praying for (cp Zech 10:1,4).

Verse 8: Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Stablish: *sterizo* - to set fast, to turn resolutely.

Draweth nigh: *eggizo* - to make near, approach. The same word is used in the phrase, "the Kingdom of God is at hand" (cp Matt 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15; see also 1 Pet 4:7).

Likewise, we should show the same patience and have our faith established in our hearts in the knowledge that Christ's return "has approached" (Diag). (Compare 2 Thess 3:5; 1 Thess 3:11-13).

Stablishing our hearts involves conducting ourselves appropriately towards our brethren as well as patiently enduring the suffering from unbelievers.

Verse 9: Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned:



Grudge: *stenazo* - to sigh, murmur, groan, grieve. "To sigh or groan within ourselves" (Grimm-Thayer). "To groan (of an inward, unexpressed feeling of sorrow)" (Vine).

Condemned: *katakrino* - to judge against, sentence (cp Jam 4:11-12).

LIVING THE WORD



How often do we sigh, murmur or groan about our brethren? This can be an easy thing to find ourselves doing often and is something James has spoken about before in chapter 3 and 4:11. He specifically comments here again that we “grudge not one against another, brethren”. It can be easier to be longsuffering towards the world as we must make allowances for them not knowing God and what He expects. However, we must have the same patience with our brethren as God is also working with them to develop their characters. It would be tragic to withstand the persecutions from unbelievers only to be condemned by our attitude towards our brethren. James later exhorts us to speak to others if we have any problems (5:16).



behold, the judge standeth before the door.

The true judge is standing at the door, ready to knock (Rev 3:20) and is listening for our response to him.

The mention of the judge is another link to Jam 4:11. James had warned us about making ourselves judges when we speak evil or grudge against our brethren. Here the true judge stands by the door, ready to knock. Does he stand behind the door and hear our grudging, judging and condemnation of our brethren? Or does he hear prayers for help and guidance in forgiving our brethren?

James next gives two strong examples to look to - the prophets for patience in affliction, and Job for endurance in trial. Both examples suffered in the hands of their “brethren”.



Verse 10: Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

Patience: *makrothumia* - longsuffering. We need to manifest the same patience with our brethren as with the world (cp vs 7-8).

Even the prophets who had the authority of God experienced opposition from others in the “Ecclesia” (cp Matt 5:10-12; 23:29-37; 2 Chron 36:15-16; Jer 2:30; Acts 7:52; 1 Thess 2:14-15). Patience and suffering have always been the lot of God's servants as it is the way He develops character (see Jam 1:2-4). It is also to be expected for the godly (2 Tim 3:12). The prophets provide us with a wonderful example by the way they endured suffering (cp Heb 11:32-38), trusting in Yahweh's defence (cp Jer 1:17-19). Christ himself learned obedience by the things which he suffered (Heb 5:7-9).

Verse 11: Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

James is recalling his words from chapter 1:2-4,12. Those who endure are blessed because they will receive the joy they held before them (cp Heb 12:2; see Dan 12:12-13).

“Job provides an outstanding example of patience in suffering. See Job 1:21. His experiences also reveal the purpose of suffering. Job's three friends were dominated by a false theory that a person's sins or otherwise, were invariably measured by the extent of his sufferings. Job suffered greatly, hence Job must have been a most evil sinner. The fact that his friends could not pin-point his sins availed nought. In fact it served to show that he was hypocritical in his assumed righteousness! Job, on his part, refuted the theory, for he knew that it was wrong. He recognised that his sufferings were from God, but he could not understand their purpose, for he endeavoured, in every way possible, to live in accordance with the Divine will. His sufferings were not necessary for the purification of his character, in spite of the allegations of his associates, for Yahweh gave testimony to his righteousness (Job 1:1,8). In view of their claims to the contrary, he felt completely frustrated until the revelation of Yahweh placed all matters in proper perspective. Then it was revealed that his example of steadfast endurance in the face of bitter trial and prolonged provocation was not in vain.

He suffered, not merely for himself, but like Christ, for the benefit of his friends. They became convinced of their mistake, and Job who was vindicated by Yahweh, presided as a priest in their sacrifices of atonement (Job 42:7-9)" (*Expositor - From James to Jude*, pg. 76-77).

