

## Introduction to James

It has become an established custom when teaching a book of the Bible to take some time in introductory comments. These generally include the human author (since the book is inspired the Holy Spirit was speaking through James). Date of composition, background, people to whom written, along with what we know about those receiving the letter, regarding their moral or doctrinal strengths or weaknesses. Anything we know about the letter that is not in the letter, but is somewhere else in Scripture. This is especially true of the letters Paul wrote that were written while Luke was writing his history in the book of Acts.

The reasons why this is important is obvious and can be seen in the following illustration. As you are cleaning out an old desk drawer you find two old letters. One is a letter from your father to your mother when you were 5 years old. It is full of information about your family. People you know about and circumstances you have always wondered about. The second letter was written about the same time, but you do not know the people or the events. The first letter would be very interesting as it would not only have an emotional connection, but you would be able to fill in the gaps in the letter with your own knowledge. The second letter would be much more difficult because there is nothing to remember that we can use to fill in any information that we would need to really understand. The people and places cannot be guessed when personal pronouns are used that the recipients of the letter would know, but are now lost. We would be intrigued, but would end up setting the letter aside with regret because much that we would like to know cannot be answered.

Hence, it is clear that by understanding as much as possible about the background of the book, we put ourselves in a better position to understand the book itself. But the book of James presents some interesting difficulties.

The author is hard to place, the time of writing is impossible from outside and inside sources to determine, the people to whom he is writing could be exclusively Jewish Christians, or churches generally. The truth is that introductory comments on James are most contradictory and frustrating.

About the only thing one can say with certainty about this book (and even then you will find some who would argue it) is that the Holy Spirit is the author, and the citizens of God's kingdom, living under the New Covenant are the recipients.

### Author: James

*James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, James 1:1*

While this passage makes it clear that the author is James, it does not decrease our difficulty. There are two men with this name mentioned in the Scriptures. The first was the brother of the apostle John who along with their father had been partners in a fishing business with Simon called Peter.

*And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, **saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother**, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him. 21 Going on from there, He **saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother**, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. Matt. 4:18-22*

*For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and **so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon**. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." Luke 5:9-10*

James and John became two of Jesus apostles and were prominent in the ministry of Christ, being taken with him to very special events and along with Peter. Why James was mentioned first may have had to do with age or prominence but we don't know.

*Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his*

brother; **James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;** Matt. 10:2-3

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, **James, and John his brother**, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. Matt. 17:1-2

Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with **James and John**. 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. Mark 1:29-31

Then **James and John, the sons of Zebedee**, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." Mark 10:35

And **He took Peter, James, and John with Him**, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. 34 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch." Mark 14:33-34

And when His disciples **James and John saw this**, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" Luke 9:54

And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, **James, John**, and Andrew; Acts 1:13

Yet, all this information, helps us very little since it is very unlikely that this is the James that wrote this letter. In 44 ad, Herod beheaded this James and his life came to an end. If we date the letter before these events as some do, then the apostle James may be the writer, but it is very unlikely that this is the case.

**Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.** 3 And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Acts 12:2-3

So we now turn our attention to the other men named James that are mentioned in the New Testament. The difficulty here is that there are several men called James and it is difficult to prove that each time this term is used it is speaking of the same person.

Jesus had brothers who were initially hostile to Him. (Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:21; 31-35; Jn. 7:3-9).

Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. 21 But **when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."** ... 31 **Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him.** 32 And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You." Mk. 3:20-21; 3:31-32

**His brothers therefore said to Him,** "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. 4 For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." 5 **For even His brothers did not believe in Him.** 6 Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. 7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. 8 You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come." 9 When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee. John 7:3-9

One of them had the name of James, who was evidently with the apostles just before the church began. Paul appeared to speak of him to the Galatians.

Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and **brother of James**, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" So they were offended at Him. Mark 6:3

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and **Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.** Acts 1:14

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. 19 But **I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.** 20 (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) Gal. 1:18-20

Is this enough evidence to conclude that this is the James who Jesus appeared to after his resurrection who then went on to take a prominent role in the church, was the one speaking at the Jerusalem Conference and was the same one spoken about by Paul to the Galatians?

**After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. 1 Cor 15:7-8**

**And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and brethren, listen to me: 14 Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. 15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: Acts 15:13-15**

**On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. 19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. Acts 21:18-20**

**when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do. Gal 2:9-10**

**Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. Gal 2:11-13**

Most people have concluded that this is in fact the same person and that he is the author of the book of James. He rose to prominence behind the scenes and then began to take a much more prominent role after the death of James. He evidently stayed in Jerusalem, and worked with the elders on a level high enough that Paul mentioned him to the Galatians. This is the same James that Paul met with when taking the money for the needy saints to Jerusalem.

As noted in the introduction. While it would be satisfying to know the answers to these things, the fact remains that the Holy Spirit is the author of these Scriptures and the human author only satisfies our curiosity and helps us better understand the thinking behind the letter. It is not necessary to know.

## Time of Composition

There is nothing in the letter or in the book of Acts to give us any means to set a date. Since the book of James is a practical epistle, and focuses on the every day life of the Christian, it could have been written at any time. The ups and downs of life, and the temptations that so easily beset us. For this reason, it is a wonderful uplifting letter to those who are interested in fine tuning their spiritual life.

Although it does not focus on doctrine, like Romans, it was rejected by Martin Luther as being a very weak letter because of his misunderstanding of the use James made of Abraham and a working faith in the second chapter.

In his exposition of the First Epistle of St. Peter he writes in 1523: “If one wants to preach the gospel, it must, in short, be on the resurrection of Christ. He who does not do that is no apostle; for this is the main part of the gospel. And those are the right, noblest books, which teach and impress this, as stated above. Hence one can well feel that the Epistle of James is no right apostolic epistle, for there is hardly a thing of this in it.” (Lenski, Richard C. H., New Testament Commentaries)

... In sum: the gospel and the first epistle of St. John, St. Paul’s epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians; and St. Peter’s first epistle, are the books which show Christ to you. They teach everything you need to know for your salvation even if you were never to see or hear any other book or hear any other teaching. In comparison with these they epistle of James is an epistle full of straw, because it contains nothing evangelical. But more about this in other prefaces. ... In direct opposition to Paul and to the rest of the Bible it ascribes justification to works, quoting Abraham wrongly as one who was justified by his works. This in itself proves that the epistle cannot be of apostolic origin. (Barclay, William “Daily Study Bible” vol 14 p 7)

Though Martin Luther through a misunderstanding of the nature of grace and works and the NT rejected the book of James as an inspired epistle, a deep study of his rejection leaves it unscathed.

The difficult Scriptures of Paul were wrested for him to draw that conclusion(II Pet 3:14-16). All in all I believe we will find James to be a fascinating epistle which in every way fits like a glove on the hand of the teachings of our Lord in the gospels and of the other inspired writers of the NT Scriptures.

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## **1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,**

As was just mentioned in the introduction, there are two James’ to which this can refer. Either the apostle James, the brother of the apostle John who was beheaded by Herod in Acts 12 in the year 44 AD, or the brother of Jesus Christ who was converted after His resurrection and became a great influence in the church at Jerusalem. (See the comments in the introduction for a fuller description). Since the real author is the Holy Spirit, and we are therefore in no danger regarding the human author, and since the vast majority have concluded it is the latter James, we will speak of him in this first section. Though the gospels record unbelief on the part of his brothers (John 7:3-5), I Cor 15:7 gives the reason for their change of heart. Why Jesus would appear to him may strike some as strange, but it must have been very difficult for these devout Jews to believe that the older brother they had known since childhood was actually the Messiah. Jesus felt for whatever reason that James deserved a special visit. What an inspiring thing that must have been for him. Yet in spite of all this, he here prefers to call himself the “servant” of the Lord:

“*doulos... 1. a slave, bondman, man of servile condition... a. properly... b. metaph. aa. one who gives himself up wholly to another’s will... gg. doulos tinos devoted to another to the disregard of one’s own interests...*” (Thayer, p. 157-158; 1401)

For James, and all the devout who have ever lived, this is the highest of all honors God bestows upon mankind. To be a bondservant of Jesus is the most uplifting and honorable opportunity God has ever given to man after the fall. When one serves a “Lord” he is under his protection and power:

“*kurios... having power or authority... he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has the power of deciding; master, lord; used a... of the possessor and disposer of a thing, the owner... in the state, the sovereign, prince, chief...*” (Thayer, p. 365-366; 2962)

The greater the power of the Lord, the greater the protection and honor bestowed upon the servants.

## **to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad,**

The recipients of the letter are as difficult to identify as the author. Because James used the term “twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad,” many have concluded that this is a letter written exclusively to Jewish Christians. If it was written before the conversion of the Gentiles, then it would make perfect sense that he would only be addressing Jewish Christians. But if it were written after that time, why would he limit the book in this way? There is no difference at all between a Jewish and a Gentile Christian. Once baptized, we are all Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise in a very special way. All of us are now children of Abraham in the same way that Isaac was. Whether born a Jew or a Gentile, baptism removes all distinctions! We are all children of

promise and not children of the flesh.

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Gal. 3:26-29*

*Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Gal. 4:28-30*

Paul made it very clear that God never intended for there to be any distinction in Christians. That is one of the reasons why God did not command circumcision immediately.

*Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised. Rom 4:9-12*

*Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. Gal. 3:7*

If at the time of writing, there were no Gentile Christians then I would heartily concur that James is only writing to Israel, but once the Gentiles were called, this designation could not longer refer exclusively to Jews. There is nothing that the Holy Spirit required of a Jewish Christian that is not also required of a Gentile Christian.

The term “scattered” was used of the Jewish people in the Greek Septuagint to refer to those dispersed by foreign kings and especially Babylon:

*“diaspora... a scattering, dispersion... in the Sept. used of the Israelites dispersed among foreign nations... esp of their Babylonian exile... Transferred to Christians[i.e. Jewish Christians(?)] scattered abroad among the Gentiles... James 1:1 sojourners far from home, in Pontus... I Pet 1:1...” (Thayer, p. 141-142; 1290)*

There is a rich heritage behind this term and it is important for Christians to understand it. The concept was introduced by God to describe what He was going to do to Israel if they rebelled against Him.

*“Then **the LORD will scatter you among all peoples**, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known-- wood and stone. Deut 28:64*

Later Moses added more details and promised that God would bring back those who are scattered.

*“Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and **you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you**, 2 **“and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul**, 3 **“that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you**. 4 **“If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you**. 5 **“Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers**. 6 **“And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.” Deut 30:1-6***

While the Jews focused on the first return which occurred at the time of Cyrus when Jews returned and rebuilt the temple under the guidance of Zerubbabel and Joshua, Christians focus on the second gathering.

***And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For***

**the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious.” 11 It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea. 12 He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. ... 16 There will be a highway for the remnant of His people Who will be left from Assyria, As it was for Israel In the day that he came up from the land of Egypt. Isa 11:10-12, 16**

This second gathering would be for the Jew first and also for the Greek. The book of Acts records exactly how God sought for His sheep and placed them under shepherds (the elders of the church) who were under the chief shepherd David.

*‘For thus says the Lord God: “**Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. 13 And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord God. 16 “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.”** Ezek 34:11-16*

*“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the Lord. 2 Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: “You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,” says the Lord. 3 “**But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4 I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,” says the Lord. Jer. 23:1-4***

Also in this second gathering, God will take out the heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh. At that same moment, God would also give them the Holy Spirit.

*“**Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. 23 And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. 24 For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. 28 Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. 29 I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. 30 And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. 31 Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. 32 Not for your sake do I do this,” says the Lord God, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!”** Ezek. 36:22-32*

## **2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,**

James begins his book with one of the most complicated and perilous of the things confronting Christians. Yet instead of explaining why these trials occur, he simply revealed how we are to think about them and what they can accomplish. What should our attitude be toward the many different trials, troubles and difficulties that enter into our lives without warning? *“All joy considering, my*

*brethren*,” is James literal answer. When these trials enter unexpectedly into our lives, our first response should be “*all joy*.”

“*pas*,... I. adjectivally, and 1. with anarthrous nouns; a. *any, every one* (sc. of the class denoted by the noun annexed to *pas*);... *all or any* of the class indicated... b. *any and every, of every kind*, ... esp. with nouns designating virtues or vices, emotions, character, condition, to indicate every mode in which such virtue, vice or emotion manifests itself, c. *the whole ...*” (Thayer, p. 491-493; 3956).

“*chara*... *joy, gladness*; ... b. by meton. *the cause or occasion of joy*...” (Thayer, p. 664-665; 5479)

“*chara ... joy, delight*” (akin to *chairo*, “*to rejoice*”), ...” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:5479)

Every form and quality of joy, gladness and delight would generally be reserved only for the best days of our life. Days filled with blessings and prosperity and good news. For these same emotions to be generated and directed toward every kind of trial is going to take some serious rethinking. The paradox of seeing bad things as good and feeling the same joy toward them is going to need some powerful reasons and motivations.

How can we “*consider*” it joyful when terrible things occur? This is a term that describes our ability to think, add up and conclude. These are not based on “*inner feeling or sentiment*,” but only on “*due consideration of external grounds*.” It requires a more “*deliberate and careful assessment*.”

“*hegeomai*... 2. i.q. *to consider, deem, account, think*...” *hegeomai* and *nomizo* denote a belief resting not on one’s inner feeling or sentiment, but on the due consideration of external grounds, the weighing and comparing, of facts; *dokeo* and *oiomai*, on the other hand, describe a subjective judgment growing out of inclination or a view of facts in their relation to us. *hegeomai* denotes a more deliberate and careful judgment than *nomizo*; *oiomai*, a subjective judgment which has feeling rather than thought (*dokeo*) for its ground. (Cf. Schmidt, chapter 17.)...” (Thayer, p. 276; 2233)

Hence within the command is the necessity of making the proper assessment and determination of all the facts until joy in the midst of trials is the only logical and natural response. The consideration of the trial is a natural response. Whenever something bad happens to us, we seek to determine the cause and the affect. Who was responsible for this and how did it happen. What is lacking for most Christians would be the joy. But after it is all added up and everything has been considered every trial has something about it that will bring joy.

Since the term “*trial*” has as it’s basic meaning “*an experiment*” or “*test*,” It covers anything that tests our faith and fidelity.

“*peirasmos*... *an experiment, attempt, trial, proving*... a. univ. *trial proving*... b. spec. *the trial of man’s fidelity, integrity, virtue, constancy*... also *an enticement to sin, temptation*, ... of a condition of things, or a mental state, by which we are enticed... *adversity, affliction, trouble*... sent by God and serving to test or prove one’s faith, holiness, character... c. ‘*temptation*’ (i.e. *trial*) of God by men, i. e. rebellion against God, by which his power and justice are, as it were, put to the proof and challenged to show themselves...” (Thayer, p. 499; 3986)

*peirasmós* masc. noun from *peirázō* (3985), to make trial of, try, tempt. Trial, temptation, a putting to the test, spoken of persons only. When God is the agent, *peirasmós* is for the purpose of proving someone, never for the purpose of causing him to fall. If it is the devil who tempts, then it is for the purpose of causing one to fall. (I) Generally, trial of one’s character (1Peter 4:12, “to try [or prove] you”). (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:3986)

When we look at its uses in the Scriptures it is a very broad word group. It covers three realms. The first are those tests God Himself uses. It was the way God tested Abraham and later Israel in the wilderness. These are tests God hopes we will succeed and pass through safely. Abraham could certainly rejoice after God gave Isaac back to him.

The second way are the simple acts of time and chance that come into our lives. The accidents, troubles and sorrows that enter our lives because we live in a sin cursed world.

*I returned and saw under the sun that — The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all. 12 For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, Like birds*

*caught in a snare, So the sons of men are snared in an evil time, When it falls suddenly upon them.*  
Eccl. 9:11-12

These are things that just overwhelmed us without any warning. One minute they are not there and the next minute they are all around us.

The third type of trials are those designed by Satan in hopes that we will fail and sin. These were the temptations Eve endured in the garden and Jesus endured after His forty day fast. These are not included here, but will be described separated later in the chapter. (Jas. 1:12-15).

James makes it clear that he is only discussing those trails Here it is confined to those events we “fall into.”

The main sense of *peripipto* is “to come on something accidentally,” Hdt., VI, 105, “to be innocently involved in something,” commonly with *mishaps* etc., Eur. Or., 367, also “to be overturned,” “to sink,” Plut. Anton., 67 (I, 947 b). ... The noun *periptoma* means “mishap.” (Kittel TDWNT NT:4045)

By using this term, James limits these trials we come upon accidentally and innocently. They were not directed. They did not come as a result of internal decisions as described with the temptations James will speak of in verse 12. But any trial that we endure that we don’t know its source fits under the term “various.”

“*poikilos* ... many-colored, spotted, mottled, pied, dappled, of leopards, fawns, Hom., etc. II. of robes, wrought in various colours, brodered, ... III. metaph. *changeful, various, diversified, manifold*, Aesch., Plat.:- (Liddell and Scott, Greek Lexicon. NT:4164)

It is difficult to limit this term. Every type and variety of trial is under consideration. Although we know different what Job endured would fall directly under James words here. They were various trials where he lost his possessions and family. Later he also lost he health, reputation and well-being. All of these would be a part of the “*many-colored, mottled,*” and “*manifold*” nature of the trials James is discussing.

God obviously wants us to view trials in a very different way than the world views them. If we view trials the way the world views them then it would be impossible for us to consider them all joy. So we have to find a way to look at trials that will lead us in the end to feel joy.

Look at the similarity between how Jesus commands us to look at the trials of persecution. Some of the worst trials come from the things Jesus described. We are told that hatred, reviling, exclusions and persecutions can bring great blessings to us and that because of these blessings, we can see the trials as bringing joy. Peter used this same reasoning as he spoke of the fiery trial that was to come upon them.

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*  
11 “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 **Rejoice and be exceedingly glad**, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

*Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man’s sake. 23 **Rejoice in that day and leap for joy!** For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.* Luke 6:22-23

*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but **rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.*** 1 Peter 4:12-14

Jesus asked us to look at the the return and the reward. What appears to be a loss and great sorrow when looked at only from this world becomes a great reward in heaven in the life to come. So joy in trials is a manifestation and reflection of our faith in the words of our Lord.

Yet the term “trials” is not limited only to those endured under persecution from faithful service to God. It also works for all tribulations. Whenever our life closes in on us and we don’t know where to turn, we are in a tribulation. It should lead to joy.

*And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Rom 5:3-5*

*Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Phil 4:11-13*

*And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:7-10*

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Cor 4:16-18*

All forms of adversity and tribulation are under consideration. Anything that we fall into that causes sorrow and loss can be viewed in this light. When we fall into adversity, we are given an opportunity to prove what we are made of. This requires great faith and trust in God to view things in this manner. It is a great leap of maturity when we can do so. Consider this carefully next time we are in a grievous circumstance and you have to decide how you are going to react to it. This is not speaking of the sorrow of the event itself.

We will often grieve at the loss of whatever quality it might be, but what will we do with it spiritually? Will we lash out in anger at God, will we doubt Him or His wisdom and love? Or will we recognize that this is an opportunity to once again be made aware that this life is not all there is, that God allows things here that will never re-occur in heaven because the world is sin-cursed and the free-will of man reigns supreme.

Regardless of our previous understanding of trials and difficulties, we must be transformed and learn how to accomplish this.

*I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Rom 12:1-2*

This will be a great transformation. It encompasses our understanding of material blessings and our reason for continuing to live in this life. How do we view our possessions, health and prosperity? Are they such a critical part of life that we feel a great loss and sorrow when a trial removes them? Our response to trials manifests our priorities, because the truth is that this life is a preparation for the one to come. Which one is the most important and takes the most time and effort tells us how spiritually or materially minded one is. Trials are going to come into the lives of all men. Such trials are a useful setback to those who are too materially minded, and are a means of joy and peace for those who are not. Why is this the case? Because those who are spiritually minded have reached a point where they deem these setbacks and trials as a necessary means of showing them the temporary and uncontrollable nature of this life.

Jesus warned us against putting too much importance to this life (Mt. 6:19-34). He also warned us to beware of covetousness. No one's life does consist of what he possesses.

*And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." Luke 12:15*

Consider the work of God; For who can make straight what He has made crooked? 14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, But in the day of adversity consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, So that man can find out nothing that will come after him. Eccl 7:13-14

The way we respond to trials will reveal to us exactly how far we have come in our view of life. It is easy to become greedy and allow our expectations of how we should enjoy this life to become a “*care of the world*” that can choke the word. When we can accept trials and loss and still feel joy, then we know we are not in danger of these things.

### 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

## Commands and Promises

- when you fall into various trials: **count it all joy**
- knowing testing faith: **produces patience.**
- **Let patience have its perfect work:**
- You may be **perfect complete, lacking nothing.**
- If you lack **wisdom: ask of God,**
- who **gives to all liberally** and **without reproach,**
- and it **will be given to him.**
- But Let him **ask in faith**
- **Let not think** that man will receive anything
- A double mind man unstable in all his ways.

James now narrows down our inquiry to one central consideration that will create our reason to feel joy. There is something we need to “*know*.” This is the term used when we are speaking about “*intelligent comprehension of an object or matter*.” It is “*a knowledge grounded in personal experience*,” but it may be being gained for the first time, or it may be perceiving it again and gaining even more insight.

“*ginosko... I. univ. 1. to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of;... 2 to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of... II in particular ginosko, to become acquainted with, to know, In classic usage...*”

*ginoskein...denotes a discriminating apprehension of external impressions, a knowledge grounded in personal experience ...*” (Thayer, p. 117-118; 1097)

“*ginosko... denotes in ordinary Greek the intelligent comprehension of an object or matter, whether this comes for the first time, or comes afresh, into the consideration of the one who grasps it (“to come to know,” “to experience,” “to perceive [again]”) or whether it is already present (“to perceive”).* (Kittel TDWNT NT:1097).

As a present active participle, this is knowledge that is always right in the forefront of the mind, where he can use it at any moment. First, comes the blast of shock and concern, then comes the calm and deliberate decision to see it as a reason to rejoice. This will not be the natural way we look at tribulations and trials. So every trial now becomes an opportunity to remember this knowledge.

One single fact that we need to be “knowing” at all times is that every trial is a “*test*” of our faith”

“*dokimion... 1. the proving... 2. that by which something is tried or proved, a test... in Sept. of a crucible or furnace for smelting...*” (Thayer, p. 155; 1383)

The stem word is *doke* “watching” ... *dokimos* ... as an adjective both of person and object thus denotes a. “tested in battle,” “reliable,” “trustworthy,” b. “a man who is tested, significant, recognized, esteemed, worthy” ... or “an object which is tested, genuine or valuable” ... *dokimion* is the neuter of an adjective *dokimios* “tested,” “genuine” In the substantive form, it has the same meaning as the older ... “means of testing,” (Kittel TDWNT, NT:1383)

Peter is the only other writer in the New Testament who uses this term, and he uses it in such a similar manner that it is very helpful to consider.

*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the **genuineness (proof ASV NASB)** of your faith, being much more precious than gold*

*that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1Pet. 1:6-7*

How do these various trials “test” faith. We can all speak of our love and devotion to God and of our desire to serve Him even to the point of losing our life. But when trials of various sorts come they test the veracity of those statements. We can read about Job in the Scriptures and tell ourselves that we would remain faithful during such terrible ordeals, but when they come, we can rejoice because we know that our words and our convictions are being tested.

It is easy to quote Paul and proclaim that we know everything that happens to us can work out to our good.

*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Rom. 8:28*

When the time comes to prove our words true, we should have a sense of anticipation. Now we have the chance to learn from experience. Now we can go through these trials and after coming out of them truly see that they **DO** work out for good!

Trials are an opportunity to show God what we are made of, and that our faith will not waver in Him in the slightest. Every time we pass through tribulations we realize that our faith has not failed us and it has not failed God. This is what Peter was revealing in his first epistle. What is being produced during this time is more precious than gold. So Abraham must have felt as he was offering up Isaac.

Tribulations prove faith. How can we show our faith to God without adversity and trials? The sad answer is that in this present life, the only way to manifest great faith is by great persecution, trial and loss. In this way Job was tested by God and Satan and showed his great faith in God. If we realize that each occurrence is a proving and that with the passing of each test comes a further guarantee of a genuine faith, we can become joyful. There is another aspect of this. Even if we are struggling with the trial, there can still be joy because we are gaining endurance.

### **produces endurance.**

This is the heart of why we should have joy when we pass through a trial. It brings us something we can in no other way produce. The only way to gain endurance is by passing through such trials. There is no other way to get it. The term “produce” is defined:

*“katēgazomai... a. to perform, accomplish, achieve [RV often work]... b. to work out... i.e. **to do that from which something results... bring about, result in**,... c. ... to fashion, i.e. render one fit for a thing...” (Thayer, P. 339; 2716)*

*“katēgazomai... found from the time of Soph., means a. “to bear down to the ground,” “to overcome,” b. “to work at,” “make.” Refined by constant use, it gradually takes on the sense of the simple, so that **the verb signifies working at, and finally accomplishing, a task. It is used in agriculture and in the making of materials,**...” (Kittel, TDWNT; NT:2716)*

Trials do something from which patience results. They bring about and result in patience. Just like sandpaper results in a smooth piece of wood, or a rake produces smooth ground, trials produce patience in the heart and soul. Consider how Paul described the process:

*And not only this, but **we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint**, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Rom 5:3-5*

Paul rejoiced and was proud of his tribulations. They produced patience and patience produced character, and character produced hope. As Christians pass through trials they look back on the ones passed as mountains already climbed. They are a badge of honor and a testimony to character. They give hope and they give greater patience to do more in the future. The term patience is defined:

*“hupomone... 1. steadfastness, constancy, endurance... in the N. T. the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings... 2. a patient, steadfast waiting for... 3. a patient enduring, sustaining...”* (Thayer, p. 644; 5281)

*“hupomeno... 2. to remain i.e. abide, not recede or flee; troop. a. to persevere: absol. and emphatic. under misfortunes and trials to hold fast to one’s faith in Christ... b. to endure bravely, bear bravely and calmly: absol., ill-treatment...”* (Thayer, p. 644; 5278)

The term *hupo* means “under” and the term “*mone*” means to “remain” or “to abide.” so *hupo-mone* means to remain or abide under something. When trials come we often have to make the choice of whether to remain under them or to bail out. Bailing out means lack of character and weakness and remaining under them means strength of character and power over life.

Patience is the ability to remain under trails and tribulations and not bail out of them. It gives the power and the reasons to remain under trials without wavering and often without complaining because having been there before, we know it has an end, that it produces great benefits in our character that far outweigh the temporary unhappiness presently being endured, and that we can do it.

The Hebrew writer uses two analogies. The first is the only way to run further is to run with endurance. The more we endure today, the further we can run tomorrow. Endurance produces more endurance. The second is that of a father chastening and disciplining his son. The more he disciplines the more he can endure.

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and **let us run with endurance the race that is set before us**, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, **who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame**, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 **For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.** 4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” 7 **If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons;** for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Heb 12:1-9*

James follows this truth with another command:

#### **4 But let patience have its perfect work**

We know this is a command because James placed it in the imperative mode. While our translators chose “*let patience have*,” they could have also used “*make patience have*.” Clearly the command to “*have*” means that is something we must make happen. “*Have*” is a very broad word for possession.

*“echo... . Transitively. 1. to have i. q. to hold; a. to have(hold) in the hand: ... b. in the sense of wearing... c. trop. to have (hold) possession of the mind; said of alarm, agitating emotions... d. to hold fast, keep... e. to have (in itself or as a consequence), comprise, involve... f... to regard, consider, hold as... 2. to have . q. to own, possess; a. external things such as pertain to property, riches, furniture, utensils, goods, food, etc. II. Intransitively. . . to hold one’s self to a thing, to lay hold of a thing, to adhere or cling to; to be closely joined to a person or thing... near, adjoining, neighboring, bordering, next...”* (Thayer, p. 265-268; 2192).

*“echo... 1. This verb is used more than 700 times in the NT, esp. in the Gospels (Matthew 75 times, Mark 72 times, Luke 78 times, John 88 times), which is related to their lively narrative style. Among the NT writings the Johannine literature is particularly prominent (thus 1 John about 28 times, Revelation about 101 times). 2. The verb has a great breadth of meaning: have, keep, possess; aor.: acquire, take possession; intrans.: be, be situated ...”* (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament NT:2192)

When our trials come, and we meet them with faith and trust, they will create patience/

perseverance. But since patience / perseverance is only the ability to remain under trials, in and of itself, it cannot bring the desired result of joy, contentment and maturity. Only when we have the perspective given here and by Paul in Romans can we “let patience have and possess a perfect work. But it is only within our will and desire that we can allow perseverance to bring us to perfection (maturity). How do we let it do that? Two things. First, we always remember that trials bring perseverance and that leads secondly to our rejoicing while we are in their midst. Look at the process again:

*And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Rom 5:3-5*

First, we glory (exult and feel joy and a sense of pride) as we enter a tribulation (pressure). The joy and exultation comes because we know it produces perseverance. We must also learn and keep foremost in our minds that this perseverance is only one link in the chain. Next comes character and finally hope. Only by properly enduring the trials can we produce the character God wants to see within us and only when we have that can we have hope.

*Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Heb. 12:8*

It is this process of tribulation and chastening that we must allow perseverance to produce the perfect “work” (peaceable fruit of righteousness)

*“ergon... 1. business, employment, that with which anyone is occupied... 2. any product whatever, any thing accomplished by hand, art, industry, mind... 3. an act, deed, thing done: ...” (Thayer, p. 248; 2041)*

*ergon ... business, ... 2. of works of industry, tilled lands, fields, farms, Hom.; ... then, generally, property, wealth, possessions, ... b. of women’s work, weaving, ... c. of other occupations, fishing, as a way of life, ... in Att. also of all kinds of works, such as mines, iron-works, ...” (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT: 2041)*

In every realm of life what comes of work is results. If it is a farm, it is a harvest. If it is fishing it is fish and if it is mining, it is ore. If it is trials, it is endurance and if it is endurance it is maturity. But we must let this happen. We can short circuit the process with anger, bitterness or loss of faith. It is up to us to bring our joy to this effort.

If through proper efforts, we bring the joy, the product in our heart will be perfection. Hence, in two quick steps James has taken us from infancy to maturity. We begin our lives as Christians with faith. Faith comes by hearing God’s word, and we can gain more and more of it by going listening. Patience comes through trials. The trials of life should be joyfully met by the child of faith because they are the quickest route to patience and patience is the quickest route to “maturity.”

*“teleios,... brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect... substantively, that which is perfect: of men, full-grown, adult; of full age, mature,... of mind and character, one who has reached the proper height of virtue and integrity...” (Thayer, p. 618).*

*“teleios and teleos, ... having reached its end, finished, complete, ll., etc.: of victims, perfect, without spot or blemish, ... 2. of animals, fullgrown, Xen., etc. 3. of persons, absolute, complete, accomplished, perfect in his or its kind, 4. of prayers, vows, etc., fulfilled, accomplished, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon)*

While perfection is one of its meanings, you can see from the definitions that it is a fluid term. A *full grown* animal, a *complete* or *accomplished* person, or fulfilled and *accomplished* prayers and vows. If I want God to see me as I ought to be then I will need to pass through all the various trials of life with joy and contentment and not bitterness or lack of faith.

**that you may be perfect and complete,**

With a “final conjunction” James takes all the previous thoughts on joyful trials and brings the “purpose,” “intent,” and “end.”

*“hina... II a final conjunction(for from local direction, indicated by the adverb, the transition was easy to mental direction or intention) denoting purpose and end: to the intent that; to the end that, in order that;... it is used 1. prop of the purpose or end...”* (Thayer, p. 302-304; 2443)

The end result of counting all trials joy, of knowing that trials produce patience, and of letting patience lead us on to perfect work is that we will be perfect and complete. He repeats the same word defined above: *“brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect”* and then adds *“complete.”*

*“holokleros... complete in all its parts, in no part wanting or unsound, complete, entire, whole, ... of a body, without blemish or defect, whether of a priest or of a victim... Ethically, free from sin, faultless, ... complete in all respects, consummate...”* (Thayer, p. 443; 3648)

*“holokleros... a totality, with special emphasis upon the entity as a whole - ‘whole, entire.’* (Lou & Nida Greek English Lexicon NT:3648)

*holokleros ... denotes completeness in extent or compass, and is thus a term of quantity rather than quality. ... “Whole,” of vessels:”* (Kittel TDWNT NT: 3648).

With this synonym, we have perfection both in quality and quantity. Clearly, in the eyes of God our response to trials is a very important. It shouldn't surprise us after reading Job, that God needs more than faith from His servants.

*If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small. Prov 24:10*

*For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. Heb 10:36-39*

In the sin cursed world in which we live, God needs servants who can handle the stresses and strains of life. God can't fix every unfair thing that occurs due to sin and His gracious dealings with others.

*There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. Eccl 8:14*

*I have seen everything in my days of vanity: There is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, And there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness. Eccl 7:15*

*Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. 3 For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ... 13 Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence. 14 For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning. 15 If I had said, “I will speak thus,” Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. 16 When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me — 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. Ps. 73:1-3, 13-17*

When we are able to count all our trials and tribulations as joyous events that prove and strengthen us, we have moved beyond one of the greatest threats to our spiritual growth. As Jesus noted in the parable of the sower, of all who obey the gospel, trials and tribulations will take a great toil.

*But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Mt. 13:20-21*

*But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation(**same as trial here**) fall away. Lk. 8:13-14*

So there is no exaggeration here. As long as we are unprepared to meet trials, Satan can *“sift us like wheat.”* As Job and the prophets, Satan has found persecution and terrible trials an effective tool to hinder or ever stop the progress of the righteous. If we want to become all that the gospel has to power to make of us, this is one of the greatest steps. Very precious and exceeding great promises are given here to the people of God if they count their trials a joy and know that they

produce patience. But James is not quite finished.

### **lacking nothing.**

Lest we think that somehow our understanding up to this point in the book is too much, James now also addresses it negatively. Not only will it make us perfect and entire, but it will also keep us from “*lacking*” anything. James joins to universal terms. “*Lacking*” is only used to describe things that are forsaken, left behind or destitute. When we don’t possess something necessary to completion, we have a lack that will lead to the loss of what we sought to accomplish.

“*leipo*... 1. trans. *to leave, leave behind, forsake*; pass. *to be left behind*(prop. by one’s rival in a race, hence), a. *to lag, be inferior*... b. *to be destitute of, to lack*... 2. intrans *to be wanting or absent, to fail*...” (Thayer, p. 375; 3007)

“*leipo*... a: *to not possess something which is necessary - ‘to not have, to be in need of, to lack.’* ‘if there is a fellow believer, man or woman, who needs clothes and has nothing to eat each day’ James 2:15; (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon NT:3007)

“*leipo*... . *To leave, forsake, fail, be wanting or deficient*. Intrans. *to fail, lack, be wanting* (Luke 18:22; Titus 1:5; 3:13). In the pass., *leipomai* , *to be deficient in or destitute of, forsaken of, to lack* (James 1:5; ...” (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT: 3007)

Without this ability we truly will be wanting and deficient. Something essential will be unavailable and we will be destitute. But if we can respond to trials as James has revealed, then we will be wanting, deficient and destitute in “*nothing*.” This too is a *absolute* term. It is used when there is no one, nothing, or none. Hence joined to the noun lacking, it means there is nothing lacking.

“*medeis*,... it is used either in connection with a noun, *no, none*, or absolutely, *no one, not one, no man*, neut. *nothing*,... a. with an imperative: MEDEIS being the person to whom something is forbidden... [A. V. *have thou nothing to do with* etc.], “ (Thayer, p. 411; 3367).