"Job's example not only shows the extent of trial that a man of faith is capable of enduring but also reveals the goodness of Yahweh. Job was blessed with greater prosperity in his latter end than he enjoyed before his sufferings came upon him, and had the added joy of being completely united in fellowship with his friends. Therefore, both he and his friends benefited from his sufferings, as both Christ and his friends benefit from his. That is the basic lesson of the book of Job. It shows that sufferings in the Lord are not in vain. They can help perfect the characters of those who suffer, and, in addition, provide an example of fortitude and faith that can stimulate others to do likewise. The statement "the end of the Lord" denotes the latter end to which Yahweh brought Job (cp Job 42:12). It implies that the patriarch's ultimate elevation was designed by Yahweh from the beginning. The word "end" is from the Greek "*telos*" and denotes the completion of a process. This is seen in the perfection of Job's character, and the greater blessings he received in his final prosperity (cp Job 42:10-17). If we are called upon to suffer for the Truth's sake, we can be assured that there are great things in store for us if we endure faithfully to the end (cp Rom 8:18). Yahweh has predetermined a great destiny for those who are obedient to His will (Eph 1:5-6)" (*Expositor - From James to Jude*, pg. 77).

Job was granted a fuller understanding of the Divine purpose through his suffering.

Pitiful: *polusplagchnos* - extremely compassionate (from *splagchnon* - bowels (as the seat of most tender affection)).

Tender mercy: *oiktirmon* - to exercise pity, compassion for the ills of others (cp Luke 6:36).

The first expression shows that God is very compassionate towards His people (Isa 63:7-9), and the second shows that it is part of His character (Exo 34:6-7). As such He will help His children in their affliction (see Psa 103:8-9; Luke 1:77-79; 2 Cor 1:3). A wise parent will discipline his children but will always be willing to extend compassion and mercy as well (cp Luke 15:20-24). We too need to learn to develop these qualities (cp Phil 2:1; Col 3:12).

Job's blessing was not primarily because of his endurance (or his righteousness), but because of God's compassion.

LIVING THE WORD



If we have not already, we are bound to have times in our life when the return of the Lord seems impossibly far away. James is exhorting us in those times to do two things:

1. Endure - do not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial.
2. Remember that God is caring for us and is always full of love and compassion towards us.

Doing these two things will help us through every difficult moment in our life, however, the example of Job shows that we are ultimately dependent on our Father's compassion towards us, and humility is needed to realise this.

James has encouraged us to be patient in our afflictions in the hope of ultimate vindication and has warned against holding grudges against the brethren. Now, in a continuation of and climax to the main theme of James 3, he exhorts us to avoid expressing our feelings of impatience in oaths that would blaspheme God.

Verse 12: But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath:

All things: In the context, these are patience (vs 7) and grudging not (vs 9). Holding grudges breaks the second greatest commandment but losing our patience and making irresponsible oaths in God's name breaks the first commandment (cp Matt 22:34-40) and misuses the name that we have been called to.

Swear: The eastern people are particularly prone to excessive giving of oaths.

Heaven ... earth: The Jews thought that by swearing by part of God's creation and not using God's name (cp Matt 5:33-37) they could circumvent the responsibilities attached to swearing by God's name (cp Deut 6:13; 10:20; Lev 19:11-12). But Christ showed that the creation cannot be separated from God. The heaven and earth are God's throne and footstool (cp Matt 5:33-37; 23:16-22; Isa 66:1).

Oath: *horkos* - a fence, an enclosure, a restriction, that which restrains a person.

Under the Law, there were a variety of oaths. There were three judicial oaths:

1. The word of adjuration (Lev 5:1), used in Matt 26:63
2. When property held in trust for another was either lost or damaged (Exo 22:11)
3. The compulsory oath of a woman accused of infidelity (Num 5:19-21)

There were also covenant oaths (Lev 19:11-12) and voluntary oaths to God (Num 30:2). James is chiefly referring to the last of these - our voluntary oaths to God.

We can see from Matthew 5:34-37 that the Jews would swear their oaths by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, and their own head. Christ explains that each of these things were ultimately in God's control, so they were not theirs to use as part of their promises. Christ advised that they should just keep their word.

James applies this principle under different circumstances - rash oaths made under times of stress and impatience. We must not let emotions or provocations take control of our actions and make rash or irresponsible statements with our tongue that we don't mean or can't keep (cp Deut 23:21-23; Ecc 5:2-6; contrast Psa 15:4). On the other hand, God has sworn with oaths to emphasise that His Word will be kept (cp Acts 2:30; Heb 6:13,16-18; 7:21).

but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay;

LIVING THE WORD



James' point is that there is no reason to make oaths and swear by anything. We may not feel this is as applicable to us as we don't tend to speak or make promises in this way today, however his point is that we must keep our word. If you are honest and true to your word, people don't need you to swear by anything as they should trust that you will keep your word.

The use of correct speech under pressure and provocation is important. Do we find this difficult to do? How can we ensure that we do not make rash statements under pressure?

lest ye fall into condemnation.

Condemnation: *krisis* - a separating, then a decision.

We must take care lest our words cause us to be judged against (cp Matt 12:36-37). Compare the example of Peter - Matt 26:69-75.

5:13-20 | EFFECTIVE PRAYER

Having advised us not to resist those who would do us harm, to endure all hardship with endurance and now not to make rash statements, James now shows us how to properly release our emotions!

James now selects the two worst instances that could result in unwise speaking – the spiritually or physically sick condition and the light-hearted and joyful spirit. He now seeks to show us how we can truly satisfy the need to express our feelings which is through prayer and praise.

James began his letter in chapter 1 with encouragement to count it all joy when we undergo trial. We cannot do this alone. We need to seek the help of others. James now focuses on the great power available in prayer, which has benefits both for those who are praying as well as those who are being prayed for.

5:13-18 | Sickness and healing



Verse 13: Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.

Afflicted: *kakopatheo* - to undergo hardship (cp vs 10; 2 Tim 2:3; 4:5).

Pray: *proseuchomai* - to pray towards (God), (from *euchomai* - to wish) (cp vs 14-18).

LIVING THE WORD



Unfortunately, prayer is not used to overcome hardships as often as it should be. Through prayer we can share our burdens with the One who is able to help us through our trials (cp 2 Chron 33:12-13). He wants us to show our need for His help and guidance.



Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

Merry: *euthumeo* - to be cheerful (cp Acts 27:22,36).



Sing psalms: *psallo* - “sing praise” (RSV). (See also 1 Chron 16:8-9).

When we are happy, it is natural to express our joy through music. Our joyfulness should be directed towards God through praise and thanksgiving because it is He who provides us with relief. Hymns and Psalms are a means to express our hearts to God (cp Eph 5:19-20; Col 3:16; Acts 16:23-25; Psa 95:1-2; 105:1-2). Singing in this way will remind us of that one who gives all good and perfect gifts (cp Jam 1:17) and will prevent us from participating in the less wholesome merriment of this world (cp Jam 5:5).



“Whether sorrow or joy be our lot, then its truest and finest outlet is worship” (Neville Smart - *The Epistle of James*, Pg 180).

LIVING THE WORD



How often do we turn to God when we have problems or thank Him when things are going well for us?

The effects of trials can take a toll on us. We can become sick both physically and spiritually. Prayer will minimise the effect of affliction and singing will focus our merriment on God - both go a long way to overcoming weaknesses but sometimes due to the burdens of trials it is necessary to seek additional strength. James provides more advice to overcome weakness.



Verse 14: Is any sick among you?

Sick: *astheneo* - to be feeble, without strength. The word is used in the following passages. What are these two kinds of sickness/weakness?

Matt 10:8

Romans 14:1



let him call for the elders of the ecclesia;

Let him: Firstly, there is humility that is required from the sick to acknowledge that they're in need of help. To call for the elders of the ecclesia is to submit to God's way. The desire for God's help must come from the sick person first for the prayer to be effective.

Those who feel their weakness are instructed to seek the help of the elders. Often, they are too proud to go to those who can help, and this can lead to brethren leaving the Truth. We don't go to a doctor to fix our car, or a mechanic to have our teeth checked - we go to where we know we will get proper help. That said, when we are sick, do we forget to pray to our God for our healing (Psa 6:2-4)?

Elders: *presbuteros* - advanced in years, a senior (cp Luke 15:25; John 8:9; 1 Tim 5:1-2).