There is some amazing promises and powerful information here. But for some, joy in trials and tribulations are one of the final mountains to climb to spiritual maturity. Added to revelation, there is one more step that we can take to reach this pinnacle. Whenever we can’t understand something clearly revealed in the Scriptures, it is a clear sign of lack of wisdom. If we have any such lack of wisdom, we can pray for enlightenment.

### **5 But if any of you lacks wisdom,**

Once again, James repeats the word from the previous verse. If we can master the steps outlined by James of counting it all joy when falling into manifold trials because we know it will make us perfect and we will not be lacking in anything. Since these are inspired words there is not doubt to their truth, but we may “*lack*” the wisdom necessary to see it.

So we must now make a careful assessment. If we are still unable to see any joy in our trials, the first thing we must look at is where the faith is coming from that is necessary for us to believe it. Since faith comes by hearing the word of God, perhaps we have not seen all the Scriptures that would round out the knowledge necessary for us to have the joy. So we look at Job, all the prophets, Jesus and His apostles and our brethren. We see that trials and tribulations bring such great blessings that they should lead us to joy. But we still can’t seem to muster it. That’s when we start praying for the wisdom necessary to take the light and apply it to the darkness that is keeping us from seeing the truth.

So the final step will always be this. When we have the truth, have the faith, but can’t make the application, we start praying for “*wisdom*.”

“*sophia*, ... *wisdom, broad and full intelligence*,... used of the knowledge of very divers matters, so that the shade of meaning in which the word is taken must be discovered from the context in every particular case. a. the wisdom which belongs to men... the varied knowledge of things human and divine, acquired by acuteness and experience... skill in the management of affairs... an acquaintance with divine things and human duties, joined to a power of discoursing concerning them and of

interpreting and applying sacred Scripture...” (Thayer, p. 581-582; 4678)

This is such a broad word and used in every language of the world that we must rely more on Scripture for the definition. In every culture there is a word to describe the ability to apply the knowledge of simple things to the complex. When we have mastered this we have wisdom. This same concept is also in the Scriptures. It is the ability to take the knowledge of God’s word and skillfully apply it to our life and the lives of others.

The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes were both written to give God’s people a broad knowledge and understanding. Consider just a few passages to grasp the concept.

*The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: 2 **To know wisdom and instruction, To perceive the words of understanding, 3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, Justice, judgment, and equity; 4 To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion — 5 A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, 6 To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their riddles. 7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction. Pr. 1:1-7***

*My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you, 2 So that you **incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding; 3 Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, 4 If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; 5 Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, And find the knowledge of God. 6 For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding; 7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; 8 He guards the paths of justice, And preserves the way of His saints. 9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice, Equity and every good path. 10 When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul, 11 Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you, Pr. 2:1-11***

***Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. 8 It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones. Pr. 3:5-8***

***Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding; 14 For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold. 15 She is more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. 16 Length of days is in her right hand, In her left hand riches and honor. 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, And all her paths are peace. 18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who retain her. Pr. 3:13-18***

***Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. 6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you. 7 Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. 8 Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor, when you embrace her. 9 She will place on your head an ornament of grace; A crown of glory she will deliver to you.” Pr. 4:5-9***

***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. 11 For by me your days will be multiplied, And years of life will be added to you. 12 If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, And if you scoff, you will bear it alone.” Pr. 9:10-12***

How do we sum all of these things into one whole? Wisdom is the ability to take all that we know about God and His expectations and properly apply them to our present circumstances. It is the ability to make the right decisions at the right time to receive a good outcome. It is the ability to see a problem, find the cause of the problem, and take the steps to solve the problem.

Since God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the same wisdom that understands the material realm and successfully works will also apply to the spiritual and moral realm. God did not make them separate. They work in tandem and harmony with one another. When one is out of kilter so will be the other.

Wisdom will bring all the facts and truths regarding trials and tribulations into a clear path leading to joy. Once we know how God wants us to go about it, then we must gain the wisdom to do it in the right way. In doing it the right way, we will always be successful.

If we lack this, then we are in a dangerous position, but God has an answer for us. If we lack this quality concerning trials, patience, and perfection, then this is what God wants us to do.

### let him ask of God,

God wants us to ask Him for help. Simple, clear, concise, and easy to accomplish. There is no Christian who has ever lived that would find this too hard to do. We might forget it, rebel against it, doubt it and give up, but no one can say this is too hard to do or to understand.

The simplicity of this answer is so clear that it should astound, amaze, and shame us. If this is all there is to it, then why are we not all experts? Either ignorance or rebellion. Yet God guarantees that if we do this, He will give us the ability to do all He has set forth.

By repeating the imperative mode, James continues to give commands, just as Jesus told His apostles to do (Mt 28:20). If we lack the wisdom to have the joy we are commanded to ask for it. This is not a suggestion, but a command. This term for ask is both submissive and compliant. This is not a demand, but a request from the inferior to the superior.

## Commands and Promises

- when you fall into various trials: **count it all joy**
- knowing testing faith: **produces patience.**
- **Let patience have its perfect work:**
- You may be **perfect complete, lacking nothing.**
- If you lack **wisdom: ask of God,**
- who **gives to all liberally** and **without reproach,**
- and it **will be given to him.**
- But Let him **ask in faith**
- **Let not think** that man will receive anything
- A double mind man unstable in all his ways.

*“aiteo... to ask mid. to ask for one’s self, request for one’s self...” (Thayer, p. 17; 154)*

*“aiteo ... is more submissive and suppliant, indeed the constant word for the seeking of the inferior from the superior (Acts 12:20); of the beggar from him that should give alms (Acts 3:2); of the child from the parent (Matt 7:9; Luke 6:11; Lam 4:4); of the subject from the ruler (Ezra 8:22); (Trench’s Synonyms of the NT; 154)*

Jesus used this same term in the Sermon on the Mount to assure His disciples that everything God has offered to give us, when we ask for it, we have His solemn promise that He will do it for us. Every step of the way we see that faith is necessary component to make this happen.

**“ASK, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who ASKS receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son ASKS for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he ASKS for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ASK Him!” Mt. 7:7-12**

Paul broadened this out by asking it for them. Obviously in letting them know he was asking, he is inferring that he wants us to be asking these same things, for ourselves and others.

*Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power Eph. 1:15-20*

*For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; Col. 1:9-12*

Although James is not speaking specifically of this command later in the book, it too is a powerful indictment

of the nature of our faith to pass it by and not to comment on it here. What does it say about us if we don't ask? It is obvious why we won't receive if we don't ask.

*You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not **ASK**. 3 You **ASK** and do not receive, because you **ASK** amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Jas. 4:2-4*

### **who gives to all men generously and without reproach,**

This is a wonderful promise that adds to Jesus words above. Just as anyone among us *"if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" Mt. 7:7-12*

There is no more important area of faith than we find here. If we don't believe this, we truly are a double minded man who will receive nothing from the Lord. This is not a saving faith. A saving faith believes what God says without question and accepts His promises with great comfort and assurance. So we can count on God to "give" if we ask.

*"didomi... to give... A. absolutely and generally... B. In construction... I to give something to some one, - in various senses; 1. of one's own accord to give one something, to his advantage; to bestow; give as a gift... 2. to grant, give to one asking, let have... 3. to supply, furnish, necessary things... 4. to give over, deliver, ... 5. to give what is due or obligatory, to pay: wages or reward..." (Thayer, p. 145-147; 1325)*

This is a word used over 300 times in the New Testament to describe what we give to others and what others give to us. It is the word used in John 3:16 of God giving His son and it is used in 1Tim 2:6 of Jesus giving himself as ransom. It is used here of God's desire to bestow, give as a gift, grant, give to the one asking, let them have, supply and furnish wisdom. We don't need to look any further than what God did for Solomon to see what God has the ability to do.

*At **Gibeon** the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?" 6 And Solomon said: "You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. 7 Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but **I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. 8 And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. 9 Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" 10 The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11 Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, 12 behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. 1 Kings 3:5-13***

***And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. 30 Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 For he was wiser than all men — than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. 32 He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. 33 Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. 34 And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon. 1Kings 4:29-34***

This is a clear example of what God can do if we trust Him and we ask Him. There is no doubt that Solomon was a different man after the prayer than he was before it. If we have faith and do not doubt we too will be different! The gift is bestowed based on the asking, not on the study, effort or

toil that we put in. The study toil and effort is necessary to fulfill the command, but the wisdom to make the applications comes from the asking, not from the effort alone.

This is a promise! One that God has given with only one condition, **ask in faith**. If we do our part then we have God's promise that He will give it to us liberally. This is a complicated word and it is only used here in the NT. Although in its verb form it does contain the sense of liberal, in the adverb, that is only a portion of its meaning. The real idea is that of "*sincere, open, 'plain and simple'* giving. It is a gift given without anything but a desire to help us.

*"haplos... simply, openly, frankly, sincerely..."* (Thayer, p. 57; 574)

*"haplos... Lat. simpliciter, singly, in one way, ... II. simply, plainly, openly, frankly, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT 574)*

*haplos* "liberally, with singleness of heart," is used in James 1:5 of God as the gracious and "liberal" Giver. The word may be taken either (a) in a logical sense, signifying unconditionally, simply, or (b) in a moral sense, generously; for the double meaning compare A, No. 3. On this passage Hort writes as follows: "Later writers comprehend under the one word the whole magnanimous and honorable type of character in which singleness of mind is the central feature." (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:574)

While reproach may appear to be out of place in this promise, it is actually a very important aspect of the faith we can have if we ask. It is a great relief to know that God will not become frustrated or angry with us. Our efforts and lack of ability will not create a rebuke. When asking for something we think we should already have we might be tempted to think that God would be frustrated with us. This would severely hinder our desire to keep asking when year after year our growth seems so slow and we can rationalized in our minds that we don't deserve to ask for this anymore. Some might think God is thinking: "AGAIN???" "Haven't you got this down yet?" We should never feel any sense of this in Him.

*"oneidizo,... to reproach, upbraid, revile;... of deserved reproach,.. of unjust reproach, to revile:... to upbraid, cast (favours received) in one's teeth..."* (Thayer, p 446; 3679)

*"oneidizo,... I. to throw a reproach upon one, cast in one's teeth, object or impute to one, Lat. objicere, exprobrare, ... . to impute it to him that. . to reproach, upbraid, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon, NT:3679)*

Though we might feel otherwise, if there has been a long period of time or that maybe we ought to be further along and we feel kind of shamed to be asking at this point. But we have God's promise that He will not do that. The asking alone will receive a response. He will not reproach upbraid, revile or cast back into our teeth. Even if we deserve it, He will not do it. God gives liberally and freely and has no anger or desire to speak evil of us for asking. He wants to give it. He wants us to have it.

**and it will be given to him.**

The only condition to this promise is asking. Once that condition is fulfilled, it will be given. This last clause is given for emphasis and assurance: He has already said it once so this is not meaningless repetition, but meaningful and powerful repetition:

*If **any** of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who **gives to all** liberally and without reproach, and **it will be given to him.** James 1:5-6*

Anyone who lacks wisdom is commanded to ask! If they keep that commandment, then God will give to all liberally and without reproach. Finally if we obey that command it will be given. Simple clear and powerful. He will give it to us if we ask for it. This is the same term as used above. God bestows, gives as a gift, grants, gives to the one asking. We need to remember God's assurance when giving a promise. Though given in the context of a promise and swearing, it is still important for us to understand the power of God's promises. If he makes a promise He always keeps it.

*For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an*

*oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. Heb 6:13-18*

It will be given!

## **6 But let him ask in faith,**

If anyone lacks wisdom, the command God gave is that they must ask. If they ask they do ask, they have fulfilled the only condition to have it given liberally. Now God does add a second condition. Yet it is not a condition on the seeking of the wisdom which is still fulfilled only in asking, but now the condition is on the asking itself. This condition must be met or God will not give. This asking must be within the interior of our faith in Him. We must trust Him when we ask and already know that He will hear and He will answer.

The preposition “in” is used here with the dative faith to emphasize that our asking must be in the midst of and in the interior of faith. We are surrounded, equipped, furnished and assisted by this faith. So faith becomes the means of the instrument by which our asking must be founded.

*“en...a preposition taking the dative after it;... Eng. in, on, at, with, by among. I LOCALLY; 1. of Place proper; a. in the interior of some whole; within the limits of some space... 5. used of that with which a person is surrounded, equipped, furnished, assisted, or acts... c. of that which one either leads or brings with him, or with which he is furnished or equipped; esp after verbs of coming, (en of accompaniment), where we often say with ... d. of the instrument or means by or with which anything is accomplished, owing to the influence of the Hebr. prep... much more common in the sacred writ. than in the prof... where we say with, by means of, by(through)...” (Thayer, p. 209-212; 1722)*

Since faith is “*the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen,*” we must have great conviction and expectation here.

*“pistis... faith; i. e. 1. conviction of the truth of anything, belief... in the N.T. of a conviction or belief respecting man’s relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and conjoined with it...” (Thayer, p. 512-414; 4102)*

There must be conviction, trust and holy fervor, a strong and welcome conviction or belief in this promise. We must “know” it is true. We must rely upon it, we must give God our absolute confidence in this matter. We must believe His Word and be confident that He will do what He promised. That is not difficult to the one who trusts God and will be nearly impossible for the one who does not. If we believe in what God did for Solomon, then we will not have any problem here.

Look again at the chart of the commands and the promises on the previous page. We are drawn inexorably from the need to feel joy through the steps of commands on how to look at things and what to gain as a result of them. At the end if we can’t find the means to make the right applications we must ask. If at any point in these commands and promises we find a gap, it is our faith that has failed, because there really isn’t any way to misunderstand the commands or the promises. In the eyes of God there is only one reason. A lack of faith.

## **without any doubting,**

There can be “NO” doubting. Doubting is completely inappropriate here. It has been promised by God who cannot lie, even when giving His word.

*“medeis,... it is used either in connection with a noun, no, none, or absolutely, no one, not one, no man, neut. nothing,... a. with an imperative: medeis being the person to whom something is forbidden... [A. V. have thou nothing to do with etc.], “ (Thayer, p. 411; 3367).*

There must be no moving back and forth in our minds. The term is used in a very good sense of making judgements and assessments. But while we can make judgements and assessments on the truths in the Scriptures to see if we are truly holding them, we can’t do it with God’s promises.

*“diakrino... 1. to separate, make a distinction, discriminate... 2. to learn by discrimination, to try, decide... 3. ... to be at variance with one’s self, hesitate, doubt...” (Thayer p 138-139)*

We cannot seek to figure this thing out and be at variance in ourselves when it comes to a promise from God. We must accept that God can do it, and since He has promised, it is done and there is nothing left to distinguish or discriminate about. We must not go through mental efforts to figure it out and find ourselves wondering how and if it can be done. We trust in God's omnipotent power and eternal being and changelessness and leave it at that.

### **for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.**

The one who doubts is like the foam or stick that is thrown into the waves and shows exactly what waves do.

*kludon...* (*kluzo* to wash against); from Homer *down; a dashing or surging wave, a surge, a violent agitation of the sea*: Luke 8:24; James 1:6 (Jonah 1:4,12; Wisdom 14:5). (Thayer NT: 2830)

*kludon* "a billow," is translated "wave" in James 1:6, KJV (RV, "surge"); in Luke 8:24 it is translated "raging (of the water)." (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:2830)

So it can be simple waves of a tempest. With doubting, it can move from one to the other depending on the circumstances. Waves simply move water back and forth and up and down. They can change direction and size with no warning. They never go anywhere and neither do the things tossed upon them. On the coasts it is especially prominent as the water moves in, and is sucked back out, it moves in again and is sucked back out. That is its course and that is all it does minute by minute hour by hour day by day and year by year. Those who have any doubts about God and the promises of God are just like that. Their doubts and their trust surge against one another and nothing is ever accomplished.

### **7 For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,**

Here is another command directed from God. If you are doubting His promises, don't expect to receive anything. Anyone who reads these verses and whose feelings toward prayers for wisdom, or anything else for that matter, will never receive anything from God and you might as well know it right now so you can change it. It all comes down to faith. Don't imagine or think in anyway within yourself.

*oiomai...* *to think, suppose...* (Thayer, p. 442; 3633)

*oiomai...* *nomizo, dokeo, hupolambano*, to regard something as presumably true, but without particular certainty - 'to suppose, to presume, to assume, to imagine, to believe, to think.' ... 'for that man must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord' James 1:7; 'I imagine that the whole world could not hold the books that would be written' John 21:25. (Lou and Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:3633).

That you will ever "receive" anything:

*lambano...* *to take*, i.e. 1. *To take with the hand, lay hold of...* any pers. or thing in order to use it: absol., 3. *to take what is one's own, to take to one's self, to make one's own...* II *to receive*(what is given) *to gain, get, obtain...* (Thayer, p. 370-371; 2983).

You will not receive, get, gain or obtain anything from God.

### **8 being a double-minded man,**

Such in the eyes of God is a "double-minded" man:

*dipsuchos...* *double minded; a. wavering, uncertain, doubting...* (Thayer, p. 153; 1374)

*dipsuchos* lit. means "twosouled" (*dis*, "twice," *psuche*, "a soul"), hence, "double-minded," James 1:8; 4:8. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:1374)

This is a terrible indictment on the soul. Such a one is worthless to all. They are the lukewarm.

### **unstable in all his ways.**

This makes you "unstable:"

“akatastatos... unstable, inconstant, restless... “ (Thayer, p. 22; 182)

You cannot be relied upon by God and hence will not be blessed by Him unless you change. This is true not only of faith in prayer though, it is true in all your ways:

“hodos... a way; 1. properly a. a travelled way, road:... 2. Metaphorically a. according to the familiar figure of speech, especially frequent in Hebrew... and not unknown to the Greeks by which an action is spoken of as proceeding, ...HODOS denotes a course of conduct, a way(i.e. manner) of thinking, feeling, deciding...” (Thayer, p. 437-438)

• My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

### 9 Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation,

### 9 But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position;

Two of the greatest trials in life are poverty and wealth. Each must be looked upon properly or they can tear a spiritually minded person to pieces. Note Prov 30:8-9:

*Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): 8 Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches — Feed me with the food allotted to me; 9 Lest I be full and deny You, And say, “Who is the Lord?” Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God. Pr. 30:7-9*

These two dreadful dangers can both be carefully avoided on the narrow path that leads to life if the wisdom offered in these two passages is taken to heart by the people of God. The Holy Spirit reveals the proper attitude for men and women in either situation. He offers this wisdom to us in the next section of the book of James:

The term “humble” is defined:

“tapeinos... low, ... a. prop. not rising far from the ground... b. metaph a. as to condition, lowly, of low degree... i. q. brought low with grief, depressed... B. lowly in spirit, humble... (Thayer p 614; 5011)

of Place, lying low, Hdt.;

“tapeinos... to live in low regions, Pind.; of stature or size, low, ... 2. of the condition of persons, brought down, humbled, submissive, ... of low rank, lowly, mean, ... small, poor, weak, ... to be poorly off, ...” (from Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:5011)

What type of humble circumstances does he speak of. The context favors poverty since he contrasts it with wealth in the next verse, but it could also be slavery, or other circumstances that make them feel low. Poverty is a humbling circumstance in the eyes of many. It brings mistreatment and reviling by others. It is truly a humbling experience to be poor. The book of Proverbs expresses some of the bitterness the poor might face:

*The rich man's wealth is his strong city; The destruction of the poor is their poverty. Pr. 10:15*

*The poor man is hated even by his own neighbor, But the rich has many friends. Pr. 14:20*

*Wealth makes many friends, But the poor is separated from his friend. Pr. 19:4*

*All the brothers of the poor hate him; How much more do his friends go far from him! He may pursue them with words, yet they abandon him. Pr. 19:7*

God wants those who find themselves in such humbling circumstances not to focus upon them. Far from feeling sorrow or pity for their lowly state that might lead them to depression, frustration, or envy and bitterness and “*profaning*” the Name, they are to change their focus to “glory” in something quite different. The term “glory” is defined:

*“kauchaomai... in the N. T. often used by Paul [some 35 times; by James twice]; to glory (whether with reason or without):... to glory (on account) of a thing... “ (Thayer p. 342; 2744)*

*“kauchaomai : to express an unusually high degree of confidence in someone or something being exceptionally noteworthy - ‘to boast.’ ... ‘whoever boasts must boast of the Lord’ 1 Cor 1:31. ‘your boasting is not right’ 1 Cor 5:6. ‘all such boasting is wrong’ James 4:16. ... ‘that is why we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God’ 2 Thess 1:4. ‘this is how it is with the tongue: small as it is, it can boast about great things’ James 3:5. **Whether in any particular context the boasting is legitimate or not depends upon what is boasted about.** In a number of languages, however, quite different terms are employed, depending upon the differing degrees of justification for such boasting. (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon NT 2744)*

This is the glory of self-esteem and the feelings of worth and value that give people self-respect and self-worth in their own eyes. The brother who has no outward reasons for these feelings is counseled to find them within. They are to glory in their “high position.” This term is defined:

*“hupsoo... to lift up on high, to exalt... metaph. to raise to the very summit of opulence and prosperity... simply TINA, to exalt, to raise to dignity, honor and happiness... “ (Thayer, p. 647; 5312)*

*“hupsoo... the dimension of height compared to the other dimensions ... bathos which measures the same dimension downward. ... can also be a high place, mountains, highlands, heights, ... the “height” of dignity, Ps.-Aristot. Mund., 6, p. 398 a. 12. Later it is used as the title “highness,” in the hupsos or “sublimity” of the wise and noble man, (Kittel TDWNT 5311)*

Every one who comes to the Lord with no physical possessions and no hope for betterment find in their Lord dignity, honor and happiness. They have been raised to look at the things that are unseen and to ignore the things that are seen. The glory of the resurrection more than makes up for any physical deprivation. Those who have nothing are counseled to hope and look fully upon the glory that shall afterward be revealed.

The basic idea here is the same as what Paul told the slave. The man called as a slave has far fewer opportunities and thus could feel demeaned, but

*Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. 21 Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. 22 For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. 1Cor. 7:20-23*

## **10 but the rich in his humiliation, 10 and let the rich man glory in his humiliation,**

With the term “*but*” James continues the concept of the previous verse, but since the individuals are different the results will also be different. The poor are in a low circumstance, so they are lifted up by the gospel, “*but*” the rich must be brought down.

*“de ... but: conjunctive Particle, with adversative force: it commonly answers to “mein” and may often be rendered by while, whereas, on the other hand, v. -but mein is often omitted, de being used merely*

to pass on from one thing to another.” (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:1161)

Wealth generally leads to pride and arrogance (a high estate — the opposite of the man in the previous verse) because money brings power and prestige to those who possess it. Jesus felt strongly about this matter and spoke of it often.

*Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” 24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Mk. 10:23-25*

The wise Christian who is wealthy must learn to is to glory (being brought forward from the previous verse) — gets his self esteem from the fact that he has risen above these grave and terrible temptations of empty earthly pride and is now a humble yet wise Christian. The term “rich” is defined:

*“plousios... rich; a. prop. wealthy, abounding in material resources... b. metaph. and univ. abounding, abundantly supplied... of the thing in which one abounds...” (Thayer, p. 519; 4145)*

Note that this is a word of wealth that gives abounding material resources. Those who are abundantly supplied. This term fairly well captures the middle class in America. We are not accustomed to being considered wealthy but by the standards of most nations and certainly by the standards of that day we are wealthy.

The dangers of such wealth are subtler when unnoticed, but since most of us do have an abundance of this world’s goods and the free time to enjoy them, it would be wise for us to consider the obligation here set forth. All such “wealthy” brethren must learn to boast in their “humiliation”:

*“tapeinoo... to make low, bring low... a. to level, reduce to a plain... b. metaph. to bring into a humble condition, reduce to meaner circumstances; i.e. a. to assign a lower rank or place to; to abase... c. to lower, depress, [Eng. humble]:... one;’s soul, bring down one’s pride... to have a modest opinion of one’s self, to behave in an unassuming manner devoid of all haughtiness...” (Thayer p 614; 5013)*

God’s people, especially those who were “*brought lower*” when they became a Christian need to glory in that fact. This is one of the things the gospel brought to light. It showed the folly of the general attitude man has about wealth. Wealth is not a valuable commodity for two basic reasons. First, it can only be used here and cannot be taken from this life. It therefore has no lasting value. The second reason is that it causes people to focus too much on this life to the neglect of the life to come.

*But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 1 Tim 6:9-10*

Those who are Christians look at this life as a place of preparation for the next where sacrifices are necessary and welcome. The wealthy look at this life as all there is and will be. Sacrifices to such people are foolish, and the possibility of a life to come and a future judgement quenches their joy. Such are the greedy idolaters Paul warns of:

*Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. Col 3:5-7*

Those who have escaped such a dangerous and spiritually lethal attitude should be grateful to God for that fact. They should boast in their humiliation. Wealthy people should be grateful that their wealth did not lead them to reject the gospel. They should also see their wealth as a further responsibility that the poor man doesn’t have.

*Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to*

come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 1Tim. 6:17-19

**because as a flower of the field he will pass away. like flowering grass he will pass away.**

Wealth is not permanent. Those who have wealth are not permanent. There is no permanence to money or to those who have it. This is the “reason” for what he said above.

“*hoti...* I. the substance or contents (of a statement), *that*; 1. joined to verbs of saying and declaring... II the reason why anything is said to be or to be done, *because, since, for that, for*, (a causal conjunct. ...)... a. it is added to a speaker’s words to show what ground he gives for his opinion;... b. *hoti* makes reference to some word or words that precede or immediately follow it...” (Thayer p 458-460; 3754)

Like the beautiful flowers in the field, their beauty and stateliness is so temporary that no one envies their beauty or desires to be like them. A flower stays beautiful for only a few days then it begins to wither.

*The voice said, “Cry out!” And he said, “What shall I cry?” “All flesh is grass, And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.” Isa 40:6-8*

So also are those who have wealth. They last such a short time in relation to eternity that it doesn’t really even matter that they have it. Life passes so quickly and is gone. The wealthy Christians are to put their main emphasis on the fact that Jesus has humbled them.

All the wealthy will pass away, and in their passing all such distinctions will end.

*parerchomai ... from para, “by,” erchomai, “to come” or “go,” denotes (I), literally, “to pass, pass by,” (a) of persons, Matt 8:28; Mark 6:48; Luke 18:37; Acts 16:8; (b) of things, Matt 26:39,42; of time, Matt 14:15; Mark 14:35; Acts 27:9, KJV, “past” (RV, “gone by”); 1 Peter 4:3; (II), metaphorically, (a) “to pass away, to perish,” Matt 5:18; 24:34,35; Mark 13:30,31; Luke 16:17; 21:32,33; 2 Cor 5:17; James 1:10; 2 Peter 3:10; (b) “to pass by, disregard, neglect, pass over,” Luke 11:42; 15:29, (from Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:3928)*

Jesus speaks of the terrible nature of this passing in his discussion of the rich man and Lazarus.

*So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 “Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ 25 But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. Lk. 16:22-25*

**11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed;**

As noted in Isaiah, all the glory of men will be destroyed just like the grass with its flowers. Although our life is longer and not as easily detectable, it follows exactly the same pattern as the grass. Because of the brevity of life and the uncertainty of riches, the wealthy child of God should forget he even has wealth except to use it for his own enjoyment and the help he can give to others. Wealth is not a badge, it does not confer honor, it should not be flaunted or used in ways to gain self-esteem. Our glory comes from knowing the Lord. Everything else must be put down. It is futile useless, and counter productive to see glory in such things.

*Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; 24 But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the Lord. Jer 9:23-24*

Thus the poor man sees in the gospel a stepping stone into glory and honor, the wealthy man sees in the gospel the service he owes Christ and the wonderful truth that abasement and humiliation leads to greater honor. Both are blessed by the gospel but in very different ways.

The wealthy need to follow the steps of Jesus.

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. 2 Cor 8:9*

This poverty was the losing of all the greatness He possess before He came to earth. This is exactly what the wealthy need to do with their wealth. They should rejoice to follow Jesus.

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, Phil 2:5-10*

**so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.**

It is evident here and in 2:8 that there is a problem and that it seems to center more among the wealthy than among the poor. It is about the wealthy and to the wealthy that he writes the most. The rich man is not going to abide forever, in the midst of his "pursuits" something terrible is going to occur:

*"poreia... a journey... a going i.e. purpose, pursuit, undertaking... Jas 1:11" (Thayer, p. 531; 4197)*

Looking at life as a journey, in the midst of his life he is going to fade away like the flower in the illustration above. In the middle of his undertakings and purposes, He will simply fade away:

*"maraino... to extinguish(a flame, fire, light, etc.); to render arid, make to waste away, cause to wither; pass. to wither, wilt, dry up... Trop. to waste away, consume away, perish... i.q. to have a miserable end: Jas. 1:11, where the writer uses a fig. suggested by what he had just said..." (Thayer, p. 389; 3133)*

It doesn't matter how much wealth they have and how much power and esteem it has given to them, they will all come to a miserable end without the Lord. No matter what he pursues and seeks to master, and no matter how successful he might become in those areas, he will wither and come to nothing in the end. Consider the parable of the Lord about it:

*Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" 15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Lk. 12:13-21*

Before leaving the topic, it is wise to remember what Jesus said about the greatness of those who serve.

*But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. 35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "**if anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.**" Mk. 9:34-35*

***But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Mt. 23:11-12***

*And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' 26 But not so among you; on the contrary, **he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.** 27 For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. Lk. 22:25-27*

**12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; a man who perseveres (remains steadfast ESV) under trial; (NAS)**

Because of the placement of this verse, there has been a small difference of opinion on how it should be translated. As was noted in verse two, the word “*pierasmos*” can be translated with either trial or temptation. But since God never tempts us with evil, the translators have consistently translated temptations to sin with the term tempt or temptation and the testing of our character with trial.

Since James spoke of trials in 1:2-4, he could be finishing up those thoughts before moving on.

↑ *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various **trials**, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. James 1:2-5*

*Blessed is a man who perseveres under **trial**; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. James 1:12-13 NASU*

Yet, since in the next section, James will use this same term obviously speaking of temptation, it is also possible that he begins here with the idea of temptation (KJV ASV NKJV).

↓ *Blessed is the man who endures **temptation**; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. James 1:12-13*

*Let no one say when he is **tempted**, “I am **tempted** by God”; for God cannot be **tempted** by evil, nor does He Himself **tempt** anyone. 14 But each one is **tempted** when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. James 1:13-15*

My own opinion would go the direction of trial. The use of the term “*endure*” or “*persevere*” better fits the context of the “*trials*” of the first few verses than they do the lusts of temptations. Although it could be argued that Joseph persevered under the temptations of Potiphar’s wife, the reality is more complex. Generally we flee temptation, we don’t endure it.

James pronounces the same type of blessing and uses the same terminology as that of Jesus in the opening words of His Sermon on the Mount.

“*makarios... blessed, happy: joined to names of God...In congratulations, the reason why one is to be pronounced blessed...*” (Thayer, p. 386; 3107)

In content beatitudes, which are common in both poetry and prose throughout the centuries, reflect the sorrows and afflictions, the aspirations and ideals, of the Greeks. Practical Greek philosophy breathes in them. Orientated to earth, the Gk. mind first draws its happiness from earthly goods and values. Thus parents are extolled for fine children, mothers for admirable sons (cf. Luke 11:27), the bridegroom for winning an excellent bride. ... Praise is naturally accorded to those who have found the great happiness of love. It is accorded also to the wealthy whose possessions give them a good position in life, but even more so to those who also have a good understanding or who are free from tribulations. If regard is had for inner values, he is extolled who has attained to fame, honor and manly virtue. Kittel; TDWNT 3107

This is the term used by the Greek’s in that day to give honor and praise for the success, happiness and contentment they bring. Beauty, wealth, power, athletic ability, mental achievement, or even good fortune were praised with this term. Today we honor such people with: Olympic gold/silver medal; School valedictorian, Military honors, a Nobel peace prize, a County Fair’s blue ribbon. All convey honor. It is a wonderful experience to be so honored. Jesus and James have revealed the things that will bring the equivalent with God.

The Holy Spirit reserves this blessedness for the most important of things God is looking for in His servants. The things that make us the most useful and valuable to Him. Therefore whatever is the recipient of this blessedness should cause us to take a good hard look at what it is referring to and then seek diligently to master it. In this case the attitude and lifestyle is the ability to “enduring”

trials. Another point that leads to the idea that this is a trial we must bear up under centers on the use of the term endurance.

*“hupomone... 1. steadfastness, constancy, endurance... in the N. T. the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings... 2. a patient, steadfast waiting for... 3. a patient enduring, sustaining...”* (Thayer, p. 644; 5281)

Of the seventeen times it is used in the NT it is always used of trials and never of temptation. So I believe James is completing the thoughts of 1:2-4 and including the trials of wealth and poverty. Those who are patient, enduring and seeking the silver lining in their trials are blessed. They have a deep happiness and contentment that nothing in this life can take from them.

The trial and proving of a man’s faith which leads to the winning of the battle and the feelings of joy and peace at winning. Note though that the blessedness is in the enduring of the temptation. Those who endure the temptation are the only ones under consideration.

### **for when he has been approved,**

“For” is used to give the reason why we endure, and why it brings such blessedness.

*“hoti... I. the substance or contents (of a statement), that; 1. joined to verbs of saying and declaring... II the reason why anything is said to be or to be done, because, since, for that, for, (a causal conjunct. ...)... a. it is added to a speaker’s words to show what ground he gives for his opinion;... b. hoti makes reference to some word or words that precede or immediately follow it...”* (Thayer p 458-460; 3754)

The reason is simple. They are “*approved!*”

*“dokimos... 1. prop. accepted, particularly of coins and metals... hence univ. proved, tried in the N.T. one who is of tried faith and integrity [R. V. approved]... 2. accepted i. q. acceptable, pleasing...”* (Thayer, p. 155; 1384)

The Christian has fought a great battle and won. As Job before them, they continued steadfast under all the trials and never thought of renouncing or blaming God. Thus when we are placed into a severe trial and we come out of it successfully, it is a great victory and something to savor and feel good about. The repetition appears to be due to its importance and frequency. He will return to it again in James 5:1-11. The joy of such a battle won is great indeed. It makes it worth the fight and the anguish just to win. Peter described this as proving the genuineness of their faith which is actually more precious than gold.

*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1Pet. 1:3-8*

### **he will receive the crown of life**

This is new! James has not spoken of the crown before. These trials become the means by which we can “gain” this crown.

*“lambano,... to take, i.e. 1. To take with the hand, lay hold of... any pers. or thing in order to use it: absol., 3. to take what is one’s own, to take to one’s self, to make one’s own... II to receive(what is given) to gain, get, obtain...”* (Thayer, p. 370-371; 2983).

What a wonderful blessing indeed. The trials have become our area of labor of toil in which we can gain this wonderful crown that has been promised. The term crown meant the same thing in the original language as it does today.

*“stephanos... a crown... a. prop. as a mark of royalty or (in general) exalted rank... b. metaph. a. the eternal blessedness which will be given as a prize to the genuine servants of God and Christ...”* (Thayer, p. 587; 4735)

This crown has been described elsewhere in similar terms.