It's the duty of the older and more experienced members of the ecclesia to care for the younger members in their time of need. The elders are called to help in meekness realising that they are also subject to the same frailties of the flesh.

The attributes of the elders qualify them to help the spiritually weak, as those who are spiritually minded can understand the problem and give the correct solution (cp Rom 8:5). James does not say to go to those who are dealing with a similar problem and are unable to overcome it themselves. We may get sympathy, but we won't get solutions. We will only get strength from those who are positive examples. The faith and example of more experienced brethren can fortify us against the pressures of this life (see Phil 3:17; 1 Cor 11:1; Heb 13:7).

What kind of people do you turn to for help when you need it? What are the characteristics of those people? Are they able to uplift us in the things of God?



and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil



Pray: Compare Acts 9:40; 28:8; 1 Kings 17:21; 2 Kings 4:33. "Pray over him" could also be rendered "pray with hands extended over him" (Grimm-Thayer). James has in mind the practice of healing that was used by Christ and the apostles as a witness to the power of the Gospel to save. Christ would often lay his hands upon the sick that he healed (cp Mark 5:23; 6:5; Luke 4:40; 13:13), as did the apostles (cp Mark 16:18; Acts 28:8).



Anointing: *aleipho* - to oil, "a general term used for an anointing of any kind" (Vine).

Oil: *elaion* - olive oil. Oil was sometimes used in the healing process (cp Isa 1:6; Mark 6:13; Luke 10:34). The modern equivalent would be to pray and call a doctor.

What does oil represent in the Bible and why do you think it is relevant in this context? (Cp Psa 119:105,130; Matt 25:3-4; 1 John 2:27).

Communal prayer with those of strong faith and example can sometimes be appropriate for those who do not have the strength of faith in themselves to overcome their trials. Knowing that others are seeking our wellbeing can also give us the encouragement we need. Combined with sound advice based on God's Word, this provides a formidable strength against future trials.



in the name of the Lord:

All our actions should be consistent with our calling "in the name of the Lord". What do these references say about what our way of life should be "in the name of the Lord"?

Mark 16:17-18; Acts 3:6; 4:10

John 14:13-14

Acts 3:16

Acts 5:41; 1 Pet 4:14

Eph 5:20

Col 3:17

Jam 5:10

It is only through Christ that we can be saved (cp 1 Tim 2:4-5; Acts 4:12). It is not the strength of the elders themselves that will help the weak but the strength they derive from Christ (cp Phil 4:13; 2 Cor 12:9).



'It was not uncommon, then, for acts of miraculous healing to be accomplished in New Testament times by the laying on of hands and by anointing with oil; the latter of these practices, and probably the former too, James enjoins upon the elders to whom he writes. But these were no more than the symbolic forms of blessing: the medium through which it was effectively brought to bear upon the sick man was "the prayer of faith" - prayer, that is offered in the single-minded, trustful attitude referred to in ch 1:6 and ch 4:8; and in humble recognition of the all-availing Name of the Lord Jesus. And this prayer, says James, shall "save" the sick, and the power of the Lord shall "raise him up" (Neville Smart - *The Epistle of James*, pg. 183).



Verse 15: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick,

Faith: *pistis* - firm persuasion, conviction, confidence. Any prayer asked in faith will be heard and answered (Jam 1:5-8; Matt 21:22; 1 John 5:14-16). However, remember chapter 4:15 where we are reminded to acknowledge God's will in all situations despite what we are wanting to happen. God will always answer a prayer of faith according to what He determines is best for us.

Save: *sozo* - to deliver, protect or cure (physically or spiritually). James uses it primarily in the spiritual sense (see Jam 1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:20).



Sick: *kamno* - to toil, to tire due to work, "weariness of mind" (Vine) - (cp Heb 12:3; Rev 2:3). This shows that it relates more to the worry and anxiety that is in the mind of the one who is physically or spiritually sick, rather than the sickness itself.

The faithful prayers and words of encouragement from the elders are added to the prayers of the person who was wearied with his state (see vs 14). His own faith being strengthened, he is made whole (cp Luke 5:20; 7:9-10, 48-50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42).



and the Lord shall raise him up;

Raise: *egeiro* - to waken, rouse (from sleep, sitting, disease, death).