*And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for **an imperishable crown.** 1Cor. 9:25-26*

Finally, there is laid up for me **the crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2Tim. 4:8  
and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive **the crown of glory** that does not fade away. 1Pet. 5:4

Be faithful until death, and I will give you **the crown of life**. Rev. 2:10

Hold fast what you have, that no one may take **your crown**. Rev. 3:11-12

### **which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**

The Lord has “promised” this crown to those who love Him:

“*epaggelia*... 1. announcement... 2. promise; a. the act of promising, a promise given or to be given... It is used also of the divine promise of blessings, esp. of the benefits of salvation by Christ... b. by meton. a promised good or blessing...” (Thayer, p. 226-227; 1860)

God made a promise. A promise that will never be broken and a portion of which has already been confirmed with an oath. God cannot lie and He has sworn by His own name that all who love him will be given this wonderful crown. The term “love” is the great “new” ideal that Jesus introduced to mankind:

“*agapao*.. with acc. of the person, *to have a preference for, wish well to, regard the welfare of*... of the love of Christians towards one another; of the benevolence which God, in providing salvation for men, has exhibited by sending his Son to them and giving him up to death, Jn 3:16; Rom 8:37... of the love which led Christ, in procuring human salvation, to undergo sufferings and death, Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2; of the love with which God regards Christ, ... with an acc. of the thing, *AGAPAO denotes to take pleasure in the thing, prize it above other things, be unwilling to abandon it or do without it... to welcome with desire, long for...*” (Thayer, p. 3-4; 25)

A true love for God means an unselfish care for Him, a preference for Him and a regard for His welfare. To take pleasure in our relationship with Him, to prize Him and His ways above all other things. We long for Him and strongly desire to make Him happy with us by making the kind of sacrifices spoken of above. All those who truly love God welcome opportunities to prove that love to Him by making sacrifices and showing ourselves approved through them.

Hence those who uphold their honor and integrity as well as their faithfulness to God in the midst of various trials including the trial of wealth or poverty are blessed and will receive the crown of life. Because they have proven their love for Him.

### **13 Let no one say when he is tempted,**

While there are some things in life that tend to make everything we believe look grey, fuzzy or out of focus, God gave us things that are always absolute, fixed and never changing, always black or white. When we take these absolutes and fix them clearly in our minds, they will keep us focused and on the proper path, or help us keep or regain our bearings if we lose sight of things.

In this next section of Scripture, James will set out two spiritual absolutes.

**Absolute 1:** God has no part in temptation and sin. They do not come from Him, He did not seek to place them in our path, He has nothing to do with them. When we find ourselves tempted to sin, the source can never be God.

**Absolute 2:** Every good thing we have ever experienced was created and designed by God. He is the author and source. It is God’s nature to give good things and all that He gives is good.

Although since the time of Adam and Eve, Temptation has become an everyday occurrence, there is one thing that must never be said and by implication never thought as well.

“*medeis*,... it is used either in connection with a noun, *no, none*, or absolutely, *no one, not one, no man*, neut. *nothing*,... a. with an imperative: *medeis* being the person to whom something is forbidden... Jas. 1:13; [A. V. *have thou nothing to do with etc.*], “ (Thayer, p. 411; 3367).

Thus it is a universal command. No one under any circumstances is ever to speak such words.

There are two words for speech in the Scriptures. One is just words coming thoughtlessly from the mouth and the other are words that have been carefully considered. It is the latter term that is used here.

*lego / laleo* There are two leading aspects under which speech may be regarded. It may, first, be contemplated as the articulate utterance of human language, in contrast with the absence of this, from whatever cause springing; whether from choice, as in those who hold their peace, when they might speak; or from the present undeveloped condition of the organs and faculties, as in the case of infants ... This is one aspect of speech, namely articulated words, as contrasted with silence, with mere sounds or animal cries. But, secondly, speech ('oratio' or 'oris ratio') may be regarded as the orderly linking and knitting together in connected discourse of the inward thoughts and feelings of the mind, ... But if in *lalein* the fact of uttering articulated speech is the prominent notion, in *legein* it is the words uttered, and that these correspond to reasonable thoughts within the breast of the utterer. (Trench's Synonyms of the NT 2980)

We must never allow our reasoning to bring such words. They must be crushed and removed as the terrible lies that would be. and responses to The command here centers around our outlook and words while in the midst of temptation. When trials come that we cannot bear, or temptations and enticements come to give in to lust, we must always see things clearly enough that we would never come close to saying the words of the next clause. "tempted" is defined:

When we find ourselves being tempted and enticed to commit sin we must keep a firm grip on our mind. Others have been led to doubt God, but His people should never doubt Him. These words must never enter our minds or come forth from our lips.

### **"I am tempted by God"**

The only new thing here is the preposition "by," and it is the focal point.

"*apo*,... preposition with the Genitive, *from*, signifying ... Origin ... *apo* is used ... **II Of Origin**; whether of local origin, the place whence; or of causal origin, the cause from which... **2.** of causal origin, or the Cause; and **a.** of the material cause, so called, or of that which supplies the material for the maintenance of the action expressed by the verb:... **b. of the cause** on account of which anything is or is done, where commonly it can be rendered *for*... **c. of the moving or impelling cause**... **d. of the efficient cause**, viz. of things from the force of which anything proceeds and of persons, from whose will, power, authority, command, favor, order, influence, direction, anything is to be sought;" (Thayer, p. 57-59; 575)

The term centers on origin, and cause. Did that temptation originate with God, was God the cause of that temptation. Did God have anything to do with it to the point where one might be able to say that he brought this about. No. We are never to say that God was the source of cause of any temptation. Do not say that God is the cause or God is the one who originated this temptation. Never say it, whether in your mind or in conversations to others.

### **for God cannot be tempted by evil,**

The preposition "for" is only used when a conclusion or reason for a previous statement is made:

"*gar*... is properly a particle of affirmation and conclusion, denoting *truly therefore, verily as the case stands*, ... the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added, whence arises the causal or argumentative force of the particle, *for*... **II** It adduces the Cause or gives the reason of a preceding statement or opinion... **III** It serves to explain, make clear, illustrate, a preceding thought or word: *for*, i. q. *that is, namely*..." (Thayer, p. 109-110; 1063)

Thus the reason why we could never say God is responsible is because God cannot be tempted.

"*apeirastos*... as well *untempted as unttemptable*... that cannot be tempted by evil, not liable to temptation to sin, Jas 1.13..." (Thayer, p. 55; 551)

It is something foreign to His being and nature. Because He Himself is unttemptable, it would never enter His consciousness to want it for another. Think of the implications here. When God created us we were in His image and after His likeness. He wanted us to be just like Him. It is therefore not possible that He could be involved in something like this. Added to this is the *agape-love* that is the

core of God's being. Since evil leads to eternal punishment, it too would be against His nature.

When we act according to His nature, it is always good and wholesome. The very nature of evil is something foreign and wrong. It makes Him sick for anyone to do evil. He cannot do it Himself, never feels the desire to want to sin or seek to make anyone else feel that way. It is simply impossible for Him to do. The term James chose for "evil" is the exact opposite and antithesis of what is good. Since all that God made is very good, it would not be a part of his nature or will to create the opposite of that.

*"kakos... bad 1. univ. of a bad nature; not such as it ought to be. 2. [morally, i.e.] of a mode of thinking, feeling, acting; base, wrong, wicked:... neut. kakon, to evil i.e. what is contrary to law, either divine or human, wrong, crime... spec. of wrongs inflicted... 3. troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive, baneful... (Thayer, p. 320; 2556)*

Evil is always something that creates a wrong. Taking something from another and often creating a lifetime of sorrow and anguish. So murder, adultery would always be evil as it steals something so precious from another. God cannot be involved in such things in any way.

### **and He Himself does not tempt anyone.**

That which does not interest Him, He has no desire to see anyone else do. When we are tempted, it was not in God's plan or mind that we should have done so. He wants "no one" to be tempted to do evil.

*"oudeis... and not one, no one, none, no; it differs from meideis as ou does from me... 1. with nouns... 2. absolutely, ... nothing whatever, not at all, in no wise..." (Thayer, p. 462; 3762)*

*me* a particle of negation, which differs from *ou* (which is always an adverb) in that ***ou* denies the thing itself (or to speak technically, denies simply, absolutely, categorically, directly, objectively), but *me* denies the thought of the thing, or the thing according to the judgment, opinion, will, purpose, preference, of someone (hence, as we say technically, indirectly, hypothetically, subjectively).** This distinction holds also of the compounds *oudeis medeis* ..." (Thayer's, NT: 3361)

By using *oudeis* instead of *medeis*, James is denying the thing itself! There is absolutely, categorically, directly, and objectively no chance that this could ever occur. It is absent from His being and not something that could ever exist.

Once this point has been established and forcefully made clear in our minds then we are ready to move on to the next step. There has never been a temptation to sin in the mind of any man that God put there or wanted put there. He does not do it, never has and never will. Since God does not do this, where then do they come from?

It is interesting the direction that James takes here. Some might have thought he would move to Satan. It is clear that in the first temptation, Satan placed it in the mind of Eve through the mouth of the serpent.

*Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Gen. 3:1-7*

James skips over that. Even though Satan introduced it, it did not originate with Him. He made the suggestion, but within Eve there should have been no answering desire. It never should have been an enticement and the fact that it was completely within her and not from outside of her. This is James' point. No temptation exists outside of our own mind.

**14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed.  
each one is tempted of his own lust, drawn away and enticed.**

We can't even look at temptation as a class. It is an individual thing. Something exclusive to "each one."

"*hekastos... each, every; a. joined to a substantive... every... preceded by heis... every one: ...*" (Thayer, p. 192;1538)

"*hekastos... each one of a totality in a distributive sense - 'each.'*" (Lou & Nida, NT: 1538)

Every temptation is looked at from an individual's perspective. Each one's temptations arise from their own unique combination of lust and enticement. While our translations put the verb first, the Spirit reveals it like this: "*each one is tempted of his own lust, drawn away and enticed.*"

"Of" his own lust is a preposition that with the Genitive (as it is here) speaks of the efficient cause or power that creates or conceives.

"*hupo... prep. under... I with the GENITIVE ... 1. prop. in a local sense, of situation or position under something higher... hence 2. metaph. of the efficient cause, as that under the power of which an event is conceived of as being... the Eng. by ...*"(Thayer, p. 642; 5259)

So each one, under the influence of his own lusts, creates the temptation with their lusts. The definition gives us a starting place, but this is such an important part of temptation that we need to look deeper than the definition.

"*epithumia... desire, craving, longing... the desire directed towards... spec. desire for what is forbidden, lust...*" (Thayer, p. 238-239; 1939)

The cravings, longings and desires that flow through the human heart are the source and cause of every temptation known to man. These desires are also described as youthful lusts because most of them are formed while we are still young through our own evil companions and imaginations. Everyone can read the list of the lust of the flesh and find those that have been activated and those that find no power within them. These are the beginnings of covetousness and temptation. This explains why different people are tempted by different things. It doesn't matter what the outside forces are. Some will never be tempted no matter what the force in one area and fall easily in another. It has to do with the desire. When once there is desire in the heart, then and only then can temptation and desire lead to enticement:

The temptation forms the very instant that each one is "drawn away" by his or her own desires.

"*exelcho... to draw out, ... metaph. i. q. to lure forth, [A. V. draw away]... Jas. 1.14 where the metaphor is taken from hunting and fishing: as game is lured from its covert, so man by lust is allured from the safety of self-restraint to sin...*" (Thayer, p. 222; 1828)

There is an insidious turn in the terms. Things have gone from trials that lead to greater strength, blessedness and joy, to temptations that draw one from the safety of submission to God to rebellion and evil that leads to spiritual death. That such things do exist, our own hearts reveal. We know it is the truth because it has happened over and over again.

While the lexicons tell us this is a hunting and fishing term, it was also used of drawing Joseph out of the pit he had been cast in. It is a term of action. Without the "ex" it simply means to draw out as Peter did his sword and his net (Jn. 21:6,11), and the rich draw into court. (Jas. 2:6). With the addition of the "ex" it is intensified. Lust draws out and lures forth. As a fish with a worm or a deer in a snare. Just as the lure or other bait often is irresistible to the fish or animal, so also the heart of man is often drawn after things that are vile and worthless "by" a desire.

**and enticed.**

These two seem to happen simultaneously as they are synonyms. This term is very similar to being drawn out, except it takes it one step further. While the drawing out leaves in doubt what will happen next, this word clearly reveals that in the enticement is also the catching. The desire for the

temptation leads to being drawn out and the being drawn out with these desires in our minds leads us to agonize over the bait and desperately want to take it. “Entice” is defined:

“*deleaso*... 1. prop. to bait, catch by a bait... 2 as often in prof. auth., metaph. to beguile by blandishments, allure, entice, deceive...” (Thayer, p. 128; 1185)

The mind spins, the heart yearns, the breath quickens, the desire begins to burn brightly, and the time and opportunity to make the decision to abstain grows less and less tangible. The temptation has almost led to sin.

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### **15 Then when lust has conceived,**

Using an adverb of time, the Holy Spirit reveals the exact sequence of events.

*eita*... adv of time, then; next; after... in classic Grk., it stands in enumerations, to mark a sequence depending either on temporal succession... or on the nature of the things enumerated...” (Thayer, p. 188; 1534)

First, there is lust and enticement. One may come first or the other depending on circumstances. Sometimes the enticement creates the lust and sometimes the lust seeks out the enticement, but either way from these temptation arises. So all temptation does not arise from God but from lust and enticement. Once the temptation is formed, the next in the sequence is conception.

“*sullambano*... 1. Active, a. to seize, take... one as a prisoner,... b. to conceive, of a woman... absol... 2. Mid. a. to seize for one’s self; in a hostile sense, to make (one a permanent) prisoner b. with the dat. of a pers. to take hold together with one, to assist, help... to succor,...” (Thayer, p. 595; 4815)

This is a broad term with various meanings. This is both a seizing and a conceiving. Which one is more dominant here? Both are powerful concepts. The desire seizes and brings forth sin. The desire conceives and brings forth sin. They are both true and picturesque ways of describing what happens, but the next term, “give birth,” takes us back to conceive. Temptation, consisting of enticement and lust (desire) mingle together for a time, but left long enough something new is conceived. Thus all sin arises from “conceived” lust. Once that occurs, the next sequence is always the same.

### **it gives birth to sin;**

“Gives birth” is defined:

“*tikto*... to bring forth, bear, produce (fruit from the seed); prop of women giving birth... metaph. to bear, bring forth hamartian, in the simile where *he epithumia* is likened to a female, Jas. 1.15...” (Thayer, p. 623; 5088)

“*tikto*... to bring into the world; of the father, to beget, of the mother, to bring forth, Hom., II. of female animals, to bear young, breed, Hom.; ... to lay eggs, III. of vegetable produce, to bear, produce, ... IV. metaph. to generate, produce, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT: 5088)

Something new and never before existing is now in the world. Another act of rebellion has been wrung from the heart of a faithful child of God. But it came from within and not from God. This rebellious act is called “sin” which is defined:

“*hamartia*... a failing to hit the mark... a bad action, evil deed ... In the N. T. always in an ethical sense, and 1. equiv. to ... a sinning, whether it occurs by omission or commission, in thought and feeling or in speech and action... 2. that which is done wrong committed or resultant sin, an offense, a violation

*of the divine law in thought or in act... 3. collectively, the complex or aggregate of sins committed either by a single person or by many..." (Thayer, p. 31; 266)*

It is a terrible but reliable way to describe all rebellion against God. He is not tempted with such things. He will not tempt others to such things because when it is all finished the man or woman has missed the mark, done what is wrong and offended the divine law in thought or in act. But it does not stop here either. It can be put to death with repentance right at this moment and banished from the heart. If it destroyed at this point, then the person is finished with the drawing away, desire, enticement, and sin. It is all destroyed and the person is back where they were. But if they do not stop it here, then it keeps growing and changing.

**and when sin is accomplished, (NASB) (finished - KJV) (full grown NKJV) (fully grown - ESV) (fully matured - AMP)**

I have always struggled with the translations that translate this term with the idea of sin growing from infancy to maturity. The problem is that there is no time, even in its infancy, that sin does not bring death. The idea that sin can be an infant without bringing death, and that death only comes after it has grown up is foreign to the Scriptures. Jesus revealed this truth in His sermon on the Mount. He really doesn't give us any room for progression. The lust even in the heart has already brought forth sin and death.

*"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment;" Mt. 5:21-22 (ESV)*

*"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Mt. 5:27-28*

The Greek term is not used in the Scriptures of growing to maturity, but of bringing something quite to an end or completing, and thus perfecting it.

*apo-teleo ... to bring quite to an end, complete a work, ... perfect, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT: 658)*

So what is that moment between conception and fully accomplished that brings forth death? It is doubtful that we could establish it ourselves. Repentance and confession are the only things that can be placed between sin's conception and sin's full accomplishment. If sin is not allowed to become fully accomplished it can't be repented of or confessed.

The real purpose here seems to be to strike fear into our hearts. From the very moment that temptation arises as a result of lust and enticement, there is a grave danger that it could conceive. If it conceives, the birth will be sin and death.

The moment we feel the desire and become aware of the enticement, temptation is already present. There is such a fine line with what happens next. Jesus was able to deal with every temptation and never allow sin to be conceived.

*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Heb. 4:15-16*

Thus when we fell a temptation we are already in grave peril. We need to be seeking the way of escape so that we can bear that temptation without the conception of sin.

*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. 1Cor. 10:13*

It is brought to quite an end, comes to maturity and is perfected. This strikes terror even to describe, let alone experience. The Christian is here counseled to get away from sin as quickly as possible. The longer it is left in the heart the stronger and more mature it becomes. Those who wish to look into its jaws see only one thing:

## it brings forth death.

Sin, conceived and accomplished “*brings forth*,” “*bears*” and “*produces*,” something that never existed before.

*“apokeuo... to bring forth from the womb, give birth to... Jas. 1:15 to produce...”* (Thayer, p. 64; 616)

If we look at the first time there was temptation, sin and death, this becomes easier to see and understand.

God revealed to Adam that there was one tree in the midst of the garden that could bring death to him in the very day that he ate it. This was the death that is described here.

*And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Gen. 2:16-17*

Eve also understood exactly what God had told Adam before her creation.

*but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.” Gen. 3:3*

Yet Satan was still able to create the enticement that led to the lust.

*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. Gen. 3:6*

Before this conversation, there was no lust, no enticement, thus no temptation and no death. But after the conversation, she saw the tree in a different way and now temptation and enticement were formed. Soon temptation led to the conception of sin and when it was all finished both Adam and Eve were dead.

Paul revealed that this exact same process occurs for each of us at a point in our lives where the age of accountability arises and we too have the same opportunity as Eve.

*I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. 10 The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. 11 For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. 12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Rom. 7:9-12*

## 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

We must fix the above now as a absolute truth. There are so many temptations to face and so much sorrow and anguish brought about because we must face them and often are brought to our knees by them. Sometimes one feels the need to explore these weaknesses and conclude that we must have been born this way and so consequently it must in some way be the fault of the one who created us. Do not be deceived here brethren. This is in the imperative mode so it is a command. We must never allow ourselves to be deceived:

*“planao... to cause to stray, to lead astray, lead aside from the right way; a. prop. to go astray, wander, roam about... b. metaph. to lead away from the truth, to lead into error, to deceive... pass. to be led into error, [ R. V. be led astray]... esp through ignorance to be led aside from the path of virtue, to astray, sin... to wander or fall away from the true faith, of heretic... to be led away into error and sin...”* (Thayer, p. 514)

Don't be led astray here. Don't wander from the path, don't allow error to lead you into fuzzy and wrong thinking. There are certain absolutes that must be accepted and acted upon regardless of what is occurring in our lives that we might want to interpret otherwise. God never tempts us to be led into death. He tests us to be led to maturity and strength, but never tempts us. It is not possible for our God or love and mercy to do such a thing.

**17 Every good gift (KJV) Every good thing bestowed (NAS)  
All giving (that is) good and everything given (that is) complete**

Here is another absolute. All that is good comes from God. Every good thing that happens in our lives comes forth from God, either from the creation or from his benevolence. The Spirit selected a term for “all” that denotes every and all of the class indicated:

*“pas,... all or any of the class indicated... b. any and every, of every kind, ... esp. with nouns designating virtues or vices, emotions, character, condition, to indicate every mode in which such virtue, vice or emotion manifests itself, or any object whatever to which the idea expressed by the noun belongs... “ (Thayer, p. 491-493; 3956).*

Hence there is nothing good that did not come from God. It can be translated: *“All the good things bestowed,” “every good thing bestowed,” “any and every good thing bestowed.”* God is the author of only those things that are good. All that is good in the world came from Him. Every wonderful thing in our lives came from Him. All that gives us self-esteem and blessings that make life worth living came from Him. He is the source of all that is good. This is an absolute that we need to fix in our minds. The term good is a broad term for all that is in life that has any characteristic that would qualify it as good. It is defined:

*“agathos... excelling in any respect, distinguished, good. It can be predicated of persons, things, conditions, qualities and affections of the soul, deeds, times and seasons.... 1. of good constitution or nature... 2. useful, salutary... 3. of the feeling awakened by what is good, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy... 4. excellent, distinguished... 5. upright, honorable... upright, free from guile, particularly from a desire to corrupt the people... pre-eminently of God, as consummately and essentially good... The neuter used substantively denotes 1. a good thing, convenience, advantage, ... 2. what is upright, honorable, and acceptable to God... “ (Thayer, p. 2-3; 18)*

The definition is filled with synonyms of all that is good, precious and wonderful about life here under the sun and the one to come. That which is distinguished, useful, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, and happy. All that is honorable, excellent, upright, good. These are the things that our God created. Go back and look at the creation as it came directly from the hands of our loving Creator. This should be surprise us since God stressed it over and over during the creation.

Day 1: *And God saw that the light was **good**; and God separated the light from the darkness. Gen 1:4*

Day 3: *And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was **good**. Gen 1:10*

Day 3: *And the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was **good**. Gen 1:12*

Day 4: *and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was **good**. Gen 1:18*

Day 5: *And God created the great sea monsters, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was **good**. Gen 1:21*

Day 6: *And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was **good**. Gen 1:25*

Day 6: *And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was **very good**. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Gen 1:31*

God gave us a very good world to live in. Although the world we now live in and the world that God gave us are not the same, this truth still continued. What intervened between the initial gift and today is the curse which God decreed, first to the serpent, then to Eve, and finally to Adam and the world he lived within. They died spiritually that very day, and also brought physical death into the world. All that is evil and terrible about life came from the curse. It was not God’s will that we suffer and die, it came as a direct result of sin. We can’t blame God, only ourselves. The world we now live in is described very differently from the one that came from His hands alone:

*“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” ... 13 And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. 14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind. 15 What is crooked cannot be made straight, And what is lacking cannot be numbered. Eccl 1:2, 13-15*

The vanity, troubles and trials of this world did not come directly from God as something He initiated, God wanted a different world and a different life. All that now is came as a direct consequence of our actions. Not as a direct act of His will.

Although all the other translations repeat the word “gift” twice, they are different words in the original Greek the Holy Spirit used. There is a nuance to this first word that allows us to see it in two different ways. It can be translated either as the act of giving or the gift itself.

*dosis... 1. a giving... an account of giving and receiving... 2. a gift...” (Thayer, p. 157; 1394)*

*dosis... denotes, properly, “the act of giving,” Phil 4:15, euphemistically referring to “gifts” as a matter of debt and credit accounts; then, objectively, “a gift,” James 1:17 (Vine’s Expository Dictionary 1394)*

Some prefer the act of giving while others want both to be gifts. For myself, since both are true and the act of giving can be translated, it seems better to do so. Giving itself implies the intent of the gift. Hence God’s intent in every act of giving and the actual gifts themselves are all good. God is a God who loves to give good to those who ask Him.

*“Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will he give him a stone? 10 Or if he shall ask for a fish, will he not give him a snake, will he? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” Mt 7:7-11*

### **and every perfect gift is from above,**

The Spirit now describes the actual gifts. Both the acts and reasons behind the giving and the gifts themselves share the same goodness. He repeats *pas* to again emphasize every class and kind of gift. They are perfect. This is the same term used in verse four to describe the value of trials to lead us to completion (*brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect*).

Everything that God gives to man lacks nothing to completeness. All His gifts are good, wholesome and fulfilling. When it is otherwise, then it is because man has tainted it. God gave things capable of perfection and goodness and man perverts and ruins it to other uses. God’s “gifts” are perfect.

*“dorema... that which is given, a gift, present,” (Liddell and Scott, Greek Lexicon NT: 1434)*

As we can see, this word also emphasizes the source as well as the object. It is what is given, hence it is a gift. Nothing we have possess today did we gain ourselves. Everything we have and have the potential to have is a gift. Our body, soul, personality, strengths and weaknesses, all our potential, all our challenges and goals, all gifts from the God who created them all. All the evil things came not as a direct act of God’s will, but as a consequence else is must be source from somewhere else. Consequences or direct actions of others, but never from God. When something bad happens we don’t look to God because it didn’t come from Him. All that comes from “above” are only good and wholesome, perfect and without any lack.

*“anthen... from above, from a higher place... from the upper part, from the top... often ... used of things which come from heaven, or from God as dwelling in heaven... (Thayer, p. 52; 509)*

Everything that comes from above is good and perfect. Thus if it is not good and perfect we must seek for another source. James used this same term later in the book with exactly the same idea. There is wisdom from above and wisdom from somewhere else. That which is from above has certain qualities. If these qualities are not present then it did not come from above.

*This wisdom does not descend from **above**, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and*

self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 17 But the wisdom that is from **above** is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. James 3:15-18

So also with our gifts from God. When we examine the wonderful things of life, we will find one thing to be constant and fixed. Every good act of giving, and every perfect gift came from above. It came from God. God gives all that is good. There is no other source for life, joy, happiness and all that is good. Paul commented also on this thought:

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? 35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him {be} the glory forever. Amen. Rom. 11:32-38*

### **coming down from the Father of lights,**

All that is good and perfect is “*coming down*.”

“*katabaino... to go down, come down, descend; 1. of persons; ...the place from which one has come down being evident from the context... 2. to come(i.e. be sent) down...*” (Thayer, p. 329; 2597)

The idea James sought to convey is that when good things are enjoyed they came down from (*apo* - source and origin) above, while everything else is not coming down from above, but coming up from our own foolish deeds (coming up), or coming across either from our fellow men, or the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places.

These things originated within the Father and were sent down from Him to us. God is here given a designation found nowhere else in Scripture. “*Father of lights*” seems to be literal and not a symbolic designation. John revealed,

*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 1Jn. 1:5*

Since God is light, the heavenly bodies that He created are an imitation of Him. Something that will not be needed in the world to come:

*The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. Rev. 21:23*

So when we see the lights in the heavenly realm (sun moon and stars) only reflect and imitate, God himself, He is their Father, just as He is ours. He created light on the first day, and then created the light bearing bodies on the fourth. He is the father of all light, and there is nothing but good, wholesome and wonderful character to “*light*.”

“*phos... light... 1. prop. a. univ... b. by meton. anything emitting light: a heavenly luminary (or star, ... fire, because it is light and gives light,... a lamp or torch... c. light i.e. brightness (Lat. splendor), ... 2. phos is often used in poetic discourse, in metaphor, and in parable...*” (Thayer, p. 663-663; 5457)

### **with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.**

The one quality of light that does not adequately reflect the wonderful characteristics of our God is that light changes from hour to hour, day to day, and season to season. The light varies and the shadows shift. Thus it is a parable or metaphor that has a flaw that needs to be corrected. What comes down from the father of lights and what God intends for those who receive His gifts has not. Since the term “*beside*” is in the dative, it places God “*near by, beside, in the power of, in the presence of, or with*.”

“*para... a preposition indicating close proximity, with various modifications corresponding to the various cases with which it is joined...with the DATIVE, para indicates that something is or is done either in immediate vicinity of someone, or (metaph.) in his mind, near by, beside, in the power of, in the presence of, with...*” (Thayer, p. 478; 3844)

This is the different between the lights as children and the Father Himself. When we are beside God, in the presence of or with God, there is no variation, there is no shadow, there is no turning. From God there is only on bright shining continuous flow of giving. There can be no change or

variation with Him:

*“parallage... variation, change...”* (Thayer, p. 484; 3883)

He is faithful and unchangeable. The great I AM that I AM. There is no change cast by turning with Him either. The Greek were accustomed use this term regarding the solstices that occur in the summer and winter, *“when the sun appears to turn his course and cross the ecliptic,”* or of the turning of the heavenly bodies. There is none of this with God.

*“trope... trepho a turn, turning: ... 1. tropai helioio the tropics or solstices, i.e. midsummer and midwinter, Lat. solstitium and bruma, when the sun appears to turn his course and cross the ecliptic. ... when tropai is used alone, it mostly refers to the winter solstice, 2. a turn, change, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:5157*

*“trope ... a turning: of the heavenly bodies,...”* (Thayer, p. 631; 5157)

With this turning comes the inevitable shadow that moves whenever the light is blocked.

*“aposkiasma... a shade cast by one object upon another, a shadow... shadow cast by revolution...”* (Thayer, p. 67; 644)

There is no turning, not shifting shadows or variation at all in the Father of lights. Only a continuous stream of goodness in giving and perfection in gifts. We should never be deceived, anything other than that did not come from Him.

## **18 Of His own will He brought us forth**

A concrete and indisputable example. God did not have to create us (brought forth the first time), and God did not have to redeem us (born again – brought forth a second time).

*“apokueo... to bring forth from the womb, give birth to... to produce...”* (Thayer, p. 64; 616)

This is a pure example of the kind of loving giving God that He is. He chose in the exercise of His own Will to bring us forth. We should need no more than this. This is the very argument Paul put forth in Romans:

*For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath {of God} through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Rom 5:7-11*

It was only His will. This is a different term for “will” that is only used a few times in the New Testament and only here of God:

*“boulomai...to will, wish; and 1. commonly to will deliberately, have a purpose, be minded... 2. of willing as a affection, to desire...”* (Thayer, p. 105; 1014)

God desired, willed and purposed to bring us forth. There was no force and prior to the first creation, no compelling reason for Him to bring us forth since He knew it would lead to the need for redemption, but He did so and that is the example used here.

## **by the word of truth,**

God designed and created the word of truth with the power to bring us forth. Peter developed this a little further than James. He described the word of truth as the word of God which lives and abides forever. The incorruptible seed of the word of God.

*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 24 because “All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, 25 But the word of the Lord endures forever.” Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached*

to you. 1 Peter 1:22-25

**so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.**

All of this was done for one specific purpose (*eis* – end, purpose, result). Literally with the infinitive verb of being: So that we “*to be*” This was His purpose and plan to make us into something more than we had become after we had sinned. He wanted us to be “*first fruits*.” This is a tough concept because the true first fruits would be Abel, Enoch, or Noah. Even though the first generation Christians were in a sense His first fruits, they were joined to the spirits of just men made perfect. (Heb 12:22-24).

There appears to be two paths open to us. The first would be that as the firstborn not only meant those who were first to open the womb, but those who have the preeminence. Jesus was the firstborn over all creation, not meaning He was the first to be created, but that he had the preeminence over all creation. Since we are all the firstborn in the church, it doesn't have to do with order of time, but also with preeminence.

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, Col. 1:15-16*

*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Rom. 8:29*

*to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, Heb. 12:23*

Another possibility is that all Christians are the first fruits of the entire creation. That we have been redeemed, and our redemption is the promise of a future redemption.

*For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. Rom. 8:19-24*

We could be the first fruits among His creatures. God wanted us with Him. That is the entire purpose of the creation and redemption of mankind. There is no other reason than this. We need to keep this clearly in mind as an absolute. There is no other explanation than this.

“*aparche... a. to offer firstlings or first-fruits b. to take away the first fruits... the first-fruits of the productions of the earth ...*” (Thayer, p. 54; 536)

“*ktisma... thing founded; created thing (Vulg. creatura) [A.V. creature] ...*” (Thayer, p. 363; 2938)

As we now move into the final section, it is good to review the flow of the book James has written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Christians are going to endure trials. The only variable is whether they endure them well or poorly. Whether they endure them in faith and submission to God or whether they rebel in their trials and cast accusations of mistreatment at God. If they choose the former, these trials can actually do great good. This does not mean that God sent them, or even wanted them to happen, but in the overall scheme of God's working out His plan in a sin-cursed world sometimes these things are going to happen. When they happen to us, we have clear Scripture on what we are to do. There are so many variables, so many misconceptions, so many difficult to comprehend things that can occur. James has gone step by step down the list:

- 2-3 You must have “*all joy*” when you encounter “*various trials*”
- 4-8 If you cannot understand then ask for wisdom.
- 9-11 Dealing with the trials of adversity and prosperity.
- 12 Those who do endure their trials are blessed.
- 13-18 The proper view of God when dealing with trials.
  - A. The truth about temptation. God has nothing to do with it. We all put ourselves there. We have no one but us to blame. We must take personal responsibility. 13-16

- B. The truth about God's rule over the universe. Though things may sometimes look otherwise, God only gives good things. Never mistake the bad as coming directly from Him. (Don't make Job's mistake)17-18

#### Final Conclusions

19-20 Be careful, how you hear (be swift), how you speak (be slow), and how you become angry (be slow).

21-25 Prove yourselves doers of the Word and not just hearers only.

26-27 Pure Religion: Watch your tongue, help others in their afflictions and keep yourself pure.

#### **19 So then, my beloved brethren,      19 {This} you know, my beloved brethren.**

The difference between the NKJV and NASB centers on an iota vs an omega in the first letter of the word ( ἴστε ὥστε ). This works out to about the difference between a "m" and an "n" or an "i" and a "u". Fortunately within the context of the passage it doesn't really matter which word is correct, since they both end up with a similar thought. Either the Spirit is giving them the specific "you know this", or He is telling them to draw this as a conclusion. The term "know" is defined:

*"oida... lat. video... The tenses coming from eido and retained by usage form two families, of which one signifies to see, the other to know... I. to see 1. to perceive (with the eyes)... 2. lat. video, to perceive by any of the senses... 3. univ to perceive, notice, discern, discover... 4. to see, i.e. to turn the eyes, the mind, the attention to anything; a. to pay attention, observe... b. ... to see about something i.e. to ascertain what must be done about it... c. to inspect, examine... d. to look at, behold... 5. to experience, any state of condition... 6. to see i.e. have an interview with, to visit..." (Thayer, p. 172-174; 1492)*

Again, the difference is insignificant. Either, it is because you have known or seen all this (if it is *oida*) or what follows is the the logical conclusion that should be drawn based on the above

this is the proper word, then the Spirit expects us to see and acknowledge these things as true. You know that God would never tempt any one with evil, that only good things come forth from him and all these things must be taken in that context. If it is the other term, then it is defined:

*'oste ... (with the rough breathing pronounced hoste), "hoste, ...a consecutive conjunction, i. e. expressing consequence or result,...1. so that,... it is also used of a designed result, so as to i.q. in order to, for to... 2. so then, therefore, wherefore..." (Thayer, p. 683; 5620).*

It then becomes a simple bridge. All the above being admittedly true, the end result that will follow is... With this understanding there really is no difference in the concepts.

#### **let everyone be swift to hear,**

Every true Christian knows and has made the proper conclusions regarding the facts of this chapter up to this point. Yet in spite of that knowledge God gives a strong warning. The verb of being here translated "be" is in the imperative mode, so this is a command. Every Christian regardless of spiritual maturity and understanding must never lose sight of this obligation. As a matter of fact, the more truth we already have the more we should fulfill this passage as we are thereby enhanced to glean and understand even more. We should all be very "swift" to hear.

*"tachus... of motion, quick, swift, fleet, opp. to bradus ... II. of thought and purpose, quick, rapid, hasty, ... speed, haste, ... 2. so of actions, events, quick, rapid, sudden, (Liddell and Scott Greek Lexicon. NT: 5036)*

God wants to see a quick, speedy, and attentive mind whenever His word is being discussed or contemplated. We need to have a fleet mind. Swift to learn, quick to understand and speedy to change. We are to be swift to (*eis - purpose, end result, object*) So the direction of our haste and speed and its purpose and object is to hear as God wants us to hear.