In the physical sense this was what occurred (cp Matt 9:5-7; Mark 5:41-42; Acts 3:6-7; 9:40-41). Likewise, we can be assured that the cure will be just as successful for the spiritually sick both in being lifted up in their spiritual state now (cp Rom 13:11; Eph 5:14) and at the resurrection (cp Matt 25:5-7).



and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

There is a connection here between sin and sickness. In general, all sickness is caused by sin (see Gen 3). Some sickness is the direct result of transgression (cp Deut 28:15,20,45; 2 Chron 26:16-20; 2 Kings 5:20-27; John 5:14; 1 Cor 11:29-30). However, not all sickness is the direct result of specific sin (cp John 9:2-3). Ultimately, the removal of our sinful nature at the resurrection will result in the removal of sickness and death (cp Isa 33:24; Psa 103:3; Luke 5:18-26; Rev 21:4; 22:3).

A proper paraphrase of this would be, "If he has committed sins... (which have given rise to his sickness)..." Thus, here James is referring to a sickness that may or may not have been caused by sin (this is seen in the word "if"). In the absolute sense all have sinned (Rom 3:23), but the sickness may have a symptom of a spiritual need. Forgiveness is given on the basis that sin has been acknowledged and repented of (see notes on vs 16). This repentance was shown in the man going to the elders in the first place (vs 14). It is possible that the sins themselves can cause mental sickness and depression of mind when a person considers how they have failed to manifest the Father's character. This particularly applies if they are labouring under a feeling of unforgiven guilt. Obtaining encouragement from those of strong example and seeking forgiveness of sins will lift the burden from their minds.



Verse 16: Confess your faults one to another,



Confess: *exomologeo* - to acknowledge openly (cp Phil 2:10-11). "Confess therefore" (Roth) - (cp vs 15).

We should be willing to go and make right our wrongs with the person that we have hurt. We should also be willing to go to wise and trustworthy people in the ecclesia and admit our faults so that we can obtain spiritual guidance.

What is confession necessary for?

Psalm 32:5

Proverbs 28:13

Luke 17:3-4

1 John 1:8-10

What are some reasons we might not want to confess our sins?

1.

2.

3.

Faults: *paraptoma* - a sideslip, error, transgression, trespass (cp Col 2:13).

The word is used in the sense of an injury against another (cp Matt 6:14-15; 18:35), thus the next phrase - "one to another". James is not telling us to abase ourselves before others, but that if we have sinned and injured another in the process (especially our Heavenly Father!), then we should not hesitate to admit our faults to others and seek forgiveness. That way peaceful relationships can flourish in the Ecclesia. Taking the first step is extremely hard, but it must be done by someone - that God might be glorified.

One to another: *allelon* - another of the same sort.

LIVING THE WORD



Are we humble enough to be prepared to admit our faults to others? Often, we may injure someone - by word or by deed, and yet we don't say sorry and seek forgiveness because our pride prevents us. James is asking us to adopt the spirit of meekness - a spirit that allows us firstly to see our faults, and secondly to be able to try to fix them up.

The greatest confession of our faults and particularly our fleshly nature is done at our baptism (cp Matt 3:6; Rom 10:9-10), at which time all our previous trespasses are forgiven (cp Col 2:11-13).

LIVING THE WORD



Have we made that step to make a public confession of our faith in baptism, or have we put this vital act of doing the Word off, content to sit back and merely hear the Word?



and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.



Roth: "And be praying in each other's behalf".

Pray: *euchomai* - to wish (cp 3 John 2).

Confessing to one another is not enough. James now exhorts us to also intercede for others, whether we are the sick or not. Intercession is seen as one of the great roles of Christ (Rom 8:26,27,34; Heb 7:25), yet we also can pray for others, just as others in Scripture have done (e.g. Moses (Exo 32:11-14), Daniel (Dan 9:3-20) and Paul (Phil 1:3-4; Col 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Tim 1:3; Philemon v4)). The sick should pray with those in whom they have confided to seek God's help. The whole Ecclesia can be united in knowing that others need our prayers and that we need the prayers of others. This is fulfilling the Royal Law (cp Jam 2:8) - showing concern for each other's welfare.

Healed: *iaomai* - to cure. Used physically (cp Matt 8:13; Mark 5:29; Luke 6:17; John 5:13) and spiritually (cp Matt 13:15; Heb 12:13; 1 Pet 2:24).