This is the end to which the swiftness is directed. We are to be swift toward the direction of hearing and listening to the truths of God's word. The term "hear" is defined:

*"akouo... to hear I. absol. 1. to be endowed with the faculty of hearing (not deaf)... 2. to attend to (use of the faculty of hearing), consider what is or has been said... 3. trop. to understand, perceive the sense*

*of what is said... II. ... 1. to hear something... b. to get by hearing, learn... c ... a thing comes to ones ears, to find out (by hearsay), learn...d. to give ear to teaching or teacher... e. to comprehend, understand, 2. ... unless one hear the person or thing with his own ears... a. aa. to perceive any one's voice... b. to give ear to one, listen, hearken..." (Thayer, p. 22-23; 191)*

Note the breadth of the term. It means to hear with the ear, then to attend to what was heard (properly use their ears), then to understand perceive, comprehend and what was heard. We should all be swift, speedy and rapid in our attempts to hear, attend to and understand the truth. God is seeking for such. Both Cornelius and the Bereans manifest such an attitude:

*"And so I sent to you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord." Acts 10:33*

*Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so. Acts 17:11-12*

Those who want to hear all that has been commanded, and who receive that word with great eagerness and examine the Scriptures daily to see if they are so are the quality of hearers that God seeks. We are only cutting ourselves off from great wisdom and understanding when we do not seek for truth by being swift to hear. There are other passages that also describe what God does and does not want to see in a hearer:

*And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, ... And he read therein ... from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.... and Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshiped Jehovah with their faces to the ground. .. And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading Neh. 8:2-8*

*"As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, 'Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.' 31 So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. 32 Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them. Ezek 33:30-33*

*Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him." Lk. 8:18*

*So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king." 1Sam. 15:22-23*

*I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food. Job. 23:12*

*"But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets" (Zech. 7:11,12).*

But God wants us to not only be swift to hear, but also ...

### **slow to speak**

The term "slow" is defined another Greek word that has come into our language. Bradycardia is a slow heart rate and tachycardia is a fast heart rate. The term brady means too slow. This is the basic meaning of the term:

*"bradus... :-slow, slowest at running, 2.of the mind, slowness, II. of Time, tardy, late, Soph., (Liddell and Scott Greek Lexicon, NT: 1021)*

So we have opposites, we must be swift in regard to hearing and slow in regard to speaking. God wants us to be slow to speak. The term "to" is the same one as in the previous verse (*eis* -

*purpose, end result, object*) . So again, this is the end purpose and object to which the slowness must be directed. We are to be slow toward the direction of speaking. The term “speak” is defined:

“*laleo*... The distinction which indeed exists between the words may in this way be made clear. **There are two leading aspects under which speech may be regarded. It may, first, be contemplated as the articulate utterance of human language, in contrast with the absence of this, from whatever cause springing; whether from choice, as in those who hold their peace, when they might speak; or from the present undeveloped condition of the organs and faculties, as in the case of infants or from natural defects, as in the case of those born dumb; or from the fact of speech lying beyond the sphere of the faculties with which as creatures they have been endowed, as in the lower animals.** This is one aspect of speech, namely articulated words, as contrasted with silence, with mere sounds or animal cries. But, **secondly, speech (‘oratio’ or ‘oris ratio’) may be regarded as the orderly linking and knitting together in connected discourse of the inward thoughts and feelings of the mind, ... Thus the dumb man (*alalos*, Mark 7:37), restored to human speech, *elalese*, (Matt 9:33; Luke 11:14), the Evangelists fitly using this word, for they are not concerned to report what the man said, but only the fact that he who before was dumb, was now able to employ his organs of speech. ... But if in *lalein*, the fact of uttering articulated speech is the prominent notion, in *legein*, it is the words uttered, and that these correspond to reasonable thoughts within the breast of the utterer.** Thus while the parrot or talking automaton (Rev. 13:15) may be said, though even they not without a certain impropriety, *lalein*, seeing they produce sounds imitative of human speech; and in poetry, though by a still stronger figure, a *lalein* may be ascribed to grasshoppers (Theocritus , Idyl. v. 34), and to pipes and flutes (Idyl. xx. 28, 29); yet inasmuch as there is nothing behind these sounds, they could never be said *legein*, for in the *legein*, lies ever the *ennoia* or thought of the mind (Heb 4:12), Often as the words occur together, in such phrases as *elalese legon* (Mark 6:50; Luke 24:6), *laletheis logos* (Heb 2:2), and the like, each remains true to its own meaning, as just laid down. Thus in the first of these passages *elalese* will express the opening of the mouth to speak, as opposed to the remaining silent (Acts 18:9); while *legon* proceeds to declare what the speaker actually said. Nor is there, I believe, any passage in the N. T. where the distinction between them has not been observed. Thus at Rom 15:18; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thess 1:8, there is no difficulty in giving to *lalein* its proper meaning; indeed all these passages gain rather than lose when this is done; while at Rom 3:19 there is an instructive interchange of the words. (Trench’s Synonyms of the NT 2980)

Note that the emphasis on this passage centers on the forming of words and speaking. It is not dialogue in the mind, but dialogue of the tongue. When hearing something new, be swift to listen and slow to speak.

A casual look at the history of God’s people shows clearly why God is so concerned about His people listening. So much more often were God’s people led into or remained in apostasy because they were too quick to speak and too slow to listen and make changes. Jesus near failure among the Jews was a direct result of people ignoring this great principle. Most of those in the denominations are also guilty of this. They close their minds and are always too quick to speak and too slow to listen. Are we? God has told us over and over again in every possible way that we must be very careful with our words.

*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise. 20 The tongue of the righteous is choice silver* Pr. 10:19-20

*He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. 28 Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.* Pr. 17:27-28

*Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.* Pr. 21:23

*Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.* Pr. 29:20

*Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few. 3 For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool’s voice is known by his many words.* Ecc. 5:2

*If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless.* James 1:26

*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” M.t 12:34-37*

*“Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge? 3 Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. Job 38:2-3*

*“Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me: 8 “Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? Job 40:7-8*

*“Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. 5 Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.” Job 40:4-5*

James now moves to the final consideration on advising us of the need to be very careful in our minds in the initial acceptance of the truth.

### **{and} slow to anger;**

The Holy Spirit repeated both the term “slow” and the term “to.” Hence we are again to do the exact opposite with anger as we were told to do with hearing. God wants us to be slow for the purpose of anger, because once again, “to” (*eis*) is the end to which the slowness is directed. We are to be slow toward the direction of “anger.” This term is defined:

*“orge,...(fr orgao to teem, denoting an internal motion, esp that of plants and fruits swelling with juice... the natural disposition, temper, character; movement or agitation of soul, impulse, desire, any violent emotion, but esp. (and chiefly in Attic) anger. In bibl. Grk. anger, wrath, indignation... anger exhibited in punishing, hence used for the punishment itself... The orge attributed to God in the N. T. is that in God which stands opposed to man’s disobedience, obduracy(esp in resisting the gospel) and sin, and manifests itself in punishing the same... wrath, outburst of anger,... to provoke, arouse to anger; pass. to be provoked to anger, be angry, be wroth,;...” (Thayer, p. 452; 3709)*

*orge, thumos ... When these words, after a considerable anterior history, **came to settle down on the passion of anger, as the strongest of all passions, impulses, and desires** (see Donaldson, New Cratylus, 3 rd ed. pp. 675-679; and Thompson, Phædrus of Plato , p. 165), the distinguishing of them occupied not a little the grammarians and philologers. These felt, and rightly, that the existence of a multitude of passages in which the two were indifferently used (as Plato , Legg. ix. 867), made nothing against the fact of such a distinction; for, in seeking to discriminate between them, they assumed nothing more than that these could not be indifferently used on every occasion. **The general result at which they arrived is this, that in thumos, connected with the intransitive thuo ... is more of the turbulent commotion, the boiling agitation of the feelings, ... St. Basil calls it, either presently to subside and disappear,... — or else to settle down into orge wherein is more of an abiding and settled habit of mind (‘ira inveterata’) with the purpose of revenge; ... This, the more passionate, and at the same time more temporary, character of thumos (thumoi) ... according to Jeremy Taylor, are ‘great but transient angers;’ ... Aristotle , too, in his wonderful comparison of old age and youth, thus characterizes the angers of old men (Rhet . ii. 11): ... thumoi ... —like fire in straw, quickly blazing up, and as quickly extinguished ...” (Trench’s Synonyms of the NT: 3709)***

James selects the more settled term for anger that once created stays in the mind. It is aroused every time one sees or thinks about its object. While under either form, one is no longer rational, James chooses *orge*. We must learn to move this emotion to the back burner, not allowing it to be easily generated. God has revealed again and again the danger of anger in both its forms:

*Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Ps 4:4*

*An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression. Pr. 29:22*

*A wrathful man stirs up strife, But he who is slow to anger allays contention. Pr. 15:18*

*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. Pr. 16:32*

*The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression Pr. 19:11*

*Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools. Eccl. 7:9*

*Be angry, and do not sin: let not the sun go down on your wrath, Eph. 4:26*

*7 Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret — it only causes harm. 9 For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the Lord, They shall inherit the earth. Ps. 37:7-9*

Cain, Moses and Aaron, Naaman and Jonah were all under the influence of anger when they made terrible mistakes in judgement and sinned.

*but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6 So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” Gen 4:5-7*

*And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?” 11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. 12 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.” Num. 20:10-12*

*They angered Him also at the waters of strife, So that it went ill with Moses on account of them; 33 Because they rebelled against His Spirit, So that he spoke rashly (unadvisedly asv) with his lips. Ps. 106:32-33*

*But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, “Indeed, I said to myself, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.’ 12 Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage. 2 Kings 5:11-14*

*But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. 2 So he prayed to the Lord, and said, “Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. 3 Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!” 4 Then the Lord said, “Is it right for you to be angry?” Jonah 4:1-4*

*Then God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?” And he said, “It is right for me to be angry, even to death!” 10 But the Lord said, “You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left — and much livestock?” Jonah 4:9-11*

In love and compassion, God does not want to see this in His true people. It is too dangerous to allow to form at all and must be carefully managed. We must learn to be quick to listen and understand, and slow to speak back or lash out in anger.

## **20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.**

That which one sees over and over in the Scriptures is now bluntly put forth as truth. Man's anger doesn't achieve God's righteousness. We all need to remember this the next time we become angry. When ever we are thinking that something needs to be done, done now and done by me, we need to stop. At that moment, we are at our least potential for actually accomplishing it. Parents, must will be unable to properly discipline their children when they are angry. Don't use this as a crutch. The term “achieve” is defined:

*“ergazomai... 1. absol. a. to work, labor, do work: it is opposed to inactivity or idleness... b. to trade, to make gains by trading ... 2. trans. a. (to work i. e.) to do, work out... with acc. of virtues or vices, (to work i. e.) to exercise, perform, commit... b. to work for, earn by working, to acquire...” (Thayer, p. 247; 2038)*

Take whoever you want, Cain, Moses speaking to the rock, Nabal's anger at David, or the anger

of the Jews at their prophets who taught them truth. You see that when man is under the influence of this emotion, he is incapable of fulfilling God's righteousness:

*"dikaiosune... the virtue or quality or state of one who is dikaios; 1. in the broad sense, the state of him who is such as he ought to be, righteousness... the condition acceptable to God... a. univ. ... the doctrine concerning the way in which man may attain to a state approved of God... b. integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling and acting..."* (Thayer, p. 149; 1343)

God seeks for integrity, virtue, purity correctness and thinking, feeling and acting. Man's anger can't accomplish it. Therefore we must be very slow to become angry, especially in the context of hearing the word of God. When speaking with others, especially in areas of doctrine and morality that is new and has not been discussed before, be very careful about becoming angry and about speaking too quickly.

## 21 Therefore lay aside (putting aside) all filthiness

With another *"therefore,"* James holds on to this thought as he moves into a new area. This term is defined:

*"dio... wherefore, on which account..."* (Thayer, p. 152; 1352)

*"dio, dioper,* relatively emphatic markers of result, usually denoting the fact that the inference is self-evident - 'therefore, for this reason, for this very reason, so then.' (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:1352)

If we are doing all the above, it is obvious and self-evident that we must get rid of all filthiness and wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word. Since this is among the most often discussed subject in the Scriptures if we are truly swift to hear, this is exactly what we will be doing. If not, we are that man or woman who looks in a mirror then forgets. God will not take us step by step through the process of how to hear His Word. First we must put aside filthiness and wickedness. "Put aside" is defined:

*"apotithemi... to put off or aside; in the N. T. only middle to put off from one's self... to lay up or away... trop. those things are said to be put off or away which any one gives up, renounces..."* (Thayer, p. 69; 659)

*apotithemai ... (a figurative extension of meaning of apotithemai), 'to put away,' 85.44) to cease doing what one is accustomed to doing - 'to stop, to cease.' ... 'stop living the way you did formerly' (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:659)*

The process is much more painful and difficult than it may appear. It will require both cutting off, plucking out, and potting to death .

*And if your hand causes you to sin, **cut it off**. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, **cut it off**. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, **tear it out**. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 48 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' 49 For everyone will be salted with fire. Mk. 9:43-50*

*Therefore **put to death** your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. Col 3:5-7*

The term for put aside is also used in these other passages.

*that you **put off**, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. 25 Therefore, **putting away** lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," Eph. 4:22-25*

*But now you yourselves are to **put off** all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Col. 3:8-9*

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us **lay aside** every*

*weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, Heb. 12:1-2*

The main idea here is in taking something off or putting something aside. In this case, it is not garments as a figure, but “*filthiness*.”

“*hruparia ... (hruparos) filthiness... metaph of wickedness as moral defilement... [of sordidness...] ...*” (Thayer, p. 564; 4507)

“*hruparos... filthy, dirty: prop. of clothing... metaph. defiled with iniquity, base ...[(in the sense of sordid, mean...)]...*” (Thayer, p. 564; 4508)

Moral filth, moral smut, moral dirt, moral defilement. To God it is all nauseating. He is not tempted with this garbage, He tempts no one with this garbage, and He wants us to remove it from our lives. This is just another term to describe the vile nature of sin to God. It is dirty and filthy to Him, again much in the same way as physical filth is to the nose of man, only to a worse degree.

The wicked corruption and filth of sin must be put off, laid away, given up and renounced. All forms of ungodliness and sin must be removed. There can be no place for it in the heart of God’s children. Sin to the heart, soul and emotions of man does much the same as a foul stench would to the nose. If we stain our clothes with oil or another stinking chemical and they try to eat or drink with that smell, it permeates our nostrils and we cannot enjoy it. Just as the delicate smells and tastes are destroyed by the foul smell, the beauty and purity of God’s Word cannot be appreciated and clearly seen by those who’s mind is sullied with filth. When God’s word points out something as wrong and we are permeated in sin, we often cannot see it and consequently make up excuses and reasons that it is all right. It causes prejudice and keeps us from seeing clearly its like weeds that block the sun on a plant. Its like film on the window of a house which makes it impossible to see out clearly. We must get rid of it, and along with it...

#### **and overflow (all that remains) of wickedness,**

James couples to the description of sin as filth the idea that it is an overflow of wickedness. The term “*overflow*” is defined.

“*perisseia... 1. abundance... adverbially, superabundantly, superfluously, ... 2. superiority; preference, pre-eminence... 3. gain, profit... 4. residue, remains...*” (Thayer, p. 505; 4050)

“*perisseia... It the NT it is used of the superabundant fulness of the time of salvation, whether it be that of God’s grace and righteousness poured forth in Christ in contrast to the dominion of death in the old aeon (Rom 5:17), or that of over flowing Christian joy which is prepared to be generous in spite of poverty (2 Cor 8:2). According to 2 Cor 10:15 Paul hopes for new and unbounded missionary victories when the Corinthian church shows obedient submission. In James 1:21 perisseia kakias does not denote a remnant of wickedness. ... in accordance with the basic sense of perisseuein the term describes the wickedness which is to be set aside as “exceedingly great.”* (Kittel, TDWNT NT:4050)

The spilling over of filth from our past life into our present life, the spilling over of our thoughts into our words and actions, are possibly both under consideration. God wants our hearts, minds, and lives to be clean. He wants us to understand that there is no such thing as a small amount of wickedness. He doesn’t look at it that way. If we are guilty of one point we are guilty of all, so any sin is an overflowing of evil and wickedness:

“*kakia... 1. malignity, malice, ill-will, desire to injure... 2. wickedness, depravity... wickedness that is not ashamed to break the laws,...*” (Thayer p 320, NT:2549)

“*kakia... kakos, badness in quality, opp. to arete, (excellence), defects, ... 2. cowardice, sloth, ... 3. moral badness, wickedness, vice, ... II. ill-repute, III. evil suffered, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon, NT: 2549)*

To see this term defined as the opposite of *arete* (*virtue – as the best anything can be*) would mean that this term describes the worst that anything can be. It is an evil term with a malicious overtone. It is not just evil, it is evil with malice, ill-will and a desire to injure. It matters little whether this desire was directed toward God, our fellow-man or even toward ourselves. It must be destroyed and

forever removed.

### **and receive with meekness the implanted word,**

After removing and putting wickedness aside, we must also “*receive*” a much more precious and sweet smelling commodity.

“*dechomai* ... signifies “to accept,” by a deliberate and ready reception of what is offered...” (from Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:1209)

“*dechomai*... lambano, lempsis ... to receive or accept an object or benefit for which the initiative rests with the giver, but the focus of attention in the transfer is upon the receiver - ‘to receive, receiving, to accept.’ ... (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, NT 1209)

Although the word of God is something “for which the initiative rests with the giver,” (God), in this context “*the focus of attention in the transfer is upon the receiver.*” We must be the ones to receive it. Only by faith and submission to its conditions can the word of God be received by those who are swift to hear. The best possible way to receive it is “in humility.” The preposition “*in*” is often used to describe either the place in the midst of which it can be done or the means by which it can be done. This can only be found in the midst of “meekness.”

*prautes*... *Gentleness, mildness, meekness*...” (Thayer, p. 535; 4236)

The meaning of “*prautes*” “is **not readily expressed in English**, for the terms **meekness, mildness**, commonly used, **suggest weakness** to a greater or less extent, whereas “*prautes*” **does nothing of the kind. It must be clearly understood**, therefore, that the common assumption is that when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself; but **the Lord was ‘meek’ because he had the infinite resources of God at His command** Described negatively, **meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest**; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because **it is not occupied with self at all**. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary)

“*prautes*... “**mild and gentle friendliness**,”... the **opposite of roughness ...bad temper, or sudden anger/brusqueness**... Among the Greeks “gentle friendliness” is highly prized as a social virtue in human relationships... The systematic thinker Aristotle places *praotes* as... a mean between “*orgilotes*” (“anger,” “bad temper”) and the spineless incompetence of “*aorgesia*” ... (Kittel, Vol 6 p 645-646)

It is a term that describes several things. Meekness is that great word of both control and of gentleness. It is the horse broken to the bit, the watchdog to the command of the owner, the gasoline engine to to control of the gas pedal. Great strength subdued and harnessed. In this case it is harnessed to the will of God.

*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Phil. 2:3-4*

In meekness we see our strength harnessed and controlled, as a horse broken to the bit, or the engine controlled by the carburetor. Like the water in a mountain stream can at times where the incline is steep and with many boulders, the water is turbulent. But can also be smoothed out quickly on level ground with a sandy bottom, where it becomes placid and smooth. The power of the water is still there, but with meekness it it can now be used.

That is what meekness is, and that is exactly what is needed when the word is preached and we quickly hear it and seek to apply it. The human spirit is much like water, in anger and frustration it boils much like water over boulders, it is uncontrollable and not conducive to spiritual growth. James counsels us to use meekness, strength harnessed, gentleness and control of spirit in mildness to accept the teachings of the Scripture. How many times have we seen God’s people kill the messenger bringing them the very information they need to get right with God because they didn’t have the meekness to receive and act upon it. That ought to be instructive to each of us. There is a grave danger that we will miss some great point of Scripture unless we cultivate this meek attitude of receiving the word.

## the implanted word,

This is a very wonderful way to describe the word of God. It is defined:

*“emphutos... in born, implanted by nature;... implanted by other’s instruction... Thus Jas. 1:21...”* (Thayer, p. 209; 1721)

*“emphutos... ‘to be implanted,’ not occurring in the NT) to be permanently in a place, with the implication of development - ‘placed in, permanently established in, implanted.’ (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:1721)*

God’s word is much like seed planted in the ground, or the grafting in of branches. In the parable of the sower, Jesus describes the powerful action of this implantation in the good and honest heart. It yields the fruit. NOTE: it is not the heart that has the power to produce, but the implanted word. The word of God is the seed Lk 8:11; if we receive it into our hearts it grows and produces fruit. Lk 8:15.

*And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, “Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.” 20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? Rom. 11:17-21*

## which is able to save your souls.

This word must accepted with meekness because of the great power it has to help us. It is “able” to save our souls.

*“dunamai... to be able, have power, whether by virtue of one’s own ability and resources, or of a state of mind, or through favorable circumstances, or by permission of law or custom... to be able to do something... to be able, capable, strong, powerful...”* (Thayer, p. 158-159; 1410)

God’s implanted word has the power, is capable and strong enough to save our soul. All we have to do is accept and act upon it without anger or rebellion, swift to hear it and accept it with humility. The term “save” is defined:

*“sozo... to save, to keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction(opp. to apollumi)... a. univ., tina ... one (from injury or peril); to save a suffering one (from perishing) e. g. one suffering from disease to make well, heal, restore to health: to preserve one who is in danger of destruction, to save(i.e.to rescue)... b. to save in the technical biblical sense; negatively, to deliver from the penalties of the Messianic judgment,... to save from the evils which obstruct the reception of the Messianic deliverance...”* (Thayer, p. 610-611; 4982)

God’s word does this to man’s soul. It saves and keeps it safe and sound. It rescues it from danger and destruction. It heals and restores to health. It is for this reason that we should be so quick to obey this command.

## 22 But be doers of the word,

While there is a great sense of satisfaction those who receive have the opportunity to hear God’s word and have possession of it, if it is not acted upon, it actually becomes a curse instead of a blessing. The word of God is living and powerful (Heb. 4:12), and it can’t lie dormant in the human heart. It either moves to action, or the heart itself becomes calloused and hardened as it protects itself from the offended conscience.

*Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, 18 and **know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law,** 19 and are confident that you yourself are **a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes,** having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. 21 **You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?** You who preach that a man should not*

steal, do you steal? 22 You who say, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? 24 **For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written.** Rom 2:17-24

When we know the word, and can preach the word, but we do not practice it, it bears the terrible blight of hypocrisy. God had complained about this even back in the days of Ezekiel.

*As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, ‘Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.’ 31 So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. 32 Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them. 33 And when this comes to pass — surely it will come — then they will know that a prophet has been among them.”* Ezek. 33:30-32;

God’s word has been designed and created to be heard. Faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17), so the more that is heard the stronger the faith becomes, but faith without works is dead. There is a terrible contradiction when we hear God’s word, but we are not doers. It is not enough to become a submissive hearer in our listening. It must be brought to completion by carry it though into our life. Multitudes of people have heard a good sermon and accepted it with meekness, yet if they never do anything with it, it is useless. The term “doers” is defined:

“*poieo*... I. to make ... 1. ... a. with the names of the things made, to produce, construct, form, fashion, etc. ... to create produce: of God, as the author of all things... absol . of men, to labor, to do work... to be operative, exercise activity ... b. joined to nouns denoting a state or condition, it signifies to be the author or, to cause ...” (Thayer, p. 524-527; 4160)

The main idea of this term is making products, doing labor, being the author(bringing something about), and carrying out, executing and performing something. We must be such “doers” of God’s word. We need to be producing, laboring authoring deeds and acts of kindness and carrying it out in our lives. We must hear to do.

“*Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”* Mt. 7:24-27

As noted above, hearing is a great and wonderful thing. To be “swift to hear” is a great blessing. But hearing alone is not enough. If we hear, but never do, our hearing will not profit us at all.

### **and not hearers only,**

God doesn’t want us to be “only” hearers.

“*monos*,... 1. an adjective alone (without a companion); a. with verbs... b. it is joined with its noun to other verbs also so that what is predicated may be declared to apply to some one person along... 2. alone, only, merely... referring to an action expressed by a verb” (Thayer, p. 418; 3441).

If all we do is listen and hear, if that is the only thing and all alone and isolated from the deeds, then it is worthless. Those who hear and do nothing do not even receive the benefit of hearing it. It is even worse than not hearing at all for those who know to do are counted worthy of more stripes than those who did not.

*And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.* Luke 12:47-48

## deceiving yourselves.

This term is defined:

*“paralogizomai...a. to reckon wrong, miscount... b. to cheat by false reckoning... To deceive by false reasoning... c. hence univ. to deceive, delude, circumvent...”* (Thayer p 484 NT:3884)

*paralogizomai ... I. in keeping accounts, to misreckon, miscalculate, Dem. ... 2. to cheat out of a thing, to defraud of, ... II. to mislead by fallacious reasoning, Aeschin.:Pass. to be so misled, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon, NT:3884)*

Although there is something ennobling and special about hearing God’s word, if we allow those feelings to permeate our heart without actually producing the things we have heard in our hearts, then we are reckoning wrong and miscounting. The more we hear the more we are expected to do, and the greater the judgment will be against us.

If we feel clean and wonderful by hearing only, but we do not feel the need to make some changes, then we are deceived, deluded and have allowed false reasoning to enter into our heart. We only hurt ourselves because you cannot hear God’s word without acting upon it if a hardening is occurring. It can be a selective hardening that leads us to feel good about ourselves when the sad reality is that we are not at all what God wants us to be. So many times Israel rejected the words of their prophets, but still spoke highly of them.

### **23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;**

Once again, James connects his thoughts with *“for - hoti — the reason why anything is said to be, it is added to a speaker’s words to show what ground he gives for his opinion.”* So this will be a parable that will give the reason why and the ground for the conclusion that one is only deceiving themselves if they hear God’s word, but never do anything about it.

James introduces a parable or illustration that makes very clear what God wants us to understand by his words. Those who only hear without doing are like a man who looks at his face in a mirror. What is the point of this illustration?

Many ideas have been set forth. The most logical is that which stays within the context. The context stresses Christians who see spiritual things about their character and then do nothing about them. How is a man who looks in a mirror like that? This man looks at his face in the mirror. Truly looks at it, sees all the flaws, all the problems and imperfections. Only if we carry it through that he sees a spot on his face or his hair is not properly fixed, but he doesn’t do anything about it.

The other possibility is the sad but true reality that when we see ourselves in the mirror, we are not always happy with what we see. As we age and look at the wrinkles, grey and balding hair, we don’t at all like what we see. Yet as soon as we step away from the mirror all that is forgotten and we are no longer self-conscious because we have forgotten all there is about our face that we don’t like.

### **24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.**

He looks long and intently, but after he leaves, he cannot recall what he looks like. How often do we look into a mirror, and even after looking, we still have no idea what we really look like, we must look again and again into the mirror to keep a clear picture of ourselves.

In order to keep a clear picture of ourselves and have a clear idea of what we really look like, we must constantly be looking into the spiritual mirror. If we are not continually comparing ourselves with what God demands that we be and attempt to do those things, then we will never change and we will never really know what we look like. The end of many a man’s path who thought it was right are the ways of death. Only by constantly looking into the mirror with a desire to fix what we see have we any hope of becoming all God seeks from us.

So as we look into a physical mirror and consider our fleshly face, we need to remember that God’s

word is just like that mirror. When we see a problem and forget to fix it, then later in the day, see it again, we need to make the application that this is exactly what God's word does to our soul, and if we don't act on it while we see it, we will soon forget and it will all be for nothing.

## 25 But one who looks intently

He now sums up the previous thoughts into this one final comment. If we truly "*receive with meekness the implanted word,*" and have truly become "*doers of the word, and not hearers only,*" then we are now prepared to accept his final conclusion. This is what is actually involved in *receiving with meekness,*" and "*doing.*" This is a very interesting term that needs more than one definition to get a full and clear picture.

*"parakupto... to stoop to... a thing in order to look at it; to look at with the head bowed forwards; to look into with the body bent; to stoop and look into... metaph. to look carefully into, inspect curiously... of one who would become acquainted with something..."* (Thayer, p. 484; 3879)

*"parakupto... b 'to stoop and look into,' 24.13) to make considerable effort in order to try to find out something - 'to try to learn, to desire to learn.' ... 'things which (even) the angels desire to learn about' 1 Peter 1:12. (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon NT:3879)*

*parakupto* lit. and primarily, "to stoop sideways" *para*, "aside," *kupto*, "to bend forward"), denotes "to stoop to look into," (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT: 3879)

This is a look that begins with great intensity and desire to see and ends with the intention to make whatever changes are necessary. It is like being in the dark and hearing a noise that doesn't fit with the circumstances and may require fight or flight. Whenever we are hearing God's word there is the possibility that something will be heard that requires immediate changes in order to avoid great danger. So this is not just a casual look, it is intense, with the body bent and stooped, prepared to make instant corrections depending on what is seen.

It is also the curious look at something that could bring great reward. When we see something that might be very valuable, we stop and look at it from every angle to get the best possible perspective. The Christian must have a strong curiosity for all the doctrines, morals and teachings of Christ in the law. He can never get enough of it, always hearing and re-evaluating to be certain it is the truth.

### at the perfect law, the law of liberty,

The Holy Spirit used James to reveal that the gospel can also be called is "*a perfect law of liberty.*" Much was said in the New Covenant about the imperfections of the Old Law.

*For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, 19 for the law made nothing perfect; Heb 7:18-19*

*For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. Heb 10:1*

*But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Rom 7:6*

We were delivered from the Old Covenant in which nothing could be made perfect and now serve God with the "*perfect*" law.

*"teleios,... brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect... substantively, that which is perfect: of men, full-grown, adult; of full age, mature,... of mind and character, one who has reached the proper height of virtue and integrity..."* (Thayer, p. 618).

The problem with the Old Law centered on one basic issue. Our fleshly desires were so strong that we could not keep it. It was not a problem with the Law, but a problem with our flesh. The new Covenant solved that by sending Jesus and bringing grace and forgiveness. Now we have a law we can keep because when we violate it, we can ask for forgiveness and keep on living under that Law:

*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son*

*in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Rom 8:3-5*

This is why in the same verse, it is called the law of “liberty.”

*eleutheria... liberty... in the N.T. a. liberty to do or to omit things having no relation to salvation... freedom from the dominion of corrupt desires, so that we do by the free impulses of the soul what the will of God requires... the Christian religion, which furnaces that rule of right living by which the liberty just mentioned is attained... “ (Thayer, p. 204; 1657)*

*eleutheros, eleutheroo, eleutheria, apeleutheros ... to be free is to be at one’s own disposal: ... 1. It was partly fashioned by contrast with the bondage of the slave. According to the general Gk. conviction defined in Aristotle ... the slave is the one who from the first (= by nature) does not belong to himself but to someone else. The formal sense of freedom naturally orientated itself to the political institution of the *doulos* More concretely the NT uses *eleutheria* for freedom from sin (Rom 6:18-23; John 8:31-36), from the Law (Rom 7:3; 8:2; Gal 2:4; 4:21-31; 5:1,13), and from death (Rom 6:21f.; 8:21). Freedom is freedom from an existence which in sin leads through the Law to death. ...” (Kittel, TDWNT; NT 1658)*

Since the idea of freedom is fraught with the peril of taking it too far, it is best to allow Jesus and His apostles to define exactly what the freedom is that this law of liberty offers. First, it is a freedom from sin. When we become His disciple, the truth revealed in the gospel is in fact the law of liberty that removes the bondage of sin and frees us by the grace and mercy of God.

*Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” 33 They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, ‘You will be made free?’” 34 Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. 35 And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. 36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. John 8:31-36*

The law of liberty keeps us from ever returning to bondage because we are not under law but under grace. Whenever we stumble into sin, we can extricate ourselves immediately by using godly sorrow and repentance, leading to confession of sins and we are completely free again. Sin can never take dominion unless we allow it.

*For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Rom 6:14*

*But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. Rom 6:17-23*

*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Rom 8:1-3*

When looked at from the perspective of true freedom and liberty, we have been greatly blessed by God to have been given such an amazing and powerful opportunity to be made free. That’s why we should be looking so intently into it. The next thing we hear may bring even more freedom to our lives that have been filled with bondage to ignorance and sin.

This is a law that sets free all those who follow it. Free from sin, free from superstition, free from false teaching and freedom from fear of death.

**and abides by it,**

The man does something different from the one who looks in the mirror and turns away. This one never turns away. He “continues” in it:

*“parameno... to remain beside, continue always near... (and continues to do so, not departing till all stains are washed away... ” (Thayer, p. 485; 3887)*

*“parameno “to continue,” e. g. “to remain beside” (para, “beside”), “to continue near,” came to signify simply “to continue,” ...” (Vines NT:3887)*

We have all learned about *hupo-meno* which is to abide under persecutions and trials as endurance. This is *para-meno* which has all the power of the remaining but this time it is at the side of or beside. So the one who hears is always by the side of this law. They never move away from it. It is always right next to them, directing and guiding them away from bondage and into freedom. Leading them from imperfection and into perfection.

### **not having become a forgetful hearer**

With an aorist participle of *eime* which is the verb of being, James speaks of not allowing ourselves to become like this. We should not be able to look back into the past and see that this has ever occurred. We have never allowed ourselves to become someone who has heard something from God’s word and then forgotten it. We are not forgetful hearers. We listen intently with the goal of keeping it ever present in our minds. Never do the things once learned slip away. There is an intensity here, a curiosity and desire born of the knowledge of salvation. Never will it be forgotten or neglected.

*“epilanthanomai... to forget... in the sense of neglecting, no longer caring for... forgotten, given over to oblivion, i.e. uncared for....” (Thayer, p. 240; 1950)*

### **but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.**

With the adversative conjunction (*alla*), James replaces what never should be with what should always be the case. He wants Christians to be working doers. Those who make and produce along with a product and something accomplished to show for it. He will return to this in the next chapter.

*“ergon... 1. business, employment, that with which anyone is occupied... 2. any product whatever, any thing accomplished by hand, art, industry, mind... 3. an act, deed, thing done: ...” (Thayer, p. 248; 2041)*

*poietes.... 1. a maker, producer, author (Xenophon, Plato, others). 2. a doer, performer ...” (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, NT4163)*

This is the great dividing line between Christians, between the true and the false, between the genuine and the counterfeit, between the deceived and the blessed. James will speak on this more in 2:14, faith without doing is dead. Work must be done, desire must lead to action.

### **26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious,**

James concludes this section with a possibility. If there is anyone reading this letter who thinks he is a religious person, then James wants him to carefully consider whether he has the credentials for it to be true.

*“dokeo... 1. to be of opinion, think, suppose... 2. intrans. to seem, be accounted, reputed... 3. inpers. ... it seems to me; i.e. a. I think judge...” (Thayer, , p. 154; 1380).*

If anyone of us reading this letter has this judgment and opinion about ourselves, if they think and suppose, or if it seems to them that they are religious, then here are some things anyone can do to see if it is genuine religion or if we are only deceived. The term “religious” is a difficult word to define, but this passage seems to follow the same path as Paul took in Romans.

*Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, 18 and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, 19 and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. 21 **You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? 22 You who say, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? 24 For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written.***

## Rom 2:17-24

Claiming to be a true servant requires more than a simple affirmation. In Romans, Paul spoke of moral purity and submission to God's commands. James asks about our religion, which appears to capture the same idea of that of Jew. Someone who fears and worships God and trembles at His word. Who seeks for ceremonial purity in worship following God's directions just like Abel.

*"threskos... fearing or worshipping God; religious (apparently fr. treo to tremble; hence prop. trembling, fearful..." (Thayer, p. 292; 2357)*

*threskeia* signifies "religion" in its external aspect (akin to *threskos*, see below), "religious worship," especially the ceremonial service of "religion"; it is used of the "religion" of the Jews, Acts 26:5; of the "worshiping" of angels, Col 2:18, which they themselves repudiate Rev 22:8,9; " (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, NT:2356)

we have in *threskos* (James 1:26), which still more nearly corresponds to the Latin 'religiosus,' the zealous and diligent performer of the divine offices, of the outward service of God. ... is predominantly the ceremonial service of religion, of her whom Lord Brooke has so grandly named 'mother of form and fear,'—the external framework or body, of which *eusebeia* is the informing soul. (Trench's Synonyms of the NT:2357)

If we believe we are true Christians following the ways of Scripture as closely as possible, there are other equally important things that must be sought and fulfilled.

### **and yet does not bridle his tongue**

First, is the matter of the words we allow to flow from our heart. Jesus Himself revealed that the tongue reveals the heart, because only what is first in the heart can flow out into words.

*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. Lk. 6:45*

An unbridled tongue reveals a heart that is not well ordered or properly prepared. Just like a horse that is unbridled goes where it will and does as it pleases so also the tongue of a man who is not properly trained.

*kalinagogeo ... from *chalin* and *ago*, "to lead," signifies "to lead by a bridle, to bridle, to hold in check, restrain"; it is used metaphorically of the tongue and of the body in James 1:26 and 3:2. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, NT:5468)*

Since James will return this and give an entire chapter to it, we can wait for his full explanation. There James will reveal that not only does the tongue need a bridle, but because it is a fire, and a world of iniquity among our members, it can defile the entire body and destroy any form of religion.

### **but deceives his own heart,**

Since the tongue is such a critical part of God's revelation of man, any religion that does not train us to bridle it, or anyone who has been deceived in any other way about the importance of bridling and being careful about our words is deceived about the value of his religion.

*Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Mt. 12:34-37*

### **this man's religion is worthless.**

James doesn't hold back in any way. Any form of religion that doesn't train us to hold our tongue and be careful with its use is worthless and vain. It has no power and thus cannot bring success.

*"mataios... devoid of force, truth, success, result [A. V. uniformly vain] ... useless, to no purpose.... *ta mataia* vain things, vanities, of heathen deities and their worship..." (Thayer, p. 392-393; 3152)*

*“mataios... pertaining to being useless on the basis of being futile and lacking in content - ‘useless, futile, empty, futility.’ (Lou and Nida, Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domain. NT:3152)*

## **27 This is pure and undefiled religion**

James is not rejecting all the other aspects of “*religion*,” only making sure that all understand that the gospel does not only teach reverence to God and Christ and to submit to the duties and obligations of the gospel, but it also teaches the importance of our relationship to our fellow-man. Jesus sought to teach this when He reminded Israel that there were actually two great laws.

*“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” 37 Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Matt 22:36-40*

We must direct our hearts to God and love Him, but we must also direct ourselves toward our fellow-man. So pure religion is not simply moral purity and being right in all doctrinal matters. In order for it to be pure, it must also move in the direction of compassion and pity toward those who are poor and weak.

*“katharos... clean, pure, (free from the admixture or adhesion of anything that soils, adulterates corrupts); a. physically... b. in a levitical sense; clean; i.e. the use of which is not forbidden, imparts no uncleanness... c. ethically; free from corrupt desire, from sin and guilt... free from every admixture of what is false, sincere... genuine blameless, innocent... “ (Thayer, p. 312; 2513)*

*“amiantos... not defiled, unsoiled; free from that by which the nature of a thing is deformed and debased or its force and vigor impaired...” (Thayer, p. 32; 283)*

### **in the sight of our God and Father,**

This concept was used by Paul to remind us that we are always walking in the sight of God and it is only in His eyes that religion has any value or merit. He is watching and He wants to see our attitude toward these things in order to find our worship acceptable.

### **to visit orphans and widows in their distress,**

The term visit has two important parts. It’s primary meaning has two parts. The first is to look into and assess the needs. It has the same root as that of the overseer who watches over the congregation.

*“episkeptomai ... “to inspect” (a late form of episkopeo, “to look upon, care for, exercise oversight”), signifies (a) “to visit” with help, ... (b) “to visit” the sick and afflicted, Matt 25:36,43; James 1:27; (c) “to go and see,” “pay a visit to,” Acts 7:23; 15:36; (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:1980)*

*“episkeptomai... to look upon or after, to inspect, examine with the eyes; a. tina in order to see how he is, i.e. to visit, go to see one... b. Hebraistically to look upon in order to help[ or to benefit, i.q. to look after, have a care for, provide for... “ (Thayer, p. 242; 1980)*

Equally important is the relieving of whatever needs are found. James will also return to this thought later in the book. There is no profit to visiting and even expressing a desire that the needs be fulfilled.

*If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Jas. 2:15-16*

Two groups are expressly mentioned. Both widows and orphans are terms stressing the loss of a provider. These are the helpless and defenseless. It has always been God’s desire that these individuals be cared for. God had instructed all Israel to leave the gleanings of the field for them.

*“When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20 When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. 21 When you gather the grapes of your*

vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. 22 And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing. Deut 24:19-22

God even explained that part of His condemnation of Sodom was in this matter. They did not care for the needy.

Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; **neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.** 50 And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit. Ezek. 16:49-50

This is one thing that our own country is to commended for doing. They have been very active in preparing for the needs of this groups of people. So much so that they have placed many Christians into an interesting dilemma. Since James speaks of distress, much of this has been removed at least in the financial realm. With all the insurances in existence, much of the financial distress has been removed.

*“thlipsis... properly, a pressing, pressing together, pressure... in bibl. and eccles. Greek metaph., oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress, straits;... of the afflictions of those hard pressed by siege and the calamities of war,... of the straits of want,... of the distress of a woman in child-birth...”* (Thayer, p. 291; 2347).

Yet the command still stands. Pure religion requires that we at least check.

*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.* Gal. 6:10

### **and to keep oneself unstained by the world.**

This one is the most expected. Everyone understands that in order to be considered right with God we must live an unstained life.

*“aspilos... metaph. free from censure, irreproachable,... free from vice, unsullied...”* (Thayer, p. 81; 784)

The meaning behind this term was fully explained by John.

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. 1 John 2:15-17*

It is such a contradiction that the very place God created should contain such things, but so it is. The world misuses all the wonderful qualities God gave to be enjoyed and become such a blessing to us. Yet the lusts of flesh and eyes along with the pride of life have stained us all in some way or another. We must identify these stains and remove them one by one.

## Chapter Two

### 1 My brethren,

As the Holy Spirit moves to the topic, he inspired James to call them brethren. Whenever conduct is being rebuked, it is wise to begin on equal footing. The Spirit also did this with Stephen as He prepared to rebuke the Jews for their hard hearts.

*And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, Acts 7:2-3*

A rebuke is always softened when the person having to point out an error places himself on the same level. All of God's children are struggling with different aspects of perfection. Every rebuke is just a problem area that one brother is not yet aware of or has not found the motivation to do anything about. James is simply giving them an opportunity to see another area in which they need to grow.

*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Phil 3:12-16*

**do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, (NKJV)**  
**do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ (NAS)**

He begins with common ground for all Christians. We have all become convinced that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. We know He is now reigning over the nations and has glory and majesty. That faith is one of our dearest possessions, and we hold fast to it with all our being just as the Lord expects us to do. The term "hold" always emphasizes possession.

*"echo... . Transitively. 1. to have i. q. to hold; a. to have(hold) in the hand: ... b. in the sense of wearing... c. trop. to have (hold) possession of the mind; said of alarm, agitating emotions... d. to hold fast, keep... e. to have (in itself or as a consequence), comprise, involve... f... to regard, consider, hold as... 2. to have . q. to own, possess; a. external things such as pertain to property, riches, furniture, utensils, goods, food, etc. II. Intransitively. . . to hold one's self to a thing, to lay hold of a thing, to adhere or cling to; to be closely joined to a person or thing... (Vine, W. E., op. cit., Volume 2 p. 223)*

*"echo... The verb has a great breadth of meaning: have, keep, possess; aor.: acquire, take possession; intrans.: be, be situated ..." (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament NT:2192)*

The possession of our faith requires first of all a mental commitment based on hearing (Rom. 10:17) that leads us to a faith which is "*the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" Heb 11:1-2. But since we hold that faith in Jesus, we also hold fast to all that He has revealed through the writings of the apostles and prophets. Thus this faith refers to the submission to all the commands in the gospel. The system of doctrines and morals which Jesus came to reveal. It belongs to Jesus for He is it's center and it's lawgiver. It is all their is to life to the people of God.

It is interesting that hear James uses this mental commitment to Jesus in a very unusual way. Since everyone who holds that faith is on an equal footing, we must not allow it to be tainted by any feelings or attitudes we have within ourselves concerning our fellow man. James warned here that our faith in Jesus is based upon more than just a simple relationship with Him. If we properly hold a faith in Jesus, then it requires that all areas in our life be in submission to Him. Specifically, we cannot hold a faith in Jesus and also have personal favoritism (prejudice, partiality, etc.)

**with partiality (NKJV) with {an attitude of} personal favoritism (NASB).**

This phrase is the heart of the entire section. It is crucial that each Christian understands what James is forbidding here. The term "partiality" is defined:

*"prosopolepsia... respect of persons... partiality, the fault of one who when called on to requite or to give judgment has respect to the outward circumstances of men and not to their intrinsic merits, and*

so prefers, as the more worthy, one who is rich, high-born, or powerful, to another who is destitute of such gifts..." (Thayer, Joseph Henry, op. cit. p. 551; 4382)

*prosopolempetes* denotes "a respecter of persons" (*prosopon*, "a face" or "person," *lambano*, "to lay hold of"), Acts 10:34. NT:4381

*prosopolempsia* ... denotes "respect of persons, partiality" (akin to No. 1), the fault of one who, when responsible to give judgment, has respect to the position, rank, popularity, or circumstances of men, instead of their intrinsic conditions, preferring the rich and powerful to those who are not so, Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; James 2:1. (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, NT 4382)

God has always been very clear about partiality, prejudice and respect that is based on criteria that has nothing to do with anything.

***'You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor. Lev. 19:15-16***

***You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's. Deut. 1:17***

***For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. Deut. 10:17-18***

***And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. Eph. 6:9-10***

***I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. 1Tim. 5:21-22***

The term centers on respect of persons, or upon showing partiality. There are two sides to this issue. The first is the positive side of giving better treatment due to outward appearances such as wealth, power, personality, beauty, or intelligence. The second which is equally evil is the negative side, prejudice against someone based upon a lack of wealth, power, personality, beauty, or intelligence.

Such prejudicial thinking either positive or negative is strictly forbidden to those who hold that faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such things should have no influence whatsoever upon us, and we should not offer or withhold the offer of the gospel, or our own hospitality and friendliness based upon them. They are of no value to God, all souls are His, and the soul is of the same value whether it belongs to a wealthy or poor man. We cannot show "partiality" when dealing with such people. In this context, James deals with a problem that centered on a brother being rich and poor. But it is actually much broader than that.

***For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:27-29).***

Jew/Gentile, Slave/free, Male/Female are also areas of distinction made by some that are no longer to be taken into consideration.

***Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. 35 "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. Acts 10:34-35***

We have many of these same problems in today's society. We have only changed the names. We now call it discrimination and reverse discrimination. What we mean by these terms is the attitude that James describes toward the poor man. There are some who have partiality based upon skin color and national origin, language, financial status, etc. It is a sin for a Christian to be prejudiced in any way when it comes to holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **2 For if a man comes into your assembly**

The Holy Spirit now gives a concrete example of His concern. Whether this had actually happened in the group James is writing is difficult to know for certain, but that it has happened and will happen

again is obvious. This is the only time in the NT that this term is used and translated for the church. It was the customary term for the synagogue. It shows that for the early Christians, the two terms were synonymous. What the Jews were doing before the church, the Christians continued to do. They were assembled together. The assembly here refers to the Christian's customary gathering together, which is a derivative of the term synagogue.

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking **our own assembling together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near. Heb 10:23-25*

*episunagoge... a. a gathering together in one place, ... b. (the religious) assembly (of Christians): Heb 10:25. (Thayer 1997)*

*episunagoge... Heb 10:25: It is most natural to think of the congregation gathered for worship. ... egkatalipto "to leave in the lurch" agrees with this, and so does the singular ..." (TDWNT; 1997)*

Paul spoke in a similar way to the Corinthians.

*Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. 18 For first of all, when you **come together as a church**, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. 19 For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. 20 Therefore when **you come together in one place**, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. ... Therefore, my brethren, when **you come together to eat**, wait for one another. 1Cor. 11:17-20, 33*

So this visitor had entered into one of their weekly gatherings. They were assembled and had come together as a church to worship, serve, and honor God, and into the midst of this assembly two men enter. The only distinction between the two men is in their jewelry (or lack of it) and clothing.

**with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes,**

The first man has a gold ring, and is wearing fine clothes. He obviously has wealth, exterior glory, and the aura of one who is in a higher social class. It is important to note that at this time this is all they know about these two men is their outward appearance.

**and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,**

The second man is obviously poor and his clothes are dirty. He obviously has nothing. There is no exterior glory. He is only a poor man without recourse or power. The term poor helps appreciate the depths of his situation:

*"~~pochos~~. 1. in classical Greek from Homer down, reduced to beggary, begging, mendicant, asking alms. 2. poor, needy, (Opp. to pousios) in a broader sense, destitute of wealth, influence, position, honors, lowly, afflicted... 3. univ. lacking in anything..." (Thayer, 557; 4434)*

This is a beggar, he is poor and needy, and he is destitute of any wealth, influence, or position. No matter what is done to this man or for this man, he has nothing with which to return it. He is completely destitute. Therefore he has no recourse no matter how he is treated.

**3 and you pay attention [pay special attention - NASB] to the one who is wearing the fine clothes,**

James then revealed the heart of the problem under consideration. Although we don't know if these are Christian's or unbelievers, it doesn't make any difference. One would be a soul needing saved while the other would be a brother in Christ, yet in both cases prejudice would be destructive and out of place. Because of these outward and essentially worthless (in the sight of God) things, the one man received better treatment and a better attitude from the congregation than the other. The term "special attention" is defined:

*"epiblepo... to turn the eyes upon, to look upon, gaze upon... contextually, to look upon one with a feeling of admiration and respect, to look up to, regard, Jas. 2:3; ..." (Thayer, 236; 1914)*

*epiblepo ... "to look upon" (epi, "upon"), is used in the NT of favorable regard, Luke 1:48, RV, "he hath*

looked upon” (KJV, “hath regarded”), of the low estate of the Virgin Mary; in 9:38, in a request to the Lord to “look” upon an afflicted son; in James 2:3, RV, “ye have regard” (KJV, “...respect”), of having a partial regard for the well-to-do. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary, NT:1914)

James was very specific about this nature of the issue. These brethren with no other basis than the type of clothes and obvious wealth of the one and the conspicuous poverty of the other have decided to treat the wealthy man with greater respect and honor. They then make an open display of their favoritism.

**and say, “You sit here in a good place,”**

The attitude seen in the countenance is also found in the words and tone of voice. This man is treated with special favor. Since many Christians met in homes, this may have been the best chair in the house. None of this would be a problem if the poor man were treated the same way as they would then only be showing kindness to their visitors and strangers, but James now paints a sordid picture.

**and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,”**

The poor man gets substandard treatment. He is not even offered a chair. He is told either to stand, or sit down near the feet of others. He is made to feel his poverty. If this occurred after the way the rich man was treated and in his hearing, then it would also be insulting. Such blatant favoritism based on wealth and prosperity is a very terrible example to all in the church.

**4 have you not shown partiality made distinctions [NAS] among yourselves,**

James now presents the indictment. The real problem with what they have done is they have made distinctions among themselves.

*“dia-krino... 1. to separate, make a distinction, discriminate... like the Lat. distinguo, used emphatically to distinguish or separate a person or thing from the rest, in effect i. q. to prefer, yield to him the preference or honor: tina, I Cor 4:7... 2. to learn by discrimination, to try, decide...” (Thayer, NT:1252)*

The term selected by the Spirit is not an evil term. It is right or wrong based on the criteria used to “make a distinction, or discriminate.” They did not use Scripture. They had not consulted God’s word so it was originating from themselves. If God has not made any distinctions then it is wrong for His children to create them. It follows the same path Jesus condemned concerning traditions of men. God has made no distinctions based upon poverty or wealth. As a matter of fact, after Peter’s vision in Acts 10, Peter drew a far-reaching inspired conclusion about this matter:

*Then Peter opened his mouth and said: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. 35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. Acts 10:34-35*

God has no partiality. There is no such thing to God as male or female, bond or free, wealthy or poor, high or low social standing, nor does the country one is born in, the language they speak, or the color of their skin. God has no partiality. Each man has a soul and every soul has the same worth regardless of the outward packaging we might see. A soul’s worth to God is based on fear - respect and reverence and working righteousness by treating others fairly and justly. There are not other criteria and to make them puts us into a position no Christian should ever want to be:

**and become judges**

By thinking and passing judgement in the manner described above, James used a verb of being to describe what they had actually changed themselves into and made of themselves by this conduct.

*“ginomai... 1. to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, receive being... to be borne... of the origin of all things... (Thayer, NT: 1096)*

They had gone from being submissive servants of God doing only His will and they had now come into existence as judges.

*krites... a judge; 1. univ one who passes or arrogates to himself, judgement on anything... in a forensic*

sense, of the one who tries and decides a case... of a Roman procurator administering justice,... of God passing judgement on the character and deeds of man, and rewarding accordingly... " (Thayer, 362; 2923)

This is a solemn charge because Jesus made it very clear that no Christian wants to be a judge.

*"Do not judge lest you be judged. 2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Matt 7:1-2*

*"And do not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Luke 6:37*

True disciples allow God to pass all judgments and they simply follow His guidelines. When God judges murder to be a sin, we are not judging, but passing God's judgment and agreeing with Him. When James returns to this later in the book, he too will condemn this activity.

*Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another? Jas. 4:11-12*

There is only one lawgiver and so there can only be one judge. We dare not pass judgment on any one based on our own set of rules. Yet although the judging itself is wrong, in this case there is a second problem.

### **with evil thoughts?**

They have become judges with "evil thoughts." Their thought processing had led to this charge.

*"dialogismos ... the thinking of a man deliberating with himself; hence 1. a thought, inward reasoning... the reasoning of those who think themselves to be wise... 2. a deliberating, questioning, about what is true: Lk. 24:38;..." (Thayer, p. 139; 1261).*

By making a false distinction regarding a wealthy had poor man, the Spirit was able to reveal that their was some evil deliberations going on. If they only wanted to do God's will, then they would have allowed God's own words to direct them, but by making a favorable judgment for the wealthy, they left themselves open to the charge of other more sinister motives, like greed, or the pride of life. If we do not use God's own stated judgements, we will always leave ourselves open to the charge of "evil" thoughts.

*"poneros... 1. full of labors. annoyances, hardships; a. pressed and harassed by labors; 2. bad, of a bad nature or condition; a. in a physical sense... b. in an ethical sense, evil, wicked, bad, etc. substantively hoi poneroi. the wicked, bad men, ... ho poneros is used pre-eminently of the devil, the evil one..." (Thayer, p. 530-531; 4190)*

Such thinking is of a bad nature and condition. They were the type of judges that God has universally condemned throughout the Scriptures.

### **5 Listen, my beloved brethren:**

He wants them to carefully consider what he is about to say as it will have great bearing on the gravity of what they are doing. The term "listen" is in the imperative mode and would have been understood by the readers as a command. This was something that needed to be heard.,

*"akouo... to hear I. absol. 1. to be endowed with the faculty of hearing (not deaf)... 2. to attend to( use of the faculty of hearing), consider what is or has been said... 3. trop. to understand, perceive the sense of what is said..." (Thayer, p. 22-23; 191)*

James demanded that they attend carefully and consider, understand and perceive what he is about to say. They are to pay special attention to the following truths that they might be made free from the sinful nature of the conduct they were currently involved in.

These are hard sayings and need to be carefully considered. They say things that are not elsewhere revealed, but they say them in a complicated way that requires careful consideration.

## **Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?**

Does this mean God has not chosen the rich? Was this a decision God made, or was it by His choices that this was the only group that was interested? Throughout the Scriptures we see examples of wealthy people who are faithfully serving God. Even Jesus only expressed the difficulty involved.

*Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." 22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. 23 Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" 27 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." Mark 10:23-27*

Yet it cannot be denied that the outcome of God's choices of faith, sacrifice, humility, love and care and concern for others has led to the truth that James revealed above. Truly, for the most part, the gospel appeals to the poor of this world more than it does to the rich.

Their attitude is just the opposite of the verdict that God has passed on wealth. From deep within the pages of the Old Covenant, God warned His people that wealth was a very dangerous possession to those who loved Him. After watching generation after generation of man, God became stronger and stronger in his condemnation of those who loved wealth, who coveted it and who possessed it. Consider Jeremiah's words:

*23 Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; 24 But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD. (Jer 9:23-24).*

Those who have no riches do not find it difficult to and glory in them. Hence the Holy Spirit can say here that God chose the other class. Poverty tends to make people more prepared to accept God's absolute standards. James simply draws on the is point to show that their judgement and God's judgement were the exact opposite. By their conduct they found themselves in direct contradiction to God's revealed will.

### **6 But you have dishonored the poor man.**

By the time James had written this letter, it should have become obvious that they poor man was actually a much better prospect for the obedience of the gospel than the wealthy man. But these brethren had allowed their prejudice to blind them.

By their conduct they had insulted and hurt the feelings of the poor man, placing a serious stumbling block in the way. The term "dishonor" is defined:

*"atimazo... to make atimos, to dishonor, insult, treat with contumely, whether in word, in deed, or in thought..." (Thayer, 83; 818)*

*"atimazo... hold in no honour, to esteem lightly, dishonour, slight, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT 818)*

The very qualities that God most desired, and found in the poor, these Christians treated with dishonor, and insulted. This is not a good commentary on their likeness to God and their setting of priorities.

### **Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?**

Once again, we need to listen carefully to these words and carefully consider them. James is not

counseling them to immediately conclude that this wealthy man should be mistreated because this is how the wealthy have treated them. If we took his words in this way we would still be guilty of being evil judges. We can't judge hearts.

*Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.*  
1Cor. 4:5

We don't know anything before the time. Only after events transpire can we know if this particular wealthy man is going to be like this. James is only seeking to level the two men by broadening out the criteria a little further. Instead of only looking at the clothing and rings, the brethren need to take a wiser and more spiritually motivated perspective. Both men are to be worked with, but the percentages are with the poor man and preclude any foolish prejudice in the direction of the wealthy. As a class, the wealthy are described here.

Those who with wealth and power have often despised Christians. Their humble ways, their righteous preaching, their godly demeanor has for some reason been considered an insult by them. The wealthy often "oppress" God's people.

*"katadunasteuo... to exercise harsh control over one, to use one's power against one... to oppress one..."* (Thayer, 331; 2616)

*katadunasteuo* "to exercise power over" (*kata*, "down," *dunastes*, "a potentate": *dunamai* "to have power"), "to oppress," (Vine's Expository Dictionary, NT:2616)

This is just a fact, something so obvious that James doesn't even need to prove it. These are the sad and true facts about class. The wealthy as a class have little respect or time for God or His people.

### **7 Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?**

Once again, it is important to remember that neither James nor the Holy Spirit are speaking of this one individual rich man here. We are only speaking of the classes of rich and poor and how they ought to affect our judgment of each individual. Yet as a class the rich often blaspheme the noble name.

*"blasphemeo... to speak reproachfully, rail at, revile, calumniate ... Passive ... to be evil spoken of, reviled, railed at... Spec. of those who by contemptuous speech intentionally come short of the reverence due to God or to sacred things..."* (Thayer, p. 102; 987)

*blasphemeo* "to speak slanderously, impiously, profanely" (*blapto*, "to injure," and *pheme*, "a saying") ..." (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT 987)

So the Holy Spirit has given three reasons here why Christians should not consider wealthy people as great simply because they are rich. Once again, it is important to remember He is speaking of class, not individuals. There are individuals who were wealthy. Men like Joseph of Arimathea was rich and also a good man who sought to help Jesus.

But speaking as a class the truth is:

- 1 God selected qualities that are mostly found in poor people, His gospel appeals to them, and He welcomes them.
- 2 They oppress and persecute Christians.
- 3 They blaspheme your noble name (probably the name Christian).

These truth are not designed to dishonor the rich. Only to set things equal and counteract the foolish human notion that those with wealth deserve to be treated better than everyone else.

### **8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well;**

Since there are two sides to this event, James breaks them down. If they want to hide behind the royal law in their treatment of the wealthy man, and if they are truly acting under the motive of

loving your neighbor as yourself, that would be a good thing. But when we add the treatment of the poor man, it all falls apart. How could they hide behind the royal law in their treatment of the wealthy man and still explain the despicable way they had treated him? Our minds are very good at rationalization, and it would be easy to reason in such a manner in regard to the treatment of the wealthy man. But when we carefully examine our treatment of the poor man a more base and sinister motive arises. This is a law that cuts both ways. It can't just be applied to one man and then set aside with another.

Why does James refer to this as a "royal" law (there is not direct article here so there is no reason to call it "**the**" royal law), according to the Scripture?

*basilikos ... of or belonging to a king, kingly, royal, regal; ...* (Thayer's Greek Lexicon, NT:937)

What is in the Scriptures that justifies James stating that it is according to the Scriptures that this is a royal law? Three passages help us to give a scriptural answer as to why this law is royal and regal among the other laws. First and most important is the answer Jesus gave when asked which was the "*greatest*" and "*first*" of all the commands in the law.

*"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Mt. 22:36*

*"Which is the first commandment of all?" Mark 12:28*

Since in Jesus' answer He selected two laws and said some very important things about both of them. Clearly, He considered these two to be special. While the first and great commandment is the "Love the Lord your God," the second is "*like it*," and on these two commands all the other laws in law of Moses hang under or upon. Jesus also said that there are no laws "*greater*" than these two laws. Since they are the two greatest laws, they can now be called "royal" or regal.

*Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the **first and great commandment**. 39 And **the second is like it**: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 40 **On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.**" Mt. 22:36-40*

*Jesus answered him, "**The first of all the commandments is**: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 31 And **the second, like it**, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is **no other commandment greater than these.**" Mk. 12:29-31*

When the Holy Spirit was writing to the Galatians, He summed up the entire law with the same law James used here. It is not difficult to see why, since even God can be considered our neighbor.

*For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Gal. 5:14-15*

Which is exactly the point that John made. The reason this law is so critically important is because if you are not loving your neighbor whom you can see, how can you really love God whom you can't see?

*If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also. 1Jn. 4:20-21*

So this is a royal law because it includes all laws and because it is linked to the first and foremost law! So while the Spirit through James admitted the possibility that they were fulfilling a royal law to the rich. If that is what they are doing, then of course they are doing "*well*."

*kalos... adv. beautifully, finely, excellently, well... a. rightly, so that there shall be no room for blame... kalos right! well! an expression of approval... b excellently, nobly, commendably c. honorably, in honor..." (Thayer p 323; 2573)*

But there was fatal flaw in their reasoning regarding the poor man, since he too is a neighbor.

## 9 But if you show partiality, you commit sin

This term translated “*but*” is generally used to oppose a previous statement. This will negate their justification and prove them to be transgressors.

“*de...* a particle adversative, distinctive, disjunctive, *but, moreover...* It is used 1. univ. by way of opposition and distinction; it is added to statements opp. to a preceding statement... 3. after negative sentences, *but, but rather...* 4. It is joined to terms which are repeated with a certain emphasis, and with such additions as tend to explain and establish them more exactly;... 5. It serves to mark a transition to something new... 6. It introduces explanations and separates them from the things to be explained... 7. After a parenthesis or an explanation which had led away from the subject under discussion, it serves to take up the discourse again... 8. it introduces the apodosis and, as it were, opposes it to the protasis... (Thayer, p. 126; 1161)

They were not really treating the rich man well to fulfill the royal law (evidenced by the fact that they are not treating both people the same), then it is really partiality. This was a term that emphasized the basis of treatment on the face or specific information about the person and not the facts or circumstances. Thus it means to show favoritism or be partial toward, giving preferential treatment.

*prosopolempto* ... (an idiom, literally ‘to accept a face’): to make unjust distinctions between people by treating one person better than another - ‘to show favoritism, to be partial, partiality.’ ... James 2:9) ‘if you treat one person better than another, you are guilty of sin’ (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon NT 4380).

If there is even the slightest amount of that in our dealings with others then it negates the previous claim about a “royal” law.

This is an important test to apply to many realms of life. We can fool ourselves into thinking that what we are doing to some people is a result of our fulfillment of God’s command to love all men, but if we do not do it across the board, consistently to everyone, then we must admit that it is not really a fulfillment of something good. James actually uses a term that means to “work and labor” at something.

“*ergazomai...* 1. absol. a. *to work, labor, do work*: it is opposed to inactivity or idleness... b. *to trade, to make gains by trading* ... 2. trans. a. (*to work* l. e.) *to do, work out...* with acc. of virtues or vices, (*to work* l. e.) *to exercise, perform, commit...* b. *to work for, earn by working, to acquire...*” (Thayer, p. 247; 2038)

There was a thin line of rationalization by which they had attempted to justify, but the end result was the same. You can’t use one Scripture against another. Since all the other laws hang on the one they sought to use to justify their conduct, the laws that forbid partiality also hung from it and negated their argument. Changing it all to just working at sin and not working at keeping the royal law.

### **and are convicted by the law as transgressors.**

They stood convicted. James had “shown them their sin and now summoned them to repent.? They were convicted and exposed in their own minds. It was up to them whether they took care of it through repentance, or waited for exposure and rebuke.

“*elencho...* 1. to convict, refute, confute, generally with a suggestion of the shame of the person convicted,...by conviction to bring to light, to expose... used of the exposure and confutation of false teachers of Christianity, Titus 1:9,13...” (Thayer, p. 202-203; 1651)

*elencho* 1. Though the NT usage is simple and straightforward, outside the NT it is very complicated. In Homer *elencho* still means “to scorn,” “to bring into contempt.” Later it means a. “to shame” by exposure, opposition, etc.; b. “to blame”; c. “to expose,” “to resist”; then d. “to interpret,” “to expound”; and finally e. “to investigate.” 2. The use of *elencho* in the NT is restricted. ... It means “to show someone his sin and to summon him to repentance.” (Kittel, NT:1651)

Which law was James speaking of? Was he simply speaking of the Old Covenant? Obviously not exclusively. They had indeed violated laws in the Law of Moses.

*“You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor. Lev. 19:15”*

But the New Covenant also would convict anyone who shows partiality as a transgressor?

*And opening his mouth, Peter said: “I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, 35 but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him. Acts 10:34-36”*

*For there is no partiality with God. Rom. 2:11*

*But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)-- well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. Gal. 2:6*

*And, masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. Eph. 6:9*

*For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. Col. 3:25*

*I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. 1Tim. 5:21*

Obviously both laws teach that God’s people are transgressors if they show partiality. It is a trespass or stepping over the line into an area that no servant of God is allowed to be.

*parabates ... lit. and primarily, “one who stands beside,” then, “one who oversteps the prescribed limit, a transgressor” (akin to *parabaino*, “to transgress,” see above); (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:3848)*

Which law he is speaking of here is open to some interpretation, especially in light of the next verse where he is clearly speaking of the old Law. But it certainly makes more sense that it is the law of liberty, because they could no longer be convicted as transgressors under the Old Covenant.

### **10 For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point,**

James now used a “for - *gar* by the use of this particle, either the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added, or some previous declaration is explained” revealing that the Holy Spirit wanted this to be seen as an explanation of the previous thought. The Old Covenant illustrated the principle that they were now violating under the law of liberty. As long as one is keeping the law, they were a law keeper, and they were also seen by God as being righteous. That was the very purpose for all the commands that were under the two royal ones. They helped identify and reveal true fairness and righteousness. Any violation of any of them would therefore create a serious problem.

*And the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. 25 Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us.’ Deut. 6:24-25*

Yet these truths come with a price. A single stumble in all their statutes and commandments brings the weight of the entire law. The term stumble presents all the statutes and commands of God as rocks or impediments to a path into sin that causes us to stumble and trip when the attitudes in our our minds and our conduct is no longer righteous.x

*“ptaio... 1. to cause one to stumble or fall... 2. to stumble... a. to err, to make a mistake, b. to fall into misery, become wretched...” (Thayer p 556; 4417)*

It only took one point, then something occurred the weight of which must be carefully assessed.

### **he is guilty of all.**

He became “*guilty*” of all. He is held under bond and obligation as guilty of then entire law. He is now worthy of the punishment that the law required.

*enochos... one who is held in anything, so that he cannot escape; bound, under obligation, subject to, liable... chiefly in a forensic sense, denoting the connection of a person either with his crime, or with*

the penalty or trial, or with that against whom or which he has offended; so. A. absol. *guilty worthy or punishment...* b. with gen of the things by violation of which guilt is contracted, *guilty of anything...*" (Thayer p. 217; 1777).

The law had to be kept perfectly, if one point of that law was broken then the person who broke that one point was now a transgressor and violator of that law in its entirety. The law of God is a unit and in order to be righteous, it must all be kept. If one point is not kept, then the person is no longer righteous. The weight of all the law rests upon the one who stumbles in one point. God had sought to explain this to Israel in Ezekiel, but they rejected it as unfair.

*"Therefore you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: **'The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression;** as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be able to live because of his righteousness in the day that he sins.' 13 **When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die.** Ezek. 33:12-14*

*"Yet **the children of your people say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.'** But it is their way which is not fair! 18 **When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it.** 19 But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it. 20 Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways." Ezek. 33:17-20*

*"But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? **All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.** Ezek. 18:24*

*"Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair? 26 **When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies.** Ezek. 18:25-27*

When God finally revealed in the New Covenant that each sin is a debt requiring the payment of eternal death in hell, all of these words were made much clearer.

**11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.**

This does not even have to be explained. It is obvious. When a law is broken that brings the death penalty (as any one of the 10 commandments did), then if you kept all nine your entire life and broke only one at any time, you would be convicted as a transgressor of the law and put to death. It would not matter if you complained that you had kept the other 9 and only broke one. God's idea in giving the Law was that everyone must keep all of them for their entire life. A violation of any one of them led to the entire weight of the law and its penalty being placed on the life of that one man.

**12 So speak and so do, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty.**

The illustration quickly gives way to the reality. James moved immediately to the true set of circumstances these brethren are now finding themselves under. With two commands in the present imperative mode he demands a new way of their continuous speaking and doing. With the terrible consequences of the violation of old law, they must be speaking and doing in a different manner under the "law of liberty."

*"houtu... in this manner, thus, so; 1. by virtue of its native demonstrative force it refers to what preceded; in the manner spoken of; in the way described; in the way it was once; in this manner; in such a manner; thus so..." (Thayer, p. 468-469; 3779)*

Since it is "in this manner," the entire context rests on the "law of liberty," we need to try to understand what the Spirit means by this term. With Jesus death on the cross, all guilt for each sin

was been paid the moment we obeyed the gospel and were “buried with Him in baptism.” (Rom. 6:1-8; Eph 2:1-10; Col. 2:11-13). Now, when we stumble in one point, we still become guilty of all, but when we ask for forgiveness, the guilt is removed and we are freed and at liberty again. Yet after making this very point, Paul did about the same thing that James did here. We must not allow sin to reign, but must put it to death every time and everywhere we see it. We must be careful with both our words and our deeds.

*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Rom. 6:12-14*

*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Rom. 8:2-3*

Being free from the law of sin and death because of the grace and mercy of God, we need to be trying even harder than Israel ever did to remove these words and deeds from our lives. The law of liberty is no less binding and no less severe on its violators than the Old Law was. Wilful sin brings terrible consequences under the law of liberty.

*25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. 26 For **if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,** 27 but a certain **fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.** 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of **how much worse punishment, do you suppose,** will he be thought worthy who has **trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?** 30 For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” Heb. 10:25-30*

Do not be deceived, to whom much is given much is expected. The law of liberty is a much more wonderful law than the law of sin and death, but it is no less harsh and severe upon those who violate it's conditions.

### **13 For judgment is without mercy**

For the third time in four verses James again used a “for’ which is the Greek term - *gar* by the use of this particle, either the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added, or some previous declaration is explained.” As the Holy Spirit now concludes this section and moves on to the next, He draws this as the final conclusion. Somehow, judgment with or without mercy is the reason, cause, and explanation of the entire section. Remembering the context, we have a poor man who was treated without mercy and therefore a rich man who received only preferential treatment of bias and partiality. There was no mercy for either. The poor man was judged wanting based on his poverty and told to sit under the footstool and the rich man was treated with great honor without any true basis. Both acts of partiality were clearly “*judgment without mercy.*” They left the impression that the Christians who had made such assessments were revealing how God felt when they were not. The only safe judgments Christians are allowed to make are the ones God has already made. If God has told us how to feel and conclude based on conduct or belief then we are safe to treat them exactly as God has commanded, but if God has said nothing about it and we are going out on our own, then we must use mercy instead of judgment.

It is important that we ask why mercy is lacking whenever partiality is shown. As noted above, Christians are bound by God's commands on how to treat others and therefore the treatment they give should be understood as the manner God sees them. Hence if the Christian treats someone in a way that gives them the wrong impression of their true spiritual condition, they are doing a terrible thing. God strongly condemned the false prophets and prophetesses in Israel because through their preaching those who should have been condemned were not and those who were righteous were treated with contempt. When that happened those who might have been turned

from evil were left in sin, while the righteous who should have been strengthened were not.

*But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. Jer. 23:20*

*“Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life. 23 Therefore you shall no longer envision futility nor practice divination; for I will deliver My people out of your hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord.”” Ezek. 13:22-23*

All of this has to be factored into all of the judgments we make. Our judgments must perfectly mirror those of the Lord, giving mercy to those He wants to receive it exactly as He demanded.

Once we understand these principles, then we can move to the much bigger picture. This passage is true in the context of what was described above, but Jesus used it in a much bigger context.

*“Do not judge lest you be judged. 2 “For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Mt. 7:1-2*

*“And do not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Lk. 6:37*

*“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Mt. 5:7*

*‘Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?’ Mt. 18:33*

These passages teach that our manner of judgment is not only seen as making us partial or impartial and thus righteous or unrighteous, but the coming day of judgment is greatly affected by each judgment that we make. Our judgment will be based on how we judged others. Jesus made that very clear when He said, *“For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”* This is why Jesus included mercy as one of the weightier matters of the law, and demanded that we be merciful as our Heavenly Father is merciful.

*“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. Mt. 23:23*

*“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Lk. 1:50*

God will judge us with the same judgement we use in our judgment of others. If we judge harshly, He will judge us harshly. If we judge with mercy, He will judge with mercy. If we show great mercy, He will show us great mercy. But if we show no mercy then we will receive no mercy.

### **merciless to the one who has shown no mercy;**

Judgement will be merciless. Mercy It will be completely absent from our judgement, like a vacuum it will all have been sucked away and by our own actions and decisions. This is the meaning when the alpha-privative is placed before the term mercy. God’s judgment will have absolutely no mercy if we have not shown mercy.

*aneleos (an-el’-e-os); This word contains the alpha privative (negation, See NT:1) with *eleos* (See NT:1656); found only in James 2:13: merciless, without mercy, without pity. (Strong’s Numbers and Concordance. NT 314a)*

*aneleos ... pertaining to the lack of mercy or the refusal to be merciful - ‘merciless, unmerciful.’ *aneleos* ‘for he will be unmerciful when he judges the person who has not shown mercy’ James 2:13. (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon NT 415a)*

There is no way to misunderstand this. If we do not show mercy in our judgment then our judgment will have no mercy.

### **mercy triumphs over judgment (NKJV, NAS, ESV) mercy glorieth (rejoiceth -KJV) against judgment. ASV**

This is a very difficult phrase to unravel, because of the term *“triumph” “glory” or “rejoice.”* Taken too far and mercy would overthrow judgment so that we could not deal with sin in the church. The

term “*triumph*” met with different treatment for two reasons. First, it is not found in the original language, and second, it is only used three times in the NT and not enough to give us a clear ability to fully define it.

*katakauchaomai* ... a strengthened form of No. 1 (*kata*, intensive), signifies “to boast against, exult over,” Rom 11:18, (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:2

“*katacauchaomai*... prop. *to glory against, to exult over, to boast one’s self to the injury of*(a person or thing... *mercy boast itself superior to judgement, i.e. full of glad confidence has no fear of judgement...*” (Thayer, 331; 2620)

*katakauchaomai* ... to have greater power or potential than - ‘to be more powerful than, to triumph over.’ ... ‘mercy is more powerful than judgment’ or ‘mercy triumphs over judgment’ James 2:13. (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon, NT:2620 )

*katakauchaomai* ... a: to boast about something by downgrading something else - ‘to boast against, to degrade.’ ... ‘you must not boast and in so doing degrade the branches’ Rom 11:18. In many languages it may not be possible to use an expression such as ‘to boast against.’ (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon, NT:2620 )

*katakauchomai* ... is found only in biblical and Christian writings. It brings out strongly the element of comparative superiority expressed in boasting, “to boast in triumphant comparison with others.” (Kittel, TWDNT; NT 2620)

Regardless of whether we understand the term as boast, triumph, comparative superiority, or “greater potential, it all works out to the same basic idea that mercy has a greater power and greater significance than judgment. But how we are to take it is obvious. Any understanding that mercy is greater than judgement that would nullify or lessen the power of the judgment day on the great day and even in every day life would be a misinterpretation.

Yet in times of doubt, mercy is always the better choice. We know this is true because God always demanded that if there was only one witness even if the guilt was known and easy to prove because of the veracity of that one witness, it was to be mercifully left to God. If there is any doubt of what to do it is always better to leave it to God to take care of on the day of judgment. If we take the scriptures just a pinch too far, it will be terrible on the day of judgment. When in doubt, leave it to God and leave them to make their own decisions.

*Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness. Deut. 17:6*

*“One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established. Deut. 19:15*

Second, When situations arise where two laws must collide, the best course is to show mercy and leave it to God. This is what got the Pharisees in trouble.

*Or have you not read in the law that **on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?** 6 Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. 7 **But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. Matt 12:5-7***

*Then He said to them, “**What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?** 12 Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? **Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**” Mt. 12:11-13*

*And the Pharisees said to Him, “**Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?**” 25 But He said to them, “**Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him:** 26 how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?” 27 And He said to them, “**The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28 Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.**” Mark 2:24-28*

*Jesus answered and said to them, “**I did one work, and you all marvel. 22 Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man***

**on the Sabbath. 23 If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? 24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” John 7:21-24**

When the laws of father and mother and the laws of vows collided, the best choice was mercy. Jesus also condemned them for doing many other things like this.

9 He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. 10 For Moses said, ‘**Honor your father and your mother**’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ 11 But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might **have received from me is Corban**” — ‘ (that is, a gift to God), 12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, 13 **making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.**” Mark 7:9-13

More to the point of what James is dealing with here is His condemnation of the Pharisees when they were falsely charging him almost exactly as the false assessments here:

And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” 12 When Jesus heard that, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” Matt 9:11-13

Hence in many situations, the best choice is mercy. When we are not sure, we must err to the side of mercy because it will always triumph over judgment. But if there is no conflict and we must set aside God’s judgment in order to show mercy, then it folly to set it aside and call that mercy.

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## 2:14-26 Faith without works is dead

The Holy Spirit expressly revealed that some would fall away from the faith.

*But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; 3 forbidding to marry, (and commanding) to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving: 5 for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer. 1Tim. 4:1-5 (ASV)*

Although Paul, and later John and Peter, gave some details, many of the details of the falling away have only come out after the fact. This falling away that forbid marriage and commanded to abstain from meats was literally fulfilled by Roman Catholicism’s celibacy of priests and nuns, and demand that meats be abstained from on Fridays. (It is interesting to note that they have already rejected the latter and are now in the process of re-evaluating the former). Yet we know from the history of the churches that the damage done by Catholicism was not simply to its followers, but also to the many denominations that now call themselves “*Protestants*.” The influence of Catholicism on the Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian churches is clearly documented in history. Some influences like Infant baptism, kept them the same while others like the teachings of the Catholic church on works led Luther who was a priest to first seek to reform the church within and later after he was excommunicated to seek to reform it from without.

It was his battle with Johann Tetzel’s selling of indulgences that led to a visit to the Pope and his excommunication from the Catholic church and the death sentence being passed upon him. From that time onward he worked tirelessly to prove that the Catholic church was in error on this point and that his own teaching that we are saved by faith alone was correct. At some point in that period, he concluded and wrote that in his early translation of the Bible into German:

Luthers Quotes:

**“Although it would be possible to SAVE the epistle by a gloss giving it a correct explanation of Justification here ascribed to works, it is impossible to deny that it does refer Moses word in Genesis 15 (which speaks not of Abraham’s works but of his faith , just as Paul makes plain in Romans 4) to Abraham’s**

works. ***This defect proves that the epistle is not of Apostolic provenance.***” (Luther, Preface to the Epistle of St. James, German Translation of Bible, 1522)

***“In sum, he wished to guard against those who depended on faith without going on to works, but he [St. James] had neither the spirit nor the thought nor the eloquence equal to the task.”*** (Luther, 1522, preface of James)

***“He does violence to Scripture and so contradicts Paul and all scripture.”*** (Luther, 1522 German Translation, Preface to James)

***“I therefore refuse him [James] a place among the writers of the true canon of my bible”*** (Luther, 1522 Translation, Preface to James)

***“Hence, although I value the book, yet it is NOT essential to reckon it among the canonical books that lay the foundation of faith.”*** (Luther, 1522 German Translation, Preface to Jude)

Comparing the Epistles of Paul to the Romans and to Galatians with the Epistle of James, Luther states: ***“In comparison with these, the Epistle of James is an Epistle full of straw.”*** (Luther, German Translation of the Bible, 1522, preface to Romans)

So out of the great apostasy and reformation movement has come a general view that James words here are not worthy of being accepted at face value and that Paul’s writings and James writings cannot be harmonized.

Yet that is the very duty and obligation of the Christian! He must harmonize and make all Scripture fit. If Paul’s words have been taken to such an extreme that they “contradict” other writings, then the problem is not Paul and James it is the way Paul is being used.

As Peter warned at the conclusion of his epistle, ignorant and unstedfast men would twist and wrest Scriptures to their own destruction. He also warned that since we know this beforehand we need to beware and be watching for it.

*Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; 15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation — as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 2Pet. 3:14-18*

Few areas have been as twisted and tortured as these. The origins of these ideas are probably lost to us now, but the religious world has been torn for centuries over the subject of grace and works. It was his inability to grasp this issue that caused Martin Luther to reject the book of James as an inspired epistle. What James wrote in this section could not fit into his mind filled with the theories of his day.

The question is very simple and straightforward. We have to harmonize what Paul said in Romans with what James said here. Once we see the basic idea of what James is trying to say it is not that difficult to do it, but at that time with all the other things Luther was dealing with, he could not see it. One interesting side note is that we are told did not repeat these quotes in his next edition of his translation. Perhaps he was regretting the strength of what he had said. But no retraction was ever made so we do not know what Luther would have done with James if he had been given enough time to study it further.

There is no contradiction between Paul and James. Paul was speaking of works without faith and works with faith. Can a man be saved by his works alone without any need of faith? His point in Romans is that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but there was still a chance for those men and women who would trust in Jesus and obey the gospel. With human effort and merit removed, the only thing left is obedience of the gospel and submission to God. That is what Paul is affirming!

*Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay: but by a law of faith. 28 We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Rom. 3:27-28*

*for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, (it is) the gift of God; 9 not of works, that no man should glory. Eph. 2:8-9*

*But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, 5 not by works (done) in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:4-5*

James was not speaking from Paul's perspective, either in matter of time or the scope of the faith. Paul was writing to those who have not yet obeyed the gospel warning them that it is the only means left to them and therefore their only hope. They were relying on the Law of Moses which required perfect obedience (perfect works), but not even Abraham or David expected to be saved in that way (Rom. 4). Israel must leave the Law of Moses and put their faith in Jesus or all doors to salvation would be closed to them forever.

James was speaking to those who have obeyed the gospel and are under the "perfect law of liberty." They have already rejected the notion of Israel that they can be saved by the Law of Moses and have accepted Jesus as Lord and Christ. He wanted to discuss two levels of faith within the gospel, not one outside and one within as Paul.

James was not speaking of different types of faith, or of different objects of faith, both of the individuals involved in the discussion have the same type of faith. James was not dealing with one who believed and one who did not believe. He was speaking about two Christians who both have faith in the Lord, but one has a faith that prompts him to do everything God demands to be done, and the other has a faith, that allows him to trust only in his faith and not do any of the things God has demanded.

Here we have two of the greatest concepts in the OT and NT Scriptures, and one of the greatest areas of controversy in the religious world. For God to take this much space(13 verses) on a subject so simple and obvious seems to indicate that He knew this would become a problem area. Even with these clear verses it is still a great controversy and many ignore His plain teaching here.

The theories of Luther and Calvin have come down into the denominations today with the idea that man's works have no basis in our salvation and if we make our works any part of salvation we are wrong. Although they base these theories on certain passages of Paul, they must be carried too far. The main passages that are used to base these upon are:

Since James made it very clear that faith without works is dead, Paul could not possibly be saying the opposite. There is no way to misunderstand James, but there is a way to misunderstand Paul. It is of the highest importance when we have the inspired words of James and Peter and God's warning that Paul's words will be twisted to their own destruction that we carefully evaluate where we stand on this issue.

#### **14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?**

We see the scope and nature of the faith James describes in his very first verse. His simple question centers on whether two people who have the exact same faith in scope but a different view of how that faith is to influence their life.

Some of the later translations have softened the term "profit" which is used in the KJV; NKJV and ASV) to "What use is it?" (NASB); "What good is it?" (ESV; NIV), but the definition of the term makes it clear that "profit" is exactly what James said.

*ophelos... (ophello to increase), advantage, profit..." (Thayer, 469; 3786)*

*ophelos... pertaining to a benefit to be derived from some object, event, or state - 'advantage, benefit, beneficial.' (Lou & NidaGreek-English Lexicon NT:3786)*

His question is, what is the advantage or benefit, or what is the profit and value of such a faith. If you have two men, one who has no faith, and the other who has faith but no works, is there any

use, profit or advantage to the faith of the man who does not have any works.

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony...6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Heb. 11:1, 6*

*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Rom. 10:17*

We have two men here who both have this faith, but adding a third helps us see the question in its full value. First, we have a godly man who sees every word of God as being of the highest importance and as soon as he reads anything God has asked him to do, his response is to do exactly and everything God has said to the best of his ability. Next to him is the man who has obeyed the gospel, but sees no need to make any of the changes to his life. So if we then introduce a third man, the worldly minded man who has no faith in Christ and therefore makes no efforts to obey him. What is the profit of the man who still is doing exactly what the worldly minded man is doing. He is making no changes and is still living identically to that man who never obeyed the gospel at all. What is the profit to that faith? Is there any benefit or profit to it since it has not led to a single change in the conduct of that man?

Since there is nothing in the definition of the term “works” that changes any part of the controversy between Paul and James, the definition only helps outline the scope of James’ question.

*“ergon... 1. business, employment, that with which anyone is occupied... 2. any product whatever, any thing accomplished by hand, art, industry, mind... 3. an act, deed, thing done: ...” (Thayer, p. 248; 2041)*

*ergon ... mind your own business, 1. in ll. mostly of deeds of war, to engage in battle, ... 2. of works of industry, tilled lands, fields, farms, Hom.; the tilled lands of Ithaca, .... then, generally, property, wealth, possessions, ... b. of women’s work, weaving, c. of other occupations, fishing, as a way of life, Od.; ... also of all kinds of works, such as mines, iron-works, ... 3. a hard piece of work, a hard task, ... 4. a deed, action, often, ... deed, not word,...*” (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon.

Works are the things with which we occupy ourselves, the products we produce by hand or mind, the acts, deeds and things we do. Hence the very essence of the question posed is, can a man have conviction in the existence in God, belief that Jesus is the Messiah and that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation but have nothing to show for it. There is absolutely no effect on what he occupied himself with. NO product of hand and mind! NO impact on his acts, deeds and things done! If he were a soldier there is no warfare, if a farmer no tilled land, no results at all. Is there any value to such a faith?

James doesn’t even answer the question because the answer is obvious. There is no profit in that type of faith. In each of the examples God gave in Hebrews 11, it was by faith that they all did something! Their works were obvious. There is no one anywhere in the Scriptures whose faith did not get them to do something.

### **Can that faith save him?**

Although the term “that” is added by the translators, since he is referring back to the second man, it is necessary for us to make the proper application in English. That faith is the second faith, the faith without works. Can that faith save? First the term “can” is much fuller in Greek than our own English term.

*“dunamai... to be able, have power, whether by virtue of one’s own ability and resources, or of a state of mind, or through favorable circumstances, or by permission of law or custom... to be able to do something... to be able, capable, strong, powerful...” (Thayer, p. 158-159; 1410)*

Hence does the quality of faith spoken of above have the power and ability to save? Does it have the capability? Is it strong and powerful enough? to save, is it able, capable of doing this? His term for “save” is the universal term for salvation, it is used over a hundred times in the NT Scriptures.

*“sozo... to save, to keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction (opp. to apollumi)... a. univ., tina ... one (from injury or peril); to save a suffering one (from perishing) e. g. one suffering from*

disease to make well, heal, restore to health: to preserve one who is in danger of destruction, to save(i.e.to rescue)... b. to save in the technical biblical sense; negatively, to deliver from the penalties of the Messianic judgment,... to save from the evils which obstruct the reception of the Messianic deliverance..." (Thayer, p. 610-611; 4982)

That the salvation of the gospel is based upon faith is so obvious it need not be proven. It was the theme of Romans and the essence of the reason the gospel can save.

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Rom 1:16-17*

*For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, 1Th. 2:13*

Yet James question doesn't center on faith, but on "that faith." What James asked is if faith doesn't have any affect on the productions of the man's life, can it save? Can it bring about the salvation God promised? The literal way that James presents the question is:

*"not is able the faith to save him, is it?"*

His question demanded a negative answer. This quality of faith cannot save anyone can it? Yet since not all will not know how to answer that question, The Holy Spirit follows it up with a parable that perfectly fits the circumstances.

### **15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,**

James is careful to leave nothing to chance here. The parameters of the illustration he gives offer no valid excuse. A brother or sister here could be either a blood relative, or a fellow Christian. Both of these are clearly within the responsibility of each of us. No one having such a brother or sister could legitimately claim they had no obligation here.

*But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Tim 5:8*

*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Gal. 6:9-10*

Yet these passages barely scratch the surface. The parable of the good Samaritan makes everyone our neighbor.

*Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. Lk. 10:31-35*

Jesus Himself spoke strongly about those who do not help their brethren in times of need.

*Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Mt. 25:34-40*

What followed was the conversation with those who had done nothing and Jesus made it clear it did not bring salvation.

*"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and*

*you gave Me no drink; 43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ ... 45 Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ 46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, Mt. 25:41-46*

So the parable has a great magnitude that no one who knows the Lord’s teaching on this subject could miss.

### **16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,”**

After all those passages above, which category do we want to be place? Here as above with faith, the statement and the sentiment behind it are perfect. The need was recognized, they needed warmth either from clothing or shelter, and they needed food. The person with the obligation to help them recognized the need to help them and even expressed his own desire that they gain both. The feelings are right, the words of comfort are right. Everything up to this point is just exactly what it ought to be.

### **and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body,**

The desire and obligation do not lead to a resolution of the problem. You see the need and acknowledge the need, but you do nothing to alleviate the problem. The person is still naked, and destitute of food, and the saint has only expressed a sincere desire that the person gets what they need, but nothing more is done for them. They part company with his wish for their being help, but with no works. No deed or product comes from these wonderful feelings. What was the profit of his good wishes? Would that lead to any commendation from the Lord. He did nothing. The feelings only made the fact that he did nothing worse because he knew:

*And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more. Lk. 12:47-48*

### **what use is that?**

James repeats the exact same term from verse 14 *ophelos... (ophello to increase), advantage, profit...*” What is the advantage or benefit, or what is the profit and value of such words and sentiments? So now we have another comparison. A Christian who desires the well being of his brethren but who will not do anything about it and a brother who not only desires the well being of his brother, but has the works to go along with it. So now we again add that third person. This time it is a person who doesn’t care at all about the brother and does not wish them well. What makes the person who cares any better than the one who does not? What benefit did the one who expressed a desire and concern give to the one in need?

Absolutely nothing! If anything, the one who expressed the concern without doing anything about it is even worse, because he knew and did nothing.

### **17 Thus also faith by itself,**

The term translated “*thus*” is the adverb “*houto... in this manner, thus, so;*” It could be translated thusly, or in the same manner. James is directly tying the illustration he has just gave about the good wishes of someone but with no help being worthless to the statement he is about to make. It is like putting an equal sign between the two. Faith without works is equal to telling someone to be warmed and filled without actually helping them.

There is an ambiguity in the text that allows the term “by itself” to be placed either right next to faith as it is in the NKJV or to be placed after the term dead at the end of the sentence. Each translation chose its own way, but for most of them, it all works out to the faith being by itself. Only the ASV makes it “*dead in itself;*” meaning the faith is dead in itself. The rest of them, no matter where they placed it, all have it refer back to the faith.

*Even so faith, if it have not works, is **dead in itself.** (ASV)*

Even so faith, if it has no works, is **dead, being by itself**. (NASU)

So also **faith by itself**, if it does not have works, is dead. (ESV)

In the same way, **faith by itself**, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (NIV)

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is **dead, being alone**. (KJV)

So also faith, if it does not have works, **by itself** is destitute of power (inoperative, dead). (AMP)

There is some ambiguity in the expression by itself. Does it qualify faith or dead? The position of the Greek makes either a possibility. ASV takes it with dead, thus “is dead in itself.” It is more probable that the phrase is placed at the end for emphasis but is intended to be taken with faith, thus “faith alone” (KJV), or faith by itself (RSV, so also NRSV and many others). In this case, the clause *if it has no works is to be understood as an amplification of by itself*. (UBS New Testament Handbook Series)

Since in the context of the section, both are affirmed, it makes no difference doctrinally which one we choose. Truly, alone and by itself faith (because it has no works), is dead. At the same time faith without works is truly dead in itself (it has no life — “*as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*” (Jas. 2:26)

### **if it does not have works, is dead.**

The term “if ... not” are often used together in a sentence where the verb is in the subjunctive mood.

The subjective takes “*ei*” and always changes it to “*ean*” because the subjunctive is a mood of contingency and possibility.

“*ean*... I. a conditional particle(derived from *ei an*), which makes reference to time and to experience, introducing something future, but not determining, before the event, whether it is certainly to take place; *if, in case, ...* (Thayer, p. 162-163; 1437)

This is a possibility for each individual, but can only be determined at the time by the individual. If I have no works, then I have fulfilled this condition and my faith is dead.

The same is also true of “*ou*” “and “*me*.” “*ou*” is only used in the indicative and “*me*” in the subjunctive, optative and imperative.

*me* μή *not*, is the negative of thought, as *ou* of statement, i.e. *me* says that one thinks a thing is not, *ou* that it is not. The same differences hold for all compounds of *me* and *ou* ... in Independent sentences, 1. with Imperative ... 2. with Subjunctive ... 3. with Optative. to express a wish that a thing may not happen, ...” (Liddell and Scott, Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT 3361)

*me* a particle of negation, which differs from *ou* (which is always an adverb) in that ***ou* denies the thing itself (or to speak technically, denies simply, absolutely, categorically, directly, objectively), but *me* denies the thought of the thing, or the thing according to the judgment, opinion, will, purpose, preference, of someone (hence, as we say technically, indirectly, hypothetically, subjectively)**. This distinction holds also of the compounds *oudeis medeis* ...” (Thayer’s, NT: 3361)

Hence should we find ourselves in the position at anytime where in “*the judgment, opinion, will, purpose, preference, of someone*,” there are no works, we must realize that this is the condition we are in. We have a “*dead*” faith.

“*nekros*... *dead*, i. e. 1. prop. a. *one that has breathed his last, lifeless*:... hyperbolically and proleptically i. q. as if already dead, sure to die, destined inevitably to die... b. *deceased, departed, one whose soul is in Hades*... c. *destitute of life, without life, inanimate*... 2. trop. a. [spiritually dead i. e.] *destitute of a life that recognizes and is devoted to God, because given up to trespasses and sins; inactive as respects doing right*... b. univ. *destitute of force or power, inactive, inoperative*...” (Thayer, p. 424; 3498)

Faith without works is dead, lifeless, destitute of life, destitute of force or power, inactive and inoperative. The Spirit of God is very forceful here. God has no respect and no pleasure in a faith that has no works. It truly is a dead faith if it produces nothing in the life of the one who possesses it. It doesn’t matter how intense it is, how full and knowledgeable it might be, if the faith that is all by itself in the heart of the person who possesses does not get some works to go with it has a faith that is dead regardless of how he/she might feel about it.

There are so many verses that teach this that it is amazing that people still affirm it, but such is the nature of man and the tenacious evil of an accepted false doctrine.

### **18 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.”**

This has always been a confusing statement. There are 3 possible ways to interpret the statement.

1. “Someone” is a false teacher who comes to the readers of epistle and tells them that it is fine for James to have his works while they have their faith.
2. “Someone” is a person arguing with James in their own mind as they read the epistle. James has his faith while the person arguing with James has works.
3. “Someone” is a person who feels that some have faith and some (James) has works.

Either of the first two would be the most likely. Because either by someone else trying to persuade us (a false teacher), or by our own persuasion and conclusion, someone has decided that James can only speak for himself and not for all. It was made clear in the Scriptures that we are saved by faith, and that is enough. Faith in Jesus is a work and no greater work could we ever do!

*Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” 29 Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” Jn. 6:28-29*

So I will have my faith (which is a work) and James can have his works.

James has works, and that is good and wonderful since he thinks they are so important, but you have faith and that is just as important. This is the central theme of the argument as James seeks to destroy it. If the argument that James has his works and you have your faith and both of you have the right idea appeals to us, or we have actually used it to defend our conscience in times when these things are discussed, then we need to deal with the following point:

#### **show me your faith without your works,**

If you have a faith that really matters, then you are going to be able to show it. You are going to be able to “show” what it has done for you. What changes it has made in your life.

*“deiknuni... Sept. mostly for... to show, exhibit; 1. prop. to show i.e. expose to the eyes... w. metaph. a. to give the evidence or proof of a thing... b. to show by words, to teach...” (Thayer, 126-127; 1166)*

The Holy Spirit inspiring James is both clear and forceful! Those who have faith will be able to show it. They will be able to exhibit it, and to give the evidence or proof that they have it. The Spirit of God can be so forceful here because when true faith is born in the heart of any man or woman, it will begin to produce tangible changes. It will lead to repentance, confession of our faith and baptism. It will lead to tangible changes in our life as our old deeds are reproved and new deeds are given to replace them. The first day of the week becomes the special day “do this in remembrance of me.” Our life is now filled with prayer, with confession of sins and other clear works that are different than what was done before we had faith. Without these and all the other works that God has commanded of those who really believe Jesus is Lord, our faith is not only dead, we can’t even prove that it exists. You can’t show faith only. It is “better felt than told,” It is something that no one can question.

#### **and I will show you my faith by my works.”**

James on the other hand will list his works that he has done as a result of his faith. He can begin with repentance, confession and baptism. He can then move to attendance of services, learning, studying, and growing. Producing the fruits of the spirit (Gal 5) adding to his faith, virtue, knowledge, etc. (II Pet 1). The longer the list, the greater the faith. This is the entire point of how God revealed the faith of the ancients (elders) listed in Hebrews 11. By faith Abel..., Noah..., Abraham..., Sarah..., etc. No one cannot show faith without works, but anyone with works can show and exhibit his faith.

There are many passages in Scripture to bear out what James has said here.

## Commands and Explanations of Good Works

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works** and glorify your Father in heaven. Mt. 5:15-16

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their **deeds** were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his **deeds** should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his **deeds** may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” Jn. 3:18-21

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the **work** of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1Cor. 15:58

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Eph. 2:10

well reported for **good works**: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every **good work**. 1Tim. 5:10

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be **rich in good works**, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 1Tim. 6:17-19

Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every **good work**. 2Tim. 2:21-22

that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every **good work**. 2Tim. 3:17

in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of **good works**; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, 8 sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. Titus 2:7-8

who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless **deed** and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for **good works**. Titus 2:14

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every **good work**, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. Titus 3:1-3

This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain **good works**. These things are good and profitable to men. Titus 3:8

And let our people also learn to maintain **good works**, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. Titus 3:14

having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your **good works** which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1Pet. 2:12

## **Zealous of Good Works**

**Introduction:** Purchasing an expensive product, like a computer or a car, requires a careful assessment. Do we really need it and will it truly fulfill that need? If we conclude it is an important need and resolve that this product will fulfill it, it is easy to justify the purchase. Yet only if the product completely meets our expectations, will there be a great sense of satisfaction.

**Although the circumstances are different, the attitude we hold toward such a purchase is a fairly accurate picture (parable) of how Jesus felt purchasing the church (Acts 20:28).** There was never a more expensive purchase. Both Isaiah (Isa. 53) and Paul explain the cost. First, He “existed in the form of God,” then “emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being

made in the likeness of men.” Finally “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Phil. 2:6-9).

**Those in the church are what Jesus gained in the transaction. He had the same expectations we do.** He made it very clear what will happen if we don't meet them: “*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spit you out of My mouth.*” (Rev. 3:15-17).

**Jesus “gave Himself for us” to “redeem us from all iniquity. ... “purify unto himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works.”** When we break down this passage we see exactly what Jesus expected when He purchased us to be His own possession. This is very similar to Paul's words to the Corinthians: “*You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.*” (1Cor. 6:19-20). We glorify God in our body when we are “*zealous of good works.*” This was the need and it is what we were purchased to fulfill:

“*who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. ... 3:8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men. ... 14 And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.* (Titus 2:14-15; 3:8, 14)

**Because of their importance we would be wise to carefully consider the meaning of the three attitudes toward good works.**

**Zealous:** “most eagerly desirous of,” “striving after,” “an object of warm interest” “an emotion leading to action.”

**Careful** “to give heed,” “take thought,” “concentrate upon,” “think with concern,” “pay attention,” “be cautious about,” “attend,” “care about,” “regard.”

**Maintain:** “take the lead” “preside over,” “lead,” “direct,” “care for,” “sponsor,” “arrange,” “apply oneself to.”

**The two parables and prophesy of future judgment in Matthew 25 describe and explain how these three terms will manifest themselves.** In the first parable, the five wise virgins were zealous, careful and taking the lead in their preparations and had more than enough oil. The five foolish virgins did not eagerly strive after what they knew was expected and were condemned. In the second, three men were given the means and opportunity to manifest stewardship. The first two were wise, exhibiting their “*warm interest*” in properly using the talents. But the third squandered every opportunity “*to think with concern*” about the future reckoning.

In His prophesy of the judgment day, two groups are set before Him. One on the right and one on the left. His Praise and condemnation were based entirely on good works:

*Then the King will say to those on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was **hungry** and you **gave Me food**; I was **thirsty** and you **gave Me drink**; I was a **stranger** and you **took Me in**; 36 I was **naked** and you **clothed Me**; I was **sick** and you **visited Me**; I was **in prison** and you **came to Me.**’*

He concluded with the condemnation of those who did not do these things.

*Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was **hungry** and you **gave Me no food**; I was **thirsty** and you **gave Me no drink**; 43 I was a **stranger** and you **did not take Me in, naked** and you **did not clothe Me, sick and in prison** and you **did not visit Me.**’ (Mt. 25:34-43).*

Have we taken these things to heart? These are things to be “*affirmed constantly*” and “*learned.*” When announcements are made about the sick or those in need of prayers, those who are zealous and careful will make notes and take the opportunity to add another good work to bring before the Lord. What good works did we do this week that we will bring before our God on the final day?

In the parable of the talents, God “*gave to each according to his own ability.*” As with all giving, “*if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.*” (2Cor. 8:12). So God’s expectations are clear.

**God used a human body for us to use to assess our own abilities and seek for opportunities. Every part just needs to do its share.** “*The whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*” (Eph. 4:16).

**Each member of the body has its own function. We all have gifts that differ.** So God wants us to make an assessment of our own abilities and then use them.

“*For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or **ministry**, let us **use it in our ministering**; he who **teaches, in teaching**; 8 he who **exhorts, in exhortation**; he who **gives, with liberality**; he who **leads, with diligence**; he who **shows mercy, with cheerfulness.***” (Rom 12:4-8).

In order to be good stewards, we have to take the gifts we have received and minister it one to another. God only asks that we *minister as with the ability God supplies.*”

“*And above all things have **fervent love for one another**, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” 9 **Be hospitable** to one another without grumbling. 10 **As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards** of the manifold grace of God. 11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.” (1Pet. 4:8-11).*

**Conclusion:** The fleeting years of life are passing quickly. What of our own good works? Are we zealous, with “*eager desire* and “*earnest strivings?*” Are we careful, “*thinking with concern,*” and “*paying attention?*” Are we maintaining, “*arranging,*” “*applying ourselves to*” these good works that we may not be unfruitful? We can’t grow weary in these things.

**2 Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.** ... 9 And let us **not grow weary while doing good**, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. 10 Therefore, **as we have opportunity, let us do good to all**, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Gal. 6:2,9-10).

“*It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. 35 Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming — in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning — 36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!” (Mk. 13:34-37).*

### Full of Good Works

**Introduction:** “*At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was **full of good works** and charitable deeds which she did” (Acts 9:36-43). Her example is exactly what Paul later told Titus to do as “**a pattern of good works.**” Jesus died to “*purify for Himself His own special people, **zealous for good works***” and Dorcas showed exactly how this could be done. All should “**affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should***

be **careful to maintain good works**” as Dorcas did. She exemplified the duty to *“let our people also learn to **maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.**”* (Titus 2:7,14; 3:8, 14).