LIVING THE WORD



Confession of faults is a pre-requisite to the restoration of spiritual health (cp Psa 32:5; Prov 28:13; Matt 18:15-17; Luke 17:3-4; 1 John 1:8-10). We should not hide our problems but should seek a cure. By sharing our failings with others, we can gain encouragement from our brethren. Those who have already overcome can sympathise with us and help us to overcome in the future (cp Heb 4:15-16; 2:17-18). This willing confession also prevents ill feeling amongst brethren for wrongs committed, as we will be humbled by the realisation of our own personal weakness and the common need for Divine strength and forgiveness.



The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.



ESV: "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working".
RV: "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working".

The word "fervent" does not appear in the original Greek text.

Effectual: *energeo* - to be active, efficient, to put forth power, work (cp 2 Cor 1:6; Gal 5:6; 1 Thess 2:13).

Availeth: *ischuo* - to have (or exercise) force, to have strength to overcome.

Righteousness, in this verse, is not the same as perfection of character. The righteous person here is one who has tried their best to follow God, only to fail miserably, and then repents wholeheartedly and continues to follow their God. They have been made right with God.

In their prayer, the believer is single-minded, not double minded (cp Jam 1:6-8). They ask according to God's will (cp Jam 4:3; 1 John 5:14-15). Their prayers will be granted by God and be powerful in their operation and results (see Psa 34:15; Prov 15:8,29; 1 Pet 3:12). Not only does it strengthen those who pray, but also those for whom the prayer is made (cp 1 Kings 17:20-24; 2 Kings 4:33-37; Job 42:8-10).



Verse 17: Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are,

James now uses the prophet Elijah and his experience with prayer on behalf of others as an example. Elijah was made of the same stuff as us – human nature.



Like passions: *homoioopathes* - similarly affected, “like nature” (RV mg). This word only elsewhere occurs in Acts 14:15.

In the following table we can see this clearly. This would be a good box to mark in your margin.

Failures	Kings	James
He had blamed Yahweh for his adversity	1 Kings 17:20	Jam 1:13
He had shirked his responsibilities at times	1 Kings 19:3-4	Jam 1:22
He had been subject to persecution and affliction	1 Kings 19:2	Jam 5:6,10,13; 2:6
He had engaged in grudging against his brethren	1 Kings 19:10,14; Rom 11:2-3	Jam 5:9

Yet...despite all this, it is a comfort to know that his prayers were heard! Despite our own faults, God will hear our prayers if we approach him in the right manner. Elijah was a justified man because he responded to the still small voice of God. His name means “My strength (El) is Yahweh” (contrast this to the sick man of Jam 5:13-16).



and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

Earnestly: *proseuche* - prayer. Literally, “He prayed with prayer” (mg). This Hebraism emphasises the intensity of Elijah's petition (cp Rom 15:30; Col 4:12; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12).

Rain: *brecho* - to moisten, wash (see Rev 11:6). This word indicates both rain and dew.



On the earth: *ge* - soil of a country, territory. “On that land” (Diag). This refers to the Land of Israel in this case (cp 1 Kings 18:1 - soil).


This occasion is recorded in 1 Kings 17:1 and 18:1. Although the record doesn't specifically say that Elijah prayed for the drought, the words “before whom I stand” in 1 Kings 17:1 indicate that Elijah had previously approached God in prayer to seek a blessing upon his proclamation to come.

What was Elijah's purpose in praying that it would not rain? Why did he then pray three and a half years later? (cp Deut 11:16-17; 1 Kings 18:37; Mal 4:5-6; Luke 1:17)

The fact that God heard the prayer and answered it, shows the power that is available in the prayer of the righteous to help those in need. The shutting up of heaven strongly indicates a power beyond man, but which could be affected in cooperation with God's will (cp Rev 11:6).

1 Kings 18:1 states that the rain was to come again in the third year. This is reconciled with James by the fact that Israel has a period of six months in the summer without rain. There was a three-year period without the normal rain, plus the usual six months totalling three and a half years since the last rain fell (cp Luke 4:25).

Christ's ministry likewise occupied three and a half years in a period of drought as far as the nation was concerned. At the conclusion of this period there was an outpouring of rain in the form of the Holy Spirit (cp Acts 2:17; Joel 2:23,28 with notes on Jam 5:7).

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

Rain: *huetos* - shower. It is created and given by God as a blessing but also as part of the natural cycles He has set in place (cp 1 Kings 8:35-36; Job 38:26-28; Jer 14:22; Acts 14:17).

Brought forth: *blastano* - to germinate, yield, spring up.

The events that surrounded Elijah's prayer for the restoration of the rain are recorded in 1 Kings 18:42-45. The intensity and concentration that he put into his prayer is evident. His prayer was not a mere utterance of words. As a result, it was answered with fruit being brought forth. We will also bring forth fruit if we pray in the right manner.

Elijah didn't give up after his first prayer but continued praying for rain – seven times! What lesson can we learn about prayer from this? Find some quotations that confirm your answer.

While God was answering Elijah's prayer, He was teaching Elijah that he had weaknesses. Elijah thought that with the rain, the people would return to God. But he found that Jezebel was still in control. He fled, despondent, only to be taught that it was not rain, wind, fire, or earthquake that would turn the hearts of the people, but the still small voice. The prayers of the righteous are heard but they may not be answered in the way expected.

LIVING THE WORD



When we pray, should we expect God to answer our prayer in the way we think it should be answered?

What should be our attitude to the expected outcome of our prayers?

There is another warning here for James' readers. Elijah's prayer was effective as far as the natural elements were concerned, but the people's hearts were not turned to God. James goes on to talk about those who were erring.

It may seem like James completely changes track in verses 19-20, however this is closely related to Elijah's work. Interestingly the only people that Elijah accomplished his work with were Gentiles! Israel did not see the error of their ways and God would later judge them for their unbelief.

How wonderful will it be for him in the Kingdom to have the opportunity to regather the Jews and complete his work of bringing them back to God!

5:19-20 – Responsibility towards erring brethren

James concludes his Epistle with words of encouragement for those who stray from the truth (and by extension those who work for the spiritual welfare of the Ecclesia).

The Greek text in these verses doesn't indicate clearly who is being written to - the sinner, or the one converting him from his error. But literal translations seem to favour the erring person, or at least the brethren in general.



“My Brethren, if any one among you wander from the truth, and someone turn him back; know you, that he who turns back a sinner from his path of error will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (Diag).

The context also suggests that James is addressing the erring person for several reasons.

1. James begins by using the term “Brethren”. Throughout his Epistle this is used as a term of endearment to encourage those who need strengthening (see Jam 1:2,16,19; 2:1,5,14; 3:1,10,12; 4:11; 5:7,9,10,12).
2. James has just completed a section encouraging the sick to seek support from those who can help. This section continues that encouragement.
3. In his whole Epistle, James has been addressing his remarks to those who need turning back from wandering off the true path. In his final words, it seems more appropriate to conclude with a strong appeal to them, rather than turn to a different group who would have known the effect of their work anyway.



Verse 19: Brethren, if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him;

Brethren: James makes his last heartfelt statement to his people.

Err: *planao* - to roam, wander (like a planet), be lead astray, be deceived.

What do these quotations say about erring from the Truth?

Matt 18:12-13

Heb 5:2

1 Pet 2:25

2 Pet 2:15

What are the two main ways of erring from the Truth, and how does this apply to us in our lives?

Convert: *epistrepho* - to revert, turn about, bring back. The opposite of “err”. This is also the work of Elijah (cp 1 Kings 18:37; Mal 4:6; Luke 1:17). The conversion of one who has lost their way is one of the highest forms of service that we can perform as shepherds to others (cp Eze 34:4,16).

LIVING THE WORD



The time that we spend in contact with someone who may be struggling to keep interest or belief in the things of God or who may have chosen not to come to the meeting anymore is of great importance. There are great pressures from the World upon God’s people causing them to stray, and we must spare no effort in trying to bring back and encourage those who are being pulled away.

Throughout his epistle, James has outlined the dangers that the brethren will face and has given the solution to overcoming them. Now he gives his final exhortation which encompasses all he has written so far.



Verse 20: Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death,



Let him know: “Be ye taking note” (Roth). This is an important point that James wants us to understand.

Error: *plane* - a straying. This is the root word of “err” (vs 19). A sinner is one who has been led astray by the error of the wicked (cp 2 Pet 3:17; Jude 11; 2 Thess 2:11).