**Are we full of “good works” like Dorcas?** Most of us have made prayer and reading Scripture daily priorities and they are important enough that we monitor them. Yet are we as *“zealous for good works”* as we are for these? Evangelists are to *“affirm constantly”* that believers in God should be *“careful — meaning take care, concentrate upon, consider, reflect, take thought, give heed)* to their *“good works.”* Are we as careful as Dorcas to be full of them? In the same way we flee every temptation and confess every sin, we must also concentrate on *“maintaining good works”*

Jesus told us that **“good works” are necessary for our salvation.** *“His own special people” must be “zealous of good works.”*

*“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. ... 37 Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You... 40 Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”* (Mt. 25:31-45)

**This is exactly what Dorcas was doing for the widows in Joppa.** She was clothing *“His brethren.”* Jesus’ praise was for those disciples who gave **Him** food, drink, shelter, clothing, and visitation. Yet no Christian ever saw Jesus in the flesh. He was at God’s right hand the day the church began. Hence they asked, *“Lord, when did we see You?”* His answer: Any good work done to even **“the least of My brethren you did it to Me.”** Who are His brethren? *“For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”* His brethren are those who are being sanctified as Christians (Heb. 2:11).

**Our entrance into the eternal kingdom will be based on our “good works”** If we are not zealous for them and careful to maintain them. We are *“unfruitful”* and **“cursed of My Father.”**

*“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; ... 45 ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’*

**When Dorcas died, “all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them.”** She had recognized the needs of the widows and had busily fulfilled it with a skill she possessed and wanted to share in the church.

**She shared her gifts with those who needed them.** That is exactly what good works are! We take our gifts and serve our brethren with them: *“according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”* and *“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them”* (1Pet. 4:10; Rom. 12:6)

**Every local church is a body of Christ filled with Jesus’ brethren.** Our gifts(time, money, ability, sacrifices, etc.) must not be squandered or we will be unfruitful. We must share them with our brethren. Just as the garments Dorcas made blessed the church at Joppa, making it a happier and healthier body, so it is today. So what gifts are we ministering to those in our local church? Those who *“minister”* and *“use”* their gifts for the brethren are doing it to Jesus. Dorcas’ *“ministered”* and *“used”* her gifts. She was so full of good works that when she died the widows wept at her loss. Would anyone weep after our death because the gifts we ministered and used were gone? Will we be sorely missed?

## Good Works

*God, who is rich in mercy, ... even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ... For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:1-10).*

**Introduction:** The power God wrought when we obeyed the gospel (Rom 1:16), is compared to a resurrection (*we were dead but made alive*) and a creation (*created in Christ*). As “*we were buried with Him through baptism,*” “*just as Christ was raised from the dead,*” “*even so we also should walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:4-7). God has made clear His purpose in restoring us. We are to “**walk in newness of life**” and do “**good works God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**” When we fulfill this, we are “*His own special people,*” “**zealous for good works**” because “*those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.*” (Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-8).

God was rich in mercy when He gave us this second chance. We are “*His workmanship*” and “*were created in Christ*” for these “*good works.*” Our gratitude and relief should lead us to be **zealous of**, and **careful to maintain good works**.

**What are these “good works”** God prepared beforehand for us to walk in? The English “*prepared beforehand*” translates a single Greek word: “*Ready in advance,*” “*prepared in advance,*” and “*determined/purposed in advance.*” These are **not good works we devise**, but **good works He prepared!** We will need more than human ingenuity and imagination to do them (1Cor. 2:9-11).

God revealed it will take “**all Scripture given by inspiration of God,**” to be “**thoroughly equipped for every good work**” (2Tim. 3:15-17). Without consulting the Scriptures, we cannot be “*thoroughly prepared,*” “*furnished completely,*” or “*fully qualified.*” David discovered this when he planned the “*good work*” of moving the ark to Jerusalem. Although he thought it good, “*the LORD our God broke out against us.*” Uzzah lost his life, and the ark’s travel to Jerusalem was stopped, “*because we did not consult Him about the proper order*” (1Chr. 15:13). Their good work included an ox cart while God’s good work required the Kohathites to carry it on their shoulders. This small modification changed the good work into an evil one. We must learn from this and search the Scriptures to assess our good works. Jesus said, only if we do “*the will of My Father in heaven,*” will we escape the condemnation “*I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!*” (Mt. 7:21-23)

In order to “*do the will of My Father in heaven,*” we must first be “**filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.**” Only then can we be equipped and thoroughly prepared to “*please Him in all respects.*” Without this, we are not “**being fruitful in every good work**” (Col. 1:9-11). King Saul was given the good work of punishing the Amalekites for their sins. When he changed (very slightly in his view) what God asked him to do to better suit himself, God rejected him as King and instead sought out “*a man after his own heart who would do all His will.*” (1Sam 15; Acts 14:22). True good works can only be performed when “**filled with the knowledge of His will,**” and in full respectful submission.

The “*ordinances of divine service*” of the Old Covenant were done away when “*Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation*” (Heb 9:1, 11). We now have “*boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us,*” and are to “*consider one another in order to stir up love and good works*” (Heb. 10:19-20,24).

**These “good works” can only be found in “the Holy Scriptures”** that “*make one wise to salvation.*” Hence, in order to do the “*good works God prepared beforehand,*” we must consult the blueprints God gave. Even those “*who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things,*” were warned “*See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain*” (Heb. 8:5). Nadab and Abihu lost their lives because the good work God had revealed to them was not done “*according to the pattern.*” He saw it as an insult to His holiness and glory when the “*offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them*” (Lev. 10:1-3). God not only

defines the good works we should walk in, but often gives specific instructions about how they should be carried out. Worship, organization, terms of membership, code of conduct, etc. are all the good works God wants us to walk in.

**Conclusion:** The Most Holy Place was the most beautiful place in the tabernacle. Gold covered walls, “*a veil woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen with an artistic design of cherubim,*” “*the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat,*” and “*the ark of the covenant with the tablets of the covenant.*” (Ex. 26:31; Heb. 9:5). Its value was priceless.

Yet God decreed it only be entered once a year, by one person (the High Priest). The rest of the time it sat empty. While many might consider this a waste, it was God’s will, God’s good work, that needed to be obeyed. It was priceless as a testimony to God’s holiness and served no other purpose. Today when a church building sits idle, some consider it a waste. Yet because it was purchased with the Lord’s money, it must be used for the Lord’s good works.

Some have done what Saul did, changing the good works to suit themselves, by modifying the building as an eating place. Others have followed Nadab and Abihu and do things that were never commanded, by making this building a place of recreation. Multitudes have followed the bad example of David, not seeking to do God’s will after the proper order when they devise other uses. If we are wise, we will remember that God’s good works can only be done when we do them after His will, not after our imagination. If we do not do the Father’s will, Jesus will say, “*I never knew you.*”

## **19 You believe there is one God.**

Instead of faith, James now uses the verb believe. You actively believe the truth that there is one God. Later even the Holy Spirit will reveal that this is a critical first step.

*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Heb 11:6*

Yet that is not the whole story. There is so much more to a “*saving*” faith than one of the component parts. One must also believe Jesus is Lord, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Those who obey the gospel are saved and those who have not yet obeyed the gospel are lost. Yet each of these things that are believed leads to another step in our quest to shoulder responsibility and obligation.

The Spirit now makes a comparison that shows the true problem with such a proof.

## **You do well; Even the demons believe — and tremble!**

Although they might first conclude this is sincere praise, the conclusion reveals that it is irony or sarcasm. No one would argue that the demons are saved. The demons have a faith in God, but it doesn’t do them any good. The use of the demons is proof positive that such faith cannot save. They sought to destroy Jesus every way they could and Jesus said, that as He cast them out He was binding Satan. There is no way demons can be used in anything but an unfavorable light.

## **20 But do you want to know, NKJV But are you willing to recognize, NASB**

There are two vocabulary words here that have led to a slight divergence in translation. The first word is often translated either willing or wanting:

*“thelo, ... (derived apparently fr. *helein* with a fuller aspiration, so that it means prop. to seize with the mind; ...) to will, (have in mind,) intend; i.e. 1. to be resolved or determined, to purpose ... 2. to desire, to wish: ... 3. i. q. to love foll. by an inf., to like to do a thing, be fond of doing... 4. in imitation of the Hebr. ... to take delight, have pleasure... the will which proceed from inclination... “ (Thayer p 285-286; 2309)*

This has led to the divergence of “want” or “will.” What they would read is “Do you have in mind and intend?” “Are you resolved or determined?” “Do you desire or wish?”

The second vocabulary word is their most basic word for learning and knowledge.

“*ginosko*... 1. univ. 1. *to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of*,... 2 *to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of*... II in particular *ginosko*, *to become acquainted with, to know*, is employed in the N. T. of the knowledge of God and Christ, and of the things relating to them or proceeding from them... In classic usage... *ginoskein*, distinguished from the rest by its original inchoative force, denotes a discriminating apprehension of external impressions, a knowledge grounded in personal experience ...” (Thayer, p. 117-118; 1097)

“*ginosko*... signifies to be taking in knowledge, to come to know, recognize, understand, or to understand completely... in its past tenses it frequently means to know in the sense of realizing, ... (Vine Vol 2, p. 297-298)

James combines the active “want and desire” to the aorist “know.” Are you now prepared and desiring to reevaluate your knowledge about this subject and further it? The amount of knowledge that you have has now been augmented with additional information are you now willing to admit into your knowledge the truth that they were wrong and need to repent.

### **O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? (useless – NASB)?**

With the first three points in the debate now clearly understood, James now moves from gentle teaching to open rebuke and censure. James has shown:

1. Faith without works is like telling someone cold and hungry to be warmed and filled, but give them nothing.
2. Faith without works is dead by itself.
3. Faith without works only makes us like the demons who believe and shudder, but are lost.

When all of this is added to the knowledge they have amassed on this subject, it is now clear that they were vain and foolish when they affirmed that faith alone was enough:

“*kenos*,... *empty*; 1. prop. of places, vessels, etc., which contain nothing... metaph. *empty, vain; devoid of truth*... 2. of men, empty-handed, without a gift:... metaph. destitute of spiritual wealth, ... 3. metaph. of endeavors, labors, acts, which result in nothing, vain, fruitless, without effect... in vain to no purpose...” (Thayer, p. 343; 2756)

*kenos* outside the NT. ... 1. Lit. “empty,” “without content,” ... 2. Fig. a. of persons, “hollow,” “vain,” ... In biblical Gk. the moral element becomes stronger. ... not just foolish and vain but useless and careless persons ... “frothy,” “frivolous,” ...” (Kittel, TDWNT NT:2756)

*kenos* ... I. of things, empty, opp. to full ... 2. metaph. empty, vain, ... to no purpose, in vain, ... II. of persons, 1. c. gen. void, destitute, bereft, ... Soph.: -empty of wit, empty-headed, (Liddell and Scott, Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT 2756)

In the eyes of God, those who make such arguments become “*empty, vain and devoid of truth*.” They are “*frothy and frivolous*” without and substance. Worse of all, they are “empty of wit, or empty headed.” These are all the judgements of God on this doctrine and those who hold it after seeing the truth.

There is only one thing left to do now. They must repent of this doctrine and never preach or teach it again.

There is “*some degree of doubt*” between the Textus Receptus and the Nestle Aland on which Greek word should be in the text. The Textus Receptus has *nekros* and Nestle’s has *argos*. *nekros* was already used in verse 17. If it is repeated it has the same meaning as there, if it is *argos*, then the definition is:

“*argos*... fr. a priv. and *ergon* without work, without labor, doing nothing), *inactive, idle*: a. *free from labor, at leisure*... b. *lazy, shunning the labor which one ought to perform*... c. of things from which no profit is derived, although they can and ought to be productive: as of fields, trees, gold and silver... *unprofitable*... (Thayer, p. 72: 692)

*argos* ... (contr. from *a-ergos* ... not working the ground, living without labour, ... then, generally, inactive, slothful, idle, lazy, ... idle at a thing, free from it, 2. of land, lying fallow or untilled, ... of money, unemployed, yielding no return, ... II. pass. not done, left undone, (Liddell and Scott, Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:692)

The KJV/NKJV have translate it “dead.” The ASV/NASB translate it barren or useless.

## 21 Was not Abraham our father

Like most of the passages in the New Testament, Abraham is called “our” father, because God had promised him he would be the father of many nations and the gospel fulfilled that promise. All who obey the gospel are “like Isaac, children of promise.”

**For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Gal. 3:26-29**

For it is written that **Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, 24 which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar ... 26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written: “Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband.” 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. Gal. 4:22-29**

God's test of Abraham in asking him to offer up Isaac on the altar is the third of three pivotal moments in the chronology of Abraham's life. They are all recorded by the Holy Spirit as examples to us who live as Christians under the New Covenant. Each of them was set forth as something we should imitate and follow. As God revealed to Isaiah, everyone seeking righteousness must look to Abraham and follow his example.

*“Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, You who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, And to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. 2 Look to Abraham your father, And to Sarah who bore you; For I called him alone, And blessed him and increased him.” Isa 51:1-2*

Abraham is the rock from which all of us are hewn. Since his faith and life are set forth as examples of greatness in the sight of God we must be of the same substance and quality, we must look to him. If we truly follow after righteousness and truly seek for the Lord, Abraham is the way forward.

*and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. 22 And therefore **“it was accounted to him for righteousness.”** 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, Rom 4:21-24*

*just as Abraham “believed God, and it was **accounted to him for righteousness.**” 7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. Gal 3:6-8*

*Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it **was accounted to him for righteousness.**” And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. James 2:22-24*

It is therefore very important that we know and understand exactly what Abraham did and how God felt about it along with how we too can follow these examples with our own faith and works.

### **1. When God called Abraham went.**

*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Heb. 11:8-10*

### **2. When God made an Impossible Promise Abraham never wavered.**

*(as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed-- God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; 18 who,*

contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." 19 And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. 22 And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification. Rom. 4:17-25

### **3. When God Made an Impossible Demand and He Fulfilled it.**

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. James 2:21-24

For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. Heb. 6:13-18

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. Heb. 11:17-19

Clearly there is no more important or practical example than that of Abraham. Since his life has been made a template for for all his children, God expects us to be like him.

#### **justified by works**

As one carefully assesses the life of Abraham would we see him as a man of faith alone, or as a man of faith with works? Never was his faith alone. It was always accompanied by the actions God expected of those who have faith. In all three examples above, God tested the quality of the faith by looking at the response and then recording it so we could look at it. When God called Abram, the response of faith was to come out and to go. When God made an impossible promise, faith's response was to never waver or doubt either in word or thought. God's command that Abraham offer up his son as a burnt offering took the greatest faith of all. What else but complete trust in God would lead him to get up the next morning and take Isaac to that mountain?

Since it is faith's works here that are under consideration, James, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, points at the works that faith demands as the point of justification. God "justified" Abraham by his working faith.

*"dikaioo... 1. prop. to make dikaios; to render righteous or such as he ought to be... 2. to show, exhibit, evince, one to be righteous,... 3. tina, to declare, pronounce, one to be just, righteous, or such as he ought to be,... a. with the negative idea predominant, to declare guiltless one accused or who may be accused, acquit of a charge or reproach, ...b. with the positive idea predominant, to judge, declare, pronounce, righteous and therefore acceptable,..." (Thayer, p. 150; 1344)*

God declared Abraham righteous and such as he ought to be on the basis of the works of faith and not on the basis of faith alone without any works. Abraham was declared and made righteous by God on the basis of the strength of his faith. God made him righteous, then showed and exhibited him to be righteous. So the heart of the question James asked proved conclusively that it was not

on the basis of faith alone, but on the basis of faith that produced works. This is also made evident by the preposition used.

*“ek... It denotes as well exit or emission out of, as separation from, something with which there has been close connection; opposite to the preposition eis into and en in: from out of, out from, forth from, from... I. of PLACE and 1. univ. of the place from which; from a surrounding or enclosing place.. from the interior of... II of the ORIGIN, SOURCE, CAUSE;.. 5... is used of the cause (whether thing or person) by which the act expressed by the accompanying verb is aided, sustained, effected...” (Thayer, p. 189; 1537)*

The origin, source and cause of justification were the works. The very fact that God asked him to offer Isaac, demanded a work. There was no way for Abraham to pass this test without action. Only by the action of taking Isaac and offering him could Abraham fulfill the conditions God had set for his faith to accomplish.

### **when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?**

James chose this one specific moment in the life of Abraham. The moment when he reached the top of the mountain, arranged the wood, tied up his son and reached for the knife.

*Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” So he said, “Here I am.” 12 And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” Gen. 22:9-12*

God chose the exact moment. He did not stop Abraham until the knife was in his hand and the decision to obey God had clearly been made and was now being acted upon.

It is clear from the account that there was some faith when he arose the next morning with everything needed to do God’s will. But God waited until there was no more opportunities to turn back. Everything needed to be accomplished that was demanded in the command. If Abraham had not gone on the journey, stopped at any point on the journey, refused to go up on the mountain. Did not lay out the wood and tie up Isaac, and at the last moment if he could not reach for the knife, faith would not have been made perfect by the works.

Hence both Paul and James are right. There is no contradiction but complete harmony. Paul made it clear that it was the faith that Abraham had in God that led him to justify:

*What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” 4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. Rom. 4:1-4*

Abraham did not work to receive justification. He was a sinner just like all the rest of mankind. But God did use his faith. It was when he believed God that he was accounted as a righteous man. James is not even discussing works and faith. He is discussing faith. What kind of faith did Abraham have, is James’ question. The clear answer is a faith that had works.

Can we even imagine Abraham telling God He believed him but did not feel it necessary to be obedient to this command? If he had reasoned with God as the man James was speaking about here did could the outcome have been the same? If at any point Abraham had said, my faith should suffice, you are asking too much, the outcome would not have been the same.

It was a gracious act on God’s part that caused Him to forgive Abraham on the basis of simply taking his son up on to the top of the mountain to offer him. It manifested the extreme depth of his faith.

### **22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works,**

Faith and works form a partnership in the heart and life of all true children of Abraham. Nothing has changed. Just as in Abraham’s case, the faith “*worked together*” with his works, so also today, God

has crafted the gospel to require both inward and outward actions to assure all that they have a working faith.

*“sunergeo... to work together, help in work, be a partner in labor... to put forth power together with and thereby to assist, ... faith (was not inactive but by coworking) caused Abraham to produce works...”* (Thayer, p. 603; 4903)

The two of them become partners in labor, they work together, help in work, put forth power together, and assist one another. Without the faith, no one would work and no work would matter. Without the works, the faith is not strong enough to be called faith. Both must be working together to merit the quality of reward God offered to Abraham. It was precisely because this man by this act became a great example that God selected him to be the father of all the faithful.

God knows the quality of faith that makes man righteous and He knows how to develop it throughout our life to reach its highest level. The gospel is the perfect combination of trust and confidence in things that cannot be seen and conviction and submission to the difficult commands that both prove and increase it.

### **and by works faith was made perfect?**

James repeats “ek”(see above) to continue to emphasize that the works were the source by which the faith was made perfect. This is what the works do. They are of the highest importance because without them faith cannot be brought to “perfection.”

*“teleioo, to make perfect or complete ... 1. to carry through completely; to accomplish, finish, bring to an end... 2. to complete(perfect) i. e. add what is yet wanting in order to render a thing full... 3. to bring to the end (goal proposed... 4. to accomplish, i.e. bring to a close or fulfillment by event...”* (Thayer, p. 618).

While faith is the critical thing and is the most important element in salvation, God added the works to bring this faith to its full completion. Works take the small things that make faith lacking and lead that faith to the perfection necessary to bring salvation. So without the works. faith alone is imperfect. It doesn't have everything necessary to reach the level of power and value to bring about salvation. Hence, is the essence and source of salvation, but it must have the works in order to be perfected as a faith that God is pleased enough with to save us.

### **23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says,**

It was the works that perfected the faith and thus fulfilled the Scripture. “fulfilled” is defined:

*pleroo...1. to make full, to fill, to fill up... to fill to the full... cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally ... 2. to render full, i. e. to complete; a. prop. to fill up to the top...so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim... b. to perfect, consummate... bb. to make complete in every particular; to render perfect... c. to carry into effect, bring to realization, realize; a. of matters of duty, to perform, execute ... bb of sayings, promises, prophecies, to bring to pass, ratify, accomplish; ... hh universally and absolutely, to fulfill, i.e. to cause God's will (as made known in the law)to be obeyed as it should be, and God's promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfillment...”* (Thayer, p. 517-518; 4137).

Without the works, the Scripture could not have been fulfilled. It is important to realize that the Scripture James quoted was given to Abraham many years earlier. Abraham 86 years old when Ishmael was born and this conversation occurred even before that.

*And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.” 5 Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” 6 And **he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.***  
Gen. 15:4-6

Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born and now Isaac is old enough to carry the wood up the mountain so it is about 20 years later that the words God had given to Abraham were actually brought to their full completion. The point James is making is that these words were absolutely necessary in order for the words spoken at that time to be brought to their full completion.

This is exactly what God teaches in the NT. Jesus teaches that he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. When a man is baptized he is saved. But it is not till after the life is over and it is filled with works of a faithful life up to death (Rev 2:10 that the Scripture is truly fulfilled).

**“And Abraham believed God, and it was accounted (reckoned NASB) to him as righteousness,”**

While Abraham was the first to receive this wonderful pronouncement, it was the basis upon which all men would be saved. Yet it was not brought to its end until Abraham’s faith sacrificed and worked. The term “reckoned” is one of the most important in the Bible:

*“logizomai... [a favorite word with the apostle Paul, being used (exclusive of quotations) some 27 times in his Epp., and only four times in the rest of the N.T.]. 1. ...to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over; hence a. to take into account, to make account of... 2. ... to reckon inwardly, count up or weigh the reasons, to deliberate,... 3. by reckoning up all the reasons to gather or infer; i.e. a. to consider, take account, weigh, meditate on...” (Thayer p 379)*

God took Abraham’s working faith and accounted, computed, calculated it to be righteousness to Abraham. After man sinned, God knew all men could only be saved by His grace offered through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. But he was not going to just give it away. Though God could no longer require perfect works as that would disqualify everyone, He could require a hard working faith. The greater the works that faith produced, the more pleased God would be to save that person by grace. Those who’s faith did not motivate them to work were not much different than those who do not believe at all. With no sacrifices and nothing offered, how does that faith differ from those who had no faith at all?

**and he was called the friend of God.**

Because Abraham counted God more important than his own son, and Abraham was willing to sacrifice for God and not simply be a fair weather friend, God drew a wonderful conclusion about him. He was a true friend. God counted Abraham a friend because Abraham allowed his faith to work. The harder our faith prompts us to work and sacrifice, the greater faith we have and the more devoted friend to God we become.

Although God is a friend to everyone, Abraham is the only one who was called the friend of God.

*But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham My friend. Isa. 41:8*

*Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? 2 Chr. 20:7*

*And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the “friend of God.” Jas. 2:23*

The inference here is that if we too want to be God’s friend we must make similar decisions to offer similar works to God.

**24 You see that a man is justified by works,**

James now draws his conclusion. After putting forth a direct statement, answering the arguments with the illustration of the futility of wishing someone warmed and filled without works, bluntly stating that faith without works is dead, showing the demons believe and capping it off with Abraham, he now demanded that they acknowledge that he is right. Surely now they “see” it:

*“orao... 1. to see with the eyes... 2. to see with the mind, to perceive, know... 3. to see i.e. to become acquainted with by experience, to experience ...” (Thayer p 451-452)*

Surely now they must acknowledge what they have seen through these words. These additional facts must change what they now see with the mind, perceive and now know it to be the truth. With these words they ought to be able to see “that:”

*“hoti... I. the substance or contents (of a statement), that; 1. joined to verbs of saying and declaring... II the reason why anything is said to be or to be done, because, since, for that, for, (a causal conjunct.*

...)... a. it is added to a speaker's words to show what ground he gives for his opinion;... b. *hoti* makes reference to some word or words that precede or immediately follow it..." (Thayer p 458-460; 3754)

Surely you see the substance of the point. Surely now you will acknowledge that man is justified and made right in the sight of God on the basis of a faith that works and not on the basis of faith alone.

### **and not by faith alone (only NASB).**

After seeing these additional facts, they can now realize that there can be no justification "out of – ek." If faith is "alone" there can be no justification.

"*monos*,... 1. an adjective *alone*(without a companion); a. with verbs... b. it is joined with its noun to other verbs also so that what is predicated may be declared to apply to some one person along... 2. *alone, only, merely*... referring to an action expressed by a verb" (Thayer, p. 418; 3441).

### **25 Likewise (And in the same way NASB) was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?**

Why the Holy Spirit selected Rahab is an interesting question. Why He also referred to her as the harlot is also an interesting question. Of the of the eight times her name is mentioned in the Scriptures five times she is identified as "the harlot." Since she is the only Rahab in the Scriptures, it is not repeated because it was needed to identify her.

*So they went, and came to the house of **a harlot named Rahab(1)**, and lodged there. Josh. 2:1-2  
So the king of Jericho sent to **Rahab**, saying, Josh. 2:3  
Only **Rahab the harlot(2)** shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, Josh. 6:17  
And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out **Rahab**, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. Josh. 6:23  
And Joshua spared **Rahab the harlot(3)**, her father's household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. Josh 6:25  
Salmon begot Boaz by **Rahab**, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, 6 and Jesse begot David the king. Matt. 1:5-6  
By faith **the harlot Rahab(4)** did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. Heb. 11:31  
Likewise, was not **Rahab the harlot(5)** also justified by works Jas. 2:25*

It is also not likely that this was used in some negative way, because she is always mentioned in a very positive way in the Scriptures. The only other possibilities are that this done in a way very similar to the apostle Paul (the chief of sinners). Regardless of her sinful and wicked occupation, her faith was not only responsible for her being the only one spared out of cursed Jericho, but for her becoming one of the ancestors of David and His Christ.

It can't be denied that the rest of those in Jericho perished. Even though Rahab had related how the entire city had learned and was subdued by God's dealings with them, she was the only one to express her faith in action:

*"I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. 10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11 And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you," Josh 2:9-11*

Regardless of how much or how little faith they had, they did nothing. Rahab acted on her faith and by that action her faith was also made perfect and she was saved. Others were filled with dread, but she was the only one with enough faith to act upon it. If she had not received the messengers and manifested her faith by committing herself by hiding them and sending them another way, she would have only had a dead faith. It would not have saved.

*And Joshua spared **Rahab the harlot(3)**, her father's household, and all that she had. So she dwells*

in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. Josh 6:25

## **The Two Spies and Rahab the Harlot**

*Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there. Josh 2:1*

The providence of God is often the underlying theme of many of the events in the Scriptures. Since God knows that hearts of all men, wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, and is longsuffering toward all not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance, it is obvious that He would always guide the feet of his people to those who would be most benefitted. So it was with Rahab, the one person in the entire town who had the faith to be saved.

*By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. Heb 11:31*

Whether they knew this as they entered that home is not recorded, only that after they arrived, an emergency arose that allowed Rahab's faith to save the day.

*And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country." 3 So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country." 4 Then the woman took the two men and hid them. Josh 2:2-4*

At that moment, Rahab had the choice of turning them over or protecting them. Like Moses before and the opposite of Delilah later, she chose to stand with the people of God.

## **Rahab told a Lie**

Many have looked carefully at her words to the servants of the king. But seeking for a way to justify her words has proven futile. She told a lie. None of what she said happened, and there is no way to justify or rationalize it away. It was a lie.

*So she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. 5 And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them." 6 (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.) Josh 2:4-7*

Some even among our brethren have concluded that this was not a sinful lie, but a simple omission, justifying the concept of situation ethics. They then seek to use her place in Hebrews 11 as the reason why it was not a sin. But that this reasoning is fallacious because she was also a harlot and that too is passed over without condemnation. If her faith justified her lying then it also justified her prostitution. The truth is that the Holy Spirit simply records things as they happened and often leaves unspoken the moral consequences of the action. Thus Abraham's lies about Sarah were not condemned, nor was Judah's fornication with Tamar, or Saul's suicide. God simply recorded the events and leaves it to His people to assess the moral consequences of each action. Lying is a terrible act because, it is impossible for God to lie and the devil is the father of all lies and liars. So when we lie we make ourselves Satan's children, not God's. Also because all lies and all liars will be cast into the lake of fire.

that by two immutable things, in which **it is impossible for God to lie**, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. Heb 6:18

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, **for he is a liar and the father of it.** John 8:44-45

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and **all liars** shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

## Rev 21:8

But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or **a lie**, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Rev 21:27

But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and **whoever loves and practices a lie**. Rev 22:15

So Rahab was a harlot and a liar, but later repented of both and having sought forgiveness and being restored, she has been placed among the great people of Heb 11.

## **Words to inspire Confidence**

Rahab's faith was based on the reputation that had preceded the children of Israel's arrival. They had heard about the Red Sea and previous victories that the Lord had given to Israel. It had led the people to be very afraid. This must have emboldened the spies and even Joshua when they recounted it to him. No longer did they appear to be grasshoppers in the sight of those living in the land of Canaan.

*"I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. 10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11 And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, Josh 2:9-11*

*And they said to Joshua, "Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us." Josh 2:24*

## **Rahab's "Good Confession" and Plea**

Rahab then made a "good confession" regarding her faith in God and her hope that she and her house could be saved.

*for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. 12 Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, 13 and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death." Josh 2:11-13*

Whether the men should have agreed to her proposal without consulting Joshua and hearing from God in the matter is passed over in silence. They did agree and it turned out to the glory of God. They then give her three specific instructions that would lead to her salvation. First, unless she tied a scarlet cord to her window, the oath would no longer be binding. Second, all she wanted to be saved must be in her house at the time of the battle. Third, if she tells anyone about this business they will be free of the oath.

*We will be blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear, 18 unless, when we come into the land, **you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down**, and unless **you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home**. 19 So it shall be that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we will be guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him. 20 And **if you tell this business of ours, then we will be free from your oath** which you made us swear." Josh 2:17-20*

She agreed to all their words and immediately tied the scarlet cord to the window.

*Then she said, "According to your words, so be it." And she sent them away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet cord in the window. Josh 2:21*

## **Rahab was Spared**

As had been previously agreed, the promise of the men would be kept. The scarlet thread had been placed and all of Rahab's family had entered and remained in her home. Joshua made certain that the oaths that had been taken were fulfilled.

*And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. 22 But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country, "Go into the harlot's house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her." 23 And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. Josh. 6:21-23*

Her faith did not end with her life. She married Salmon of the tribe of Judah and they had a son they named Boaz. Boaz was one of the main characters of the book of Ruth, a very honorable man who married Ruth and they too had a son they named Obed. We are later told that Obed was David's grandfather, the father of Jesse.

*And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now this is the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; 19 Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; 20 Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon; 21 **Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; 22 Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.** Ruth 4:17-22*

The Holy Spirit later elevated both Rahab and Ruth even more by revealing that both these women had been selected as ancestors of the Messiah.

*Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. 4 Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. 5 **Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth,** Obed begot Jesse, 6 and Jesse begot David the king. Mt. 1:3-6*

So David's great grandmother was Rahab the harlot and his grandmother was Ruth. One can't help but wonder if these two great women of faith had some influence on David's heart being after God's own heart. That was certainly the case with Timothy.

*when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. 2 Tim 1:5-6*

## **26 For as the body without the spirit is dead,**

James final conclusion is prefaced with conjunction "gar — for giving the affirmation and conclusion, generally translated denoting *truly therefore, verily as the case stands.*" He then gives the most powerful indictment of a faith that does not lead the person to works. A human body that has lost its spirit is dead and lifeless. It has no life and no power. It is the spirit within the body that gives the life and the essence to the human body. Within our spirit lies all our memories, plans, goals and dreams. Within our Spirit lies our eternity and our likeness to God. The body lives only to move, carry and care for the spirit. When the spirit leaves the body, it no longer has any purpose. It is dead, and there is nothing left to do but to bury it. Paul describes the body without the spirit each time he describes what it is like when it is sown.

*The body is **sown in corruption**, it is raised in incorruption. It is **sown in dishonor**, it is raised in glory. It is **sown in weakness**, it is raised in power. 1 Cor 15:42-44*

This is the state of the body without the spirit. Corruption, dishonor and weakness. So also is a faith that has no works.

## **so faith without works is dead also.**

In exactly the same way, "houto... in this manner, thus," faith without works is dead. Works are the life force of faith. They are the purpose for it's existence, they are the essence of what it is to produce. Without them, faith is exactly like a dead body. It is useless and worthless.

## Chapter Three

James closed the first chapter with one of the strongest warnings about the tongue anywhere in the Scriptures. He proclaimed that if we can't bridle and control the tongue, our religion and service to God has been useless.

*If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Jas. 1:26*

There is no question that the tongue must be bridled. Jesus warned along the same lines when He revealed that we will give an account of every word that comes out of our mouth. Even the ones that are idle and thoughtless.

*"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Mt. 12:36-37*

The Proverbs also addressed this subject along the same lines:

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit. Pr. 18:21  
Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles. Pr. 21:23  
Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him. Pr. 29:20*

He now follows up his words in the first chapter with a very strong warning against all who would desire to be involved in teaching the Scriptures.

### **1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers,**

It is interesting sometimes how God words things to force us to truly think through the exact scope and meaning of a command like this one. Since the idea of God discouraging anyone from teaching is a contradiction to other Scriptures, we must seek for a real meaning of this passage. The Spirit has revealed elsewhere that he expects wants all to learn to teach under certain circumstances.

*Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one. Col. 4:5-6  
But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 1Pet. 3:15*

After a period of time all Christians ought to be teachers.

*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. Heb. 5:8*

First, in all three of these passages, preparation is the key. They had to "**know how you ought to answer each one,**" "**be ready to give a defense.**" and only "**by this time**" should they begin teaching. No one should attempt to be involved in teaching if they don't know how to do these things. Without adequate preparation, anyone who seeks to become a teacher would fail in the attempt. This is the exact point being made here. Before taking on the obligation, make absolutely certain you are qualified with adequate preparation, and can use choose your words carefully and properly.

Hence, reading this startling statement forces us to assess the grave responsibility this task brings to those who willingly take it upon themselves. We must all be teachers, but we better seriously consider the cost. Jesus dealt with this on a broader scale in the gospels:

*... And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. Lk. 12:48*

Those who teach have been given much. They have a much greater opportunity to do good, but with that great opportunity to do good, especially when it comes to the tongue, also comes the greater opportunity to throw away that opportunity and do great evil.

As with many other terms in the Scripture there is a dual meaning. Just like the title "elder -

overseer” differs from the normal use of “elder – as all older men,” the title “deacon – servant” differs from the “work of serving – that all Christians minister as servants (dikoneo),” the title “apostle referring to the 12 and Paul” differs from others “sent forth and called apostles,” so there are two uses of the term “teacher” in the Scriptures. One is the title given to those who do the work as a occupation or an appointed office and the other is the work that it was drawn for that almost everyone can do. We see the term “teacher” used in both ways in the Scriptures:

### **Teacher as an Occupation or Appointed Office**

*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, Eph. 4:11-13*

*And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 1Cor. 12:28-30*

The use of the term teacher in the above passages is clearly an office in the church. Along with apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors (shepherds) Jesus also gave teachers to the church as a gift to help equip the saints for the work of ministry. As Paul told the Corinthians, they were appointed in the church along with the apostles and prophets. When he follows it up with the question are all apostles, prophets or teachers, he expects the answer to be no. We all know that not everyone was given this work to do.

Luke also made it clear that in the early church the terms “prophets” and “teachers” was an official title used to describe those people who were specifically chosen to do that work.

*Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. Acts 13:1-2*

As Paul described himself as one appointed to be a preacher, apostle and teacher of the Gentiles.

*who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, 7 for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle — I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying — a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 1Tim. 2:6-7*

*to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. 2Tim. 1:9*

Through the centuries the church has shied away from using “teacher” as a title for the work, probably because of the warnings Jesus gave to his disciples about using titles as an opportunity to rise above others.