Way: *hodos* - a road, progress along a route, way of thinking (cp Matt 7:13-14).

LIVING THE WORD



This verse shows the importance of our work. Often, we read of those who save someone from drowning or fire and who receive great attention. How much more purposeful is the saving of one from eternal death where they can glorify God in His Kingdom. Unfortunately, in most of these cases, the person doesn't realise that they are “dying”, and their rescuer finds himself the subject of ingratitude. Strength of purpose is required to help those who have strayed and do not realise it (cp Gal 6:7-10). It is one of the highest forms of service we can perform to others. It really is a life-or-death situation.

We may encounter obstacles when trying to help others as they may be struggling with one or more of the following issues:

- They may not see the need for conversion.
- They may be too proud to seek help.
- They may be resentful against God or the ecclesia.
- They may have new conflicting beliefs.
- They may be overwhelmed by their sins and personal failures.
- They may struggle to believe that God can still save them or that God would even want to save them.

These obstacles, however, should not stop us from trying to work with them with care and humility, knowing that we are also prone to weakness (cp Gal 6:1; Jude 22-23. See Lev 19:17-18).

As in the example of Elijah, we need to realise that it is the still small voice of reason, and evidence of God manifest in our lives that is required. Then, in appreciation for what God has done for us, we will seek to convert others (cp Psa 51:7-13), as is our duty (cp Gen 4:9; Eze 3:17-21). Those who help sinners and assist them in obtaining that covering for their sins are manifesting love for their neighbours and fulfilling the Royal Law (cp Jam 2:8; 1 Pet 4:8; 1 Cor 13:4-8; Prov 10:12; 17:9), the greatest example of this being the Lord Jesus Christ (cp Matt 1:21; 1 Tim 1:15). On the other hand, if we don't desire our brethren to be in God's Kingdom, then we are astray ourselves as we are not manifesting God's will (cp 1 Tim 2:4). No one is beyond redemption.



and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Hide: *kalupto* - to cover up, conceal so that no trace can be seen. In relation to sins, “hide” signifies “to cause them to be forgotten”, “to procure pardon”.

Multitude: *plethos* - a fullness, large number.

The sinner in repenting and turning back to God has the means for his sins to be forgiven (cp Jam 5:14-16; Psa 32:1-6).

LIVING THE WORD



As young people, how can we apply this verse in our lives? What does it imply about our responsibility to others as we grow in the Truth?

Take some time to write your thoughts regarding the above LIVING THE WORD section:

Perhaps James' mind in these last two verses is still in the life of Elijah the prophet. In his ministry, the only people that Elijah accomplished his purpose with were Gentiles. In 1 Kings 17, he saved a child from death (1 Kings 17:17-23). His method of prayer bore a marked similarity to the method mentioned in Jam 5:14-16, and upon the woman's confession of her faults (cp Jam 5:16), her multitude of sins were hidden (1 Kings 17:17,24). Elijah's desire was to turn the hearts of the people back to God.

This also sums up the purpose of James in writing his Epistle - he desired the salvation of his brethren. He wanted his readers to know and understand his motivation. It was not to condemn them and display their faults, but to save them from death. James is prompting his readers to consider what he has done in writing his Epistle - he has highlighted their errors and given them an opportunity to change their ways. What will their response be to this? Will they appreciate that they will be saved from eternal death if they heed his exhortation? There is a need to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (Jam 1:19). The people didn't listen to Elijah - the warning for James' readers was, “would they listen to him”?

James concludes his Epistle abruptly (which emphasises his final thought) but not without warmth. His constant use of the term “Brethren” shows his care and concern for the brotherhood, and his words show him to be a man of holiness, whose way of life was consistent with his teaching. He has emphasised the importance of the Word of God given us, and our responsibility to respond with works of faith that are founded in gratefulness for what God has given us.

My beloved brethren...

“Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only”.

It is the NZYC Committee's prayer that through the study and meditation of God's Word, you might understand more fully our Father's mind and that you can continuously be “Living the Word” in your daily lives.

This Study Guide was edited by Sis. Beth Cowell on behalf of the New Zealand Youth Conference 2024 Committee from the original New Zealand Youth Conference 2010 Study Guide written by Bro. Jacob Lewis and Sis Beth Ackerman.