*They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’ 8 But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. Mt. 23:6-11*

So while many are doing the work of teacher in an official capacity, they prefer preacher, or evangelist.

### **Teacher as a Work that all can do**

But is this how James is using the term here? Is this a warning only against those who are considering the work of preacher and evangelist who will also become full time teachers of the Word? As noted above, it could also be a warning against a casual approach to teaching the lost using the word of God. This is clearly its use in Hebrews and God expects all to do this work, but only if they are qualified to do it.

*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a*

*babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Heb. 5:12-14*

Is the teaching James speaks of public or private? Are the people he is writing to babes or mature? Is he speaking of interesting teaching or of truthful teaching? What are the concerns that should hold back a devout child of God from this needful practice? I believe the Spirit addressed this in the passage above. **When by reason of time.**

It takes time to learn the gospel, and time to learn the necessary control that makes such teaching wholesome instruction. No one can teach what they do not know. No one should teach any subject until they know the truth on it. Teaching is not a status, it is a service.

But I think it is doubtful James is speaking of the work alone and not the office. While others should take this warning to heart in all conversations with others, it seems clear that James is mostly concerned with those who desire to make themselves prepared to do the public work of teaching. In this respect, it follows the same path as Paul did when giving the qualifications for elders.

It This is especially true in the gift of teachers set forth in Ephesians 4. Those who seek to be public teachers over many must assess themselves. They must know how to teach and as the qualifications of the eldership specify, they must be able to teach.

*2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach**, 1Tim. 3:2*

This requires two important considerations. First, is the scope of their knowledge which is gained by experience. Second, are the gifts they were endowed with by God at birth. Those who have the gift should teach, those who do not have the gift should seriously consider whether they are up to the task.

*For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 **Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them:** if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; **he who teaches, in teaching;** 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Rom. 12:4-8*

Hence not many should become teachers. Only those properly prepared and qualified should seek to do so. It would appear from this passage that the Spirit recognizes that not all Christians are suited to this office and each should seriously reflect upon the nature and responsibilities of it before taking it. Not many of us are to be made into official public teachers of the gospel. Those who do have placed themselves into a position of great responsibility.

### **knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.**

The reason is clear. There are many things required of Christians. Many different tasks and acts of service. We should select the ones that we are best at performing because we are going to be judged based on these works. This is the whole concept of stewardship.

*Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. 1Cor 4:1-3*

The purpose of the parable of the talents and the parable of the 10 virgins is to express this truth so that we will all know it. We are going to be held accountable for the things we volunteer to do, so we must be certain that we chose those things that we have the gift to do.

*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, 1Pet. 4:10-11*

Those who have abilities are encouraged to use them with all their might. Those who are unsure should seek to work and qualify themselves, but if they cannot do it, then they ought to refrain.

Those who take on this duty will also take on a greater responsibility. James uses the term for knowledge that emphasizes sight and understanding from what we see.

*“eido... lat. video... The tenses coming from eido and retained by usage form two families, of which one signifies to see, the other to know... l. to see 1. to perceive (with the eyes)... 2. lat. video, to perceive by any of the senses... 3. univ to perceive, notice, discern, discover... 4. to see, i.e. to turn the eyes, the mind, the attention to anything; a. to pay attention, observe... b. ... to see about something i.e. to ascertain what must be done about it... c. to inspect, examine... d. to look at, behold... 5. to experience, any state of condition... 6. to see i.e. have an interview with, to visit...”* (Thayer, p. 172-174; 1492)

This is the knowledge of perception, discernment, and understanding. It is the “Oh, I see!” knowledge. The kind that bursts upon the mind and heart. After his “faith without works is dead,” and his “be doers of the word, and not hearers only,” it is evident that God expects a great deal from those who seek to do His work.

If we desire to be a teacher then we have to be a good one. One who teachers error or who is a hypocrite because he cannot live what he teaches need to know and perceive and understand that by becoming a teacher they place themselves into a greater area of strict judgement.

There will be people who sought the office of an elder or a teacher or preacher who will be lost because they are not doing the work to the level that God demands. James is simply warning us here that it is better not to take on a work we are incapable of doing well. The reason – *“hoti... the reason why anything is said to be or to be done, because, since, for that, for.”* So there is one specific reason why not everyone should seek this work as an office.

Although everyone will “receive – *“lambano,... to receive to gain, get, obtain”* judgment, it will not be the same for all. Some will receive a “heavier” judgment than others. This is a general term used for things that are great, powerful, majestic. Here it carries the idea of stronger, more intense and heavier.

*“megas... great; ... 1. predicated a. of external form or sensible appearance of things(or persons); in particular, of space and its dimensions-- as respects... bb compass and extent; large, spacious... gg. measure and height... long... b. of number and quantity, numerous, large...abundant... used of intensity and degree... of natural events powerfully affecting the senses, i.q. violent, mighty, strong... 2 predicated of rank, as belonging to a. persons, eminent for ability, virtue, authority, power; ... univ. eminent, distinguished... something higher, more exalted, more majestic... b. things to be esteemed highly for their importance, of great moment, of great weight, important... 3. splendid, prepared on a grand scale...”* (Thayer, p. 394-395; 3173).

While those who have counted the cost and are prepared to pay the price, know that this is true and are working to be prepared to shoulder it, it must be pressed home to all. We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, but we will stand with differing abilities and great judgment due to them.

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 2Cor. 5:10-11*

For example, those who decide to seek the office of a bishop are taking on a weightier judgement because as the overseers of the church they become the watchman.

*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Heb 13:17*

*Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 2 “Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: ‘When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, 3 when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, 4 then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. 5 He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life. 6 But **if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from***

**among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.** 7 **"So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me.** 8 **When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.** 9 **Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.** Ezek 33:1-9

Obviously Ezekiel's judgment will be heavier than that of others. In exactly the same way the elders of the church are the overseers and watchmen, and God will seek and account from them.

Teachers are not elders. But because they have put their hand to the plow of preaching and teaching God's word, they too will receive a heavier and more intense judgment than others.

*"krima... 1. a decree... judgments;... 2. judgment i. e. condemnation of wrong, the decision (whether severe or mild) which one passes on the faults of others... In a forensic sense, the sentence of a judge... of the punishment to which one is sentenced... where the justice of God in punishing is to be shown, krima denotes condemnatory sentence, penal judgment, sentence... 3. a matter to be judicially decided, a lawsuit, a case in court..."* (Thayer, p. 360; 2917)

The KJV took the second meaning and translated it "greater condemnation" the other translations took definition 1. That it is simply a judgment. So we learn here that there will be both mitigating and extenuating circumstances in this judgement. One of these will be the mercy, compassion, and forgiveness we show others.

*For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.* James 2:13

*"Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. 3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?"* Matt 7:1-4

Another will be whether we took on additional responsibilities. Elders and teachers will receive a different type of judgement. A greater, stricter, more comprehensive type of judgement. The judgement will be prepared on a grander scale, the judgement will be higher, more exalted, more majestic. This can be good if we measure up, and it can be bad if we do not. James bids us count this cost.

### **For we all stumble in many things.**

James now gives the reasons ("*gar – the reason and cause*") for the previous warning. This will "*serve to explain, make clear and illustrate the preceding thought.*" It is of critical importance that all of us recognize how easily it is to stumble in our words. To make that point, James begins with the obvious. Each morning we all arise with the intention of having a perfect walk with God, following in the steps of His Son Jesus Christ. Yet by the end of each day, we realize that we "stumbled" many times.

*"ptaio... I. trans. to make to stumble or fall, ... II. intr. to stumble, trip, fall, Soph., etc.; ... to stumble against, fall over, ... 2. metaph. to make a false step, to fail, ..."* (Liddell and Scott, Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT 4417)

It is easy to see from the definition that this word is used of things that cause us to stumble, trip or fall. James had already given the context for the word in his book when he said,

*For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.* Jas. 2:10

So this is a stumble like Adam and Eve committed when they ate of the forbidden fruit. A stumble like Paul did, when he was alive apart from the law and the commandment came and sin came alive. Although the law is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, either through ignorance, weakness, inexperience, or rebellion, all stumble over things we know or later learn are a violation of God's law. Everyone is fighting their lusts, enticements and temptations that too often lead to another stumble. We "all" have must admit we do stumble in many different ways.

*“hapas... stronger than the simple pas... quite all, the whole, all together, all; ...”* (Thayer, p. 54-55; 537)

*hapas a strengthened form of pas, signifies “quite all, the whole,” and, in the plural, “all, all things.”* (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:537)

There was only one exception to this and that was our Lord Jesus Christ. He lived His entire life and never stumbled. Everyone else stumbles in many things. The term translated “many” is only used of things that are superlative or of the highest magnitude. If looking at assembled people, it is a multitude. If it is measure, weight, force, intensity, size, continuance, or repetition, it is *much, great, strong, intense, large*.

*“polus,... much used a. Of multitude, number, many numerous, great... abundant, plenteous... b. with nouns denoting an action an emotion, a state, which can be said to have as it were measure, weight, force, intensity, size, continuance, or repetition, much l. q. great, strong, intense, large... c. of time much, long... d. Neut. sing. Polu, much, substantively, l. q. many things... much, adverbially, of the mode and degree of an action...”* (Thayer, p. 529; 4183)

As much as we would like to deny or ignore this charge, everyone knows it is the truth. Our struggles throughout the day are many. The apostle John found it necessary to even more strongly state this truth.

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1Jn. 1:8-10*

Any attempt to deny this truth would either make us a liar or force us to call Him a liar. If we do not agree it simply means we have not yet discovered them.

James is not making this statement to reveal a truth, but to state the obvious so that he could make his point about the tongue. He is arguing from the lesser to the greater. Since we all must acknowledge that we stumble in many things, we are also forced to admit that this would also apply in a much fuller sense to the tongue. More than any other member of the body, this one is used over and over and is very prone to sin.

**If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man,**

He repeats the term *stumble* from the previous verse and now applies it to our words. Just as we stumble in deed, we all also stumble in words. If anyone wanted to make the argument that they are not under consideration here because they know how to control their tongue and have nothing to fear, the Holy Spirit is warning them that if anyone really could control their tongue they would be “*perfect*.”

*“teleios,...prop. brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect... substantively, that which is perfect consummate human integrity and virtue... of men, full-grown, adult; of full age, mature,... the perfect, i.e. the more intelligent, ready to apprehend divine things... of mind and character, one who has reached the proper height of virtue and integrity...”* (Thayer, p. 618; 5046).

Though it is used sometimes in the Scriptures to describe a mature Christian, this is not the Spirit’s point here. Those who would claim they are above this warning and no longer have any need to fear their tongue are the focus. The Spirit reveals that anyone who no longer fears his tongue and is actually claiming to be perfect and wanting nothing necessary to completeness. A study of the commands regarding the tongue make it clear that this is the truth.

***In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise. 20 The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little. Pr. 10:19-20***

***He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. 28 Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive. Pr. 17:27-28***

***Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles. Pr. 21:23***

***Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him. Pr. 29:20***

**Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few.** 3 For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool's voice is known by his many words. Eccl. 5:2-3

**If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.** James 1:26

Moses was 120 years old when he learned the terrible lesson of the cost of choosing the wrong words.

*And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; shall we bring you forth water out of this rock? 11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and smote the rock with his rod twice: and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their cattle. 12 And Jehovah said unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed not in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.* Num 20:10-12

There were actually two sins the first occurred when he rebelled against the actual command and struck the rock in stead of only speaking of it as God had commanded.

*"Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah.* Num 20:24-25

*For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes." (These are the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.)* Num 27:14

Yet there was a second and equally evil thing that Moses did.

*They angered Him also at the waters of strife, So that it went ill with Moses on account of them; 33 Because they rebelled against His Spirit, So that he spoke rashly (unadvisedly- asv) with his lips.* Ps. 106:32-33

He spoke rashly and unadvisedly with his lips. What did he say?

*Hear now, you rebels; shall **we** bring you forth water out of this rock?*

With these things being accepted as the truth the point of the Spirit here is clear. Only those who are prepared to be very careful with their words should seek to become teachers.

### **able also to bridle the whole body.**

This is his final point on this subject. If anyone could in fact control their tongue, they would be able to bridle and control their entire body. This is the finishing touch of this powerful argument. The facts are clear. if you could bridle your tongue, then you would also be capable of bridling your whole body because the tongue alone is as difficult to bridle and bring under control as the whole rest of the body. The term "able" is actually more than just ability, it is also power.

*"dunatos... able, powerful, mighty, strong;... 1. absolutely; a. mighty in wealth and influence... b. strong in soul; to bear calamities and trials with fortitude and patience... strong in Christian virtue... firm in conviction and faith... 2. in construction; a... to be able to do something... b. mighty i.e. excelling in something... c. mighty i.e. having power for something..." (Thayer, p. 160; 1415)*

It would require power, might, strength and ability to bridle the whole body. No man but the Lord Jesus Christ was every able to do it. No one else ever will. That is James' point! Do not be arrogant and think more highly than you ought here. Be humble and recognize the danger. If you have the power to bridle your tongue then you would already have bridled the entire body.

*chalinos* "a bridle," is used in James 3:3 (KJV, "bits"), and Rev 14:20. (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:5469)

*chalinagogeio* from *chalinos* and *ago*, "to lead," signifies "to lead by a bridle, to bridle, to hold in check, restrain"; it is used metaphorically of the tongue and of the body in James 1:26 and 3:2." (Vine's Expository Dict. NT 5468)

If don't have the power to lead with a bridle, hold in check and restrain any part of our body to keep

ourselves from stumbling (and no one can), then we need to take careful heed to the danger of the tongue and never lose sight of it.

### **3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us,**

James will now use two very familiar illustrations to make his point. We should fear and respect the tongue, because although it is a small member in the body and does not have the strength or the power of the legs or arms, nevertheless, it has a greater impact on the entire body than any other body part. To illustrate he used the bit in the horses mouth and the rudder of a ship, which also share the same attribute of being a very small thing, yet exerting great control over everything.

No horse no matter how tame can be controlled without a bit.

*chalinos ... a bridle, bit, .... to champ the bit, Plat.: -of the rider, to give a horse the rein, ... 2. metaph. of anything which curbs or restrains, II. generally, a strap or thong, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:5469)*

Men have learned that if they want to communicate to the horse to go to the left or right and to slow down or speed up, we must a bit into their mouth. We do this so they will obey us. When we have the bit in their mouth, we can gain this “obedience:”

*“peitho... 1. Active; a. to persuade, i.e. to induce one by words to believe... to cause belief in a thing... b. as in class. Grk... 2. to make friends of, win one’s favor, gain one’s good-will, ... or to seek to one, strive to please one... c. to persuade unto i.e. to be induced to believe... 2. Passive and Middle... a. to be persuaded, to suffer one’s self to be persuaded; to be induced to believe... to be persuaded of a thing concerning a person Heb. 6:9... b. to listen to, obey, yield to, comply with ...to trust, have confidence, be confident... “ (Thayer, p. 497-498; 3982).*

Slowly, over time, we persuade a horse to obey the signals we send through the bit (break the to the bit). Once persuaded, they then obey yield and comply with our demands.

### **and we turn their whole body.**

When once we have this obedience, it transfers to the body. The small bit in the mouth does a great thing for their entire body. We have full control over the power of the legs simply by using the bit that is in the mouth. We thus “turn and direct” their entire body.

*“metago... to transfer, lead over... hence univ. to direct [A.V. to turn about]: James 3:3...” (Thayer, p. 404; 3329)*

### **4 Look also at ships: although they are so large**

His second illustration is the ship, which no matter how big is controlled by a very small (in comparison) to the rest of the ship rudder. It doesn’t matter if it is a battleship, aircraft carrier, huge cruise ship, or cargo ship, all vessels in the sea no matter the size are directed by a rudder. No matter the size of the ship, even the greatest mass doesn’t matter.

*“telikoutos... 1. of such an age; used of any age, of so great an age, so old; also so young. 2. of so great a size, in bulk ...3. Intensely, such and so great...” (Thayer, 622; 5082)*

*telikoutos “so great,” is used in the NT of things only, a death, 2 Cor 1:10; salvation, Heb 2:3; ships, James 3:4; an earthquake, Rev 16:18, ...” (from Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:5082)*

### **and are driven by fierce winds,**

This is also true regardless of the strength of the wind and no matter how “fierce” the rudder will still still be used to control and move the ship.

*“skleros ... hard, .... 2. of sound, hard, harsh, crashing, ... 3. hard, stiff, unyielding, sturdy, II. metaph. of things, hard, austere, severe, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:4642)*

NT:4642

*“skleros - The adjective derives from the stem sqel- “to dry (up),” “to desiccate,” with which “skeleton” is connected; it means “dry,” “arid,” “hard,” “rough,” “unyielding.” ... In the NT it occurs 6 times: a. of things in a transferred sense: ... “hard,” “unpleasant,” “intolerable,” John 6:60; ... “strong,” “rough,”*

“contrary” winds, James 3:4 ... , a “harsh,” “hard,” “austere,” “strict,” “unmerciful” man, Matt 25:24 (Kittel, TDWNT NT: 4642)

Even in the mightiest and roughest winds one could imagine, the rudder will still move the ship at the will of those in control.

### **they are turned by a very small rudder**

They are all directed by a “*small*” rudder.

“*elachistos*... the smallest, least, ... 2. of Time, shortest, 3. of Number, fewest,...” (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon NT: 1646)

Among all the things that are in a ship, the rudder makes up one of the smallest and least, it was created to be big enough to do the job of moving that ship in whatever direction necessary.

### **wherever the pilot desires**

And they go where they are directed with this rudder. It works just like the bit in the horses mouth. If the pilot of the ship wants to go to the left or to the right, the wheel of the ship is connected to the “very small” rudder and the ship responds to the “*will*” of the pilot exactly as he “*desires*.”

“*boulomai*...to will, wish; and 1. commonly to will deliberately, have a purpose, be minded... 2. of willing as a affection, to desire...” (Thayer, p. 105; 1014)

### **5 Even so the tongue is a little member**

James connects this next thought with the previous one with a “*houto*... in this manner, thus, so,” emphasizing that it was “*in the manner spoken of; or in the way described;*” Just as the bit in the horses mouth is small compared to the horse and the rudder is small compared to the ship, the Like the tongue is a small part to our body. But as the two illustrations show, sometimes a very small thing can have great control over a very big thing. The tongue is also “*small*.”

“*mikros*... small, little; used a. of size... of length, b. of space... c. of age... the little ones, young children... d of time, short, brief... e of quantity, i.e. number or amount... f. of rank or influence...” (Thayer, 414; NT:3398)

*mikros* ... , small, little, in point of Size, ... also in point of Quantity, ... 2.in Amount or Importance, little, petty, trivial, slight, II. of Time, little, short, ...” (Liddell and Scott, Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT 3398).

Because of its size many miss this point. The tongue is one of the smaller members of the body, yet in importance and risk, it is among the most important. Most communication between ourselves and others is through the tongue. God created the tongue and connected it to the brain in such a way that it holds the same ability as the bit and the rudder. Through the tongue all communication with our fellow men is carried on. The tongue is big enough to communicate any thought we might have. Unfortunately many of our thoughts provoke others to commit terrible deeds. So the size is insignificant to the damage it can do.

### **and boasts great things.**

But it has the ability to boast of great things. There are two ways to take this phrase. The first is to see it as the tongues ability to boast and brag about things. The second is to describe the tongue itself as something that has the ability to accomplish great things. Since it is in the active, the former is the more logical approach, but we can still weave in the second meaning, but understanding that it is not just an idle boast. The tongue does tend to idly boast of great things, but the fearful reality of the tongue is that it makes such idle boasting possible.

“*megalaucheo*... to be grandiloquent; to boast great things, to bear one’s self loftily in speech or action... Jas 3:5 where it seems to denote any kind of haughty language which wounds and provokes others, and stirs up strife...” (Thayer, 394; 3166)

“*aucheo*... prop. to lift up the neck, hence, to boast...” (Thayer, 87; 5665)

## See how great a forest a little fire kindles!

James begins with something to draw attention to what he is about to say.

*idou, ide, age (ah-gey)*: prompters of attention, which serve also to emphasize the following statement - 'look, listen, pay attention, come now, then.' (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:2400)

Behold! Look! Pay Attention! Would be the best translations of the term. This is very important so James wants us to behold it. The reality is that the greatest forest fire in the world that might devastate hundreds of square miles can begin with the tiniest of sparks that caused it to ignite. The same term is used to describe both "how great" and "how small."

*helikos* ... primarily denotes "as big as, as old as" (akin to *helikia*, "an age"); then, as an indirect interrogation, "what, what size, how great, how small" (the context determines the meaning), said of a spiritual conflict, Col 2:1, KJV, "what great (conflict) I have"; RV, "how greatly (I strive)"; of much wood as kindled by a little fire, James 3:5 (twice in the best mss.), "how much (wood is kindled by) how small (a fire)..." (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT: 2245)

## 6 And the tongue is a fire,

The tongue is a fire. Note that James does not say it is like a fire, but it is a fire. God created some elements to be stable and fixed. No matter what force we exert on it, we cannot change it into a different substance. Rocks, metals, soil, water and other elements cannot be changed. Other elements like wood, coal, oil, gas are all designed by God to change form and in the process they create fire.

"Fire is the visible effect of the process of combustion – a special type of chemical reaction. A process in which one or more substances are changed into different substances. It occurs between oxygen in the air and some sort of fuel. The products from the chemical reaction are completely different from the starting material."

The spark can do nothing among the elements that are not subject to combustion, but the lower the threshold of combustion, the more perilous and dangerous that spark becomes.

How then can the tongue be a fire. Many of the emotions of the human race are combustible. They are unstable and capable of igniting and changing into another form. Love is not a stable emotion and the tongue can ignite a fire that changes it to hate by creating strife and bitterness.

The more we understand about the fire in a forest the better we will see the terrible power of our tongue. The Holy Spirit revealed "*the tongue is a fire*" (Jas. 3:6). Note: *It is not like a fire, THE TONGUE IS A FIRE!* The tongue has the same nature and ability as fire.

Think about the similarities. First, the tongue does the same things to emotions and attitudes as fire does to wood. Words formed by the tongue exert a powerful force on the mind both for good or for destruction. Our tongue can warm the hearts of our friends and family. We can enlighten minds, comfort souls, inspire with enthusiasm, train in wisdom, and "*reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching*" (2Tim. 4:2). Words are a powerful source for good and the tongue make these words possible. Even our "*faith comes by hearing*" (Rom. 10:17)

Second, like a forest, a pure heart made in the image and likeness of God is a place of peace and serenity. Words spoken wisely work as a controlled fire bringing warmth and pleasure. Words of folly can create an uncontrolled fire. The tongue can apply energy to the heart and soul as a "*little fire*" does to a forest. Through an angry outburst or bitter words, the love and trust of another can be turned to hatred, jealousy, or strife with explosive power!

*Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, 19 Is the man who deceives his neighbor, And says, "I was only joking!" 20 Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases. 21 As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife. 22 The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, And they go down into the inmost body. 23 Fervent lips with a wicked heart Are like earthenware covered with silver dross. 24 He who hates, disguises it with his lips, And lays up deceit within himself; 25 When he speaks kindly, do not*

*believe him, For there are seven abominations in his heart; 26 Though his hatred is covered by deceit, His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly. Prov 26:18-26*

*A perverse man spreads strife, and a slanderer separates intimate friends. Pr. 16:28*

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit. 18:21*

All the woe in our world came through the tongue. Satan used the tongue of the serpent to create the fire of lust and deception that led to the murder of Adam and Eve and the destruction of our home in Eden.

*You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. Jn. 8:44*

All the fire in the world today was started by that lie of the serpent in the garden. Soon those who are His children used the tongue to accomplish the same things. With the tongue people deceive, tempt, seduce, and provoke. Through the tongue people sow discord with slander, gossip, and lies. Often these fires smolder in the emotions, slowly eating away the good and leaving behind the ashes of vengeance or the emptiness of bitter despair. Sometimes they explode in blind rage that sweeps away all in its path. Our words possess a wonderful and terrible power over those who love and trust us. If we are careless we can create a lifetime of grief and sorrow.

*“Angry words lightly spoken, Bitter thoughts rashly stirred, Brightest links of life broken, by a single angry word” (#394).*

### **a world of iniquity.**

Not only does the tongue have the power to start emotional and spiritual fires that can rage across continents, but it also can imitate “*the world of iniquity.*” The term “*world*” is a very comprehensive is the Greek term translate a “cosmos of iniquity” emphasizing the most basic and comprehensive meaning of the term “*world.*”

*“kosmos... 1... an apt and harmonious arrangement or constitution, order... 2. ornament, decoration, adornment... 3. the world, i.e. the universe... 4. the circle of the earth, the earth... 5. the inhabitants of the world... particularly the inhabitants of the earth, men, the human race... 6. the ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ... 7. worldly affairs; the aggregate of things earthly; the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments, riches, advantages, pleasures, etc., which, although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ...” (Thayer p 356-357; 2889)*

The Greeks chose this world not simply for the world — earth, but the world — universe. The tongue does the same thing with iniquity that the universe does for matter. It holds and contains it all. Just as the universe contains and holds all matter and all physical things, so also the tongue can hold all iniquity. In this respect, James is using the term just as John did.

*Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and {also} its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever. 1Jn. 2:15-17*

The tongue represents every form of evil. There is no sin that the tongue can not participate in or set up or introduce. Every form of evil known to man is open to the tongue. Just as the physical world contains everything that man can see, touch, taste, hear and smell, so also the world of iniquity is within the reach of the tongue.

*“adikia,...1. injustice, of a judge... 2. unrighteousness of heart and life... 3. a deed violating law and justice, act of unrighteousness...” (Thayer, p. 12; 93)*

*adikia ... denotes “unrighteousness,” lit., “unrightness” (a, negative, dike, “right”), a condition of not being right, whether with God, according to the standard of His holiness and righteousness, or with man, according to the standard of what man knows to be right by his conscience. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:93)*

The tongue can do it all. Any act of injustice, unrighteousness or unfairness is under the power of the tongue. Whatever the mind can plan the tongue can set into motion. Whatever iniquity might be found in anyone's heart, all the lusts of the flesh and eyes, and all the pride of life is the world of iniquity that fills the hearts of each of us.

Jesus was very strong on these things while He was working on the earth. He told the pharisees that it was impossible for anything good to come out of their mouths, because the tongue in their mouth was a reflection of what was in their heart. Since their heart was evil, and "*out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks,*" whatever evil it contained would sooner or later be spoken by the tongue.

*Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Mt. 12:34-37*

He was even stronger after the Pharisees had accused His disciples of being sinners because they did not wash their hands while they were rubbing the grain and eating it. After condemning all their traditions, Jesus went on to reveal that it is not what might go into the mouth that could defile him, but the tongue that was already in the mouth as it broadcast all the iniquities that were in the heart seeking a path out into the world. It is the tongue that can bring to life any wickedness or evil that the heart might conceive.

*When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear and understand: 11 Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." ... 15 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Explain this parable to us." 16 So Jesus said, "Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man." Mt. 15:10-20*

As the Holy Spirit described the various uses of the tongue, he spoke of their mouths being like an open tomb. He described deceit, poison, cursing and bitterness.

*As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one." 13 "Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." Rom 3:10-14*

We don't have to look any further than one of the first uses of the tongue by the serpent in the garden. Through his words the entire world of iniquity started.

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" ... 4 And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Gen 3:1,4-5*

So many others have been destroyed by the lying and deceitful tongue. One of the songs of Israel laments the terrible power of the tongue to enhance the world of iniquity through deceit.

*Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue. Ps 120:2*

Of the seven abominations God speaks of in the proverbs three of them are directly applied to the tongue.

*16 These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, **A lying tongue**, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 **A false witness who speaks lies**, And **one who sows discord among brethren**. Pr. 6:16-19*

The seductress uses her tongue to seduce the simple and destroy them.

*For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life, 24 To keep you from the evil woman, **From the flattering tongue of a seductress.** Pr. 6:23-24*

***With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, With her flattering lips she seduced him. 22 Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, 23 Till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, He did not know it would cost his life. Pr. 7:21-23***

### **The tongue is so set among our members**

At the creation, God placed the tongue in our bodies to be able to accomplish great things. The tongue can warm the heart of the weak and discouraged. It can bring love and joy to those we love, it can bring instruction to the weak and rebuke to the wayward. The tongue has a great power for good. But by placing it in such a way, when the curse entered the world through the sin of Adam and Eve, now the tongue holds a sinister and terrible power. Among all our members this is how the tongue had been “set.”

*“kathistemi... (prop. to set down, put down), to set, place, put: a. ... to set one over a thing (in charge of it)... b. to appoint one to administer an office... c. to set down as, constitute... i. q. to declare, show to be... d. to constitute... i. q. to render, make, cause to be... e. to conduct or bring to a certain place... f. Mid. to show or exhibit one’s self; come forward as:...” (Thayer, p. 314)*

From the above definition, one can see that this is a broad term. It could mean that God appointed the tongue to an office, or He “rendered, made, and caused it to be.” Both ideas fit the context. In the midst of all (*en* - “in the interior of some whole, within the limits of some space”) our members, God has appointed the tongue in the midst of all the members of the human body to do great and lasting good. Yet, because of the curse that darkened the hearts, the tongue was also darkened. With the same zeal that we keep our hearts with all diligence because out of it are the issues of life, so also the tongue is the direct link and window into that heart. Just as all the good that could have been done by the tongue was linked to the heart, so now all the evil that is linked to the heart is also directly linked to the tongue. There is no other member that conveys the thoughts and intents of the heart as our tongue. Yet often in a moment of inattentiveness, the tongue can set into motion things that we never wish had gone that far.

### **that it defiles the whole body,**

It has the ability to defile the whole body. It often does so. When vile and filthy things are discussed, it spills over onto the whole person. When ungodly things are discussed, it defiles the entire body. There is no way to separate the two. When one speaks evil they are evil. The tongue is so set that nearly every sin we commit begins with it.

*“spiloo.. to cause a spot or stain upon something - ‘to spot, to stain.’ (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domain. NT:4695)*

The tongue can do to the whole body what a dye can do to a garment. It can stain and spot it to such a degree that it is no longer useful for anything because it has been defiled. Perhaps the spot not only has color to the eyes, but a vile smell to the nose and a terrible sensation to the skin that comes into contact with it. So the stench, itchiness, and vile sights of what the tongue can produce can bring the whole body into play. Thus Judas words to the High Priests and subsequent actions based on them stained and destroyed the entire life of Judas. So also the angry words of Moses defiled him to the degree that God would not longer allow him to enter the promised land. Truly to tongue must be bridled lest it do such terrible damage to us as well.

### **sets on fire the course of nature;**

This is one of the biggest statements in the Scriptures. About the destructive power that God gave to man when he set the tongue as He did in our members. We see this so clearly when we see how Satan used the tongue of the serpent to set everything on “fire.”

*“phlogizo... to ignite, set on fire... to burn up... in fig. disc. to operate, destructively, have a most*

pernicious power, Jas. 3:6; in the pass. of that in which the destructive influences are kindled...” (Thayer, 655; 5394)

God had told Adam and Eve about the fruit in the midst of the garden. Satan used the tongue of the serpent to set on fire the course of all the lives of all the people who will ever live. Even if no other words had been spoken, this would be true, but all of us have added to this. What Satan started has been greatly intensified with all the other words we have added to it.

“*trochos*... (a figurative extension of meaning of *trochos*) a ‘wheel,’ not occurring in the NT) an ordered series of events, involving repeated patterns - ‘course, pattern.’ (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domain. NT 5164)

The Holy Spirit was not simply speaking of the initial setting on fire, but the course or wheel of nature that began spinning for each of us at birth. For this is the “*wheel of nature*.” The term “nature” is the Greek “*genesis*”

*genesis*... In secular Greek, esp. in Plato, *genesis* is attested in the sense of *origin* and *beginning*, in contrast to *phthora* φθορά (dissolution); and in the sense of *becoming*, in contrast to οὐσίαφ (being) and what has come into being, or creation (κόσμος). It is also used in temporal contexts for *lineage* and *descent*. (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament NT:1078)

רֵאשִׁיט: *re’shiyth* ... **A noun meaning the beginning, the first, the chief, the best, the firstfruits. Occurring fifty-one times in the Old Testament, this term holds the honor of being the first word written in the entire Bible (Gen 1:1). Often, the term denotes the point in time or space at which something started, except when it specifies the point when time and space themselves were started (Isa 46:10). It conveys the beginning of strife (Prov 17:14); of a ruler’s reign (Jer 26:1,27:1; 28:1; 49:34); of a sin (Mic 1:13); of a kingdom (Gen 10:10); or of wisdom and knowledge (Ps 111:10; Prov 1:7). (Complete Word Study Dictionary: OT:7225**

Because of the technical definition of this term, I felt it best to look at not only the Greek term, but also the Hebrew term it originally translated. It is a term used throughout the Old Testament to describe first the initial beginning, but later all the other beginnings. Thus the wheel of nature is the wheel of beginnings, every beginning comes through this wheel, and at ever step along the way the tongue is there, starting fires and creating chaos.

The “*wheel of nature*” spins throughout our life and then begins spinning for the next generation. This course of life ever repeats itself in a never ending cycle referred to in Ecclesiastes. The sun rises and sets for each day, the wind moves from the south to the north, the rain comes to the mountain but ends in the sea and then returns again, what has been is what will be and what has been done is what will be done.

*One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever. 5 The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, And hastens to the place where it arose. 6 The wind goes toward the south, And turns around to the north; The wind whirls about continually, And comes again on its circuit. 7 All the rivers run into the sea, Yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, There they return again. 8 All things are full of labor; Man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor the ear filled with hearing. 9 That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun. 10 Is there anything of which it may be said, “See, this is new”? It has already been in ancient times before us. 11 There is no remembrance of former things, Nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come By those who will come after. Ecc 1:4-11*

In all these things, God reveals to us that life works like a wheel, with life being an ordered series of events that doesn’t vary for anyone. There are “repeated patterns” that every human being is involved in and at the center of it lies the tongue.

The tongue sets this on fire. So many raging fires have been begun with the tongue. How many laws of God have been broken that first began with the tongue. How many thefts, adulteries, etc began with the tongue. The tongue is such a dangerous thing. All false doctrine is taught with it, all hurt feelings are perpetuated with it, all terrible acts of man are brought about with it. It is an amazing thing. But the Spirit does not stop there. It goes much deeper than this.

## and it is set on fire by hell.

What is the source of this terrible fire? This powerful energy that destroys so much? Jesus points back to the heart.

*“But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. Mt. 15:18*

James goes back even further. Since it did not come from God where did it come from? Did it originate with man? Or, is it's source further back than this? Though the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, James is able to take us back to a source we would never otherwise have suspected. James repeats “set on fire” from the previous verse. It is “*ignited*” and , “*set on fire,*” by (“*hupo... prep. under... of the efficient cause, as that under the power of which an event is conceived of as being.*”

The “*efficient cause:* originates in Hell. Obviously this is something only the Holy Spirit would know and we cannot really do much with it except try to understand the nature of this fire.

The term Hell is etymologically: “a ‘hidden place.’ It goes back ultimately to Indo-European \**kel-*cover, hide” It is the English translation of the Hebrew word “*hinnom*” which was transliterated into Greek with the word *gehenna*.”

*geenna ... represents the Hebrew Ge-Hinnom (the valley of Tophet) and a corresponding Aramaic word; it is found twelve times in the NT, eleven of which are in the Synoptists, in every instance as uttered by the Lord Himself. (from Vine’s 1067)*

*And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech. 2Kings 23:10*

***And go out to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the Potsherd Gate; and proclaim there the words that I will tell you, 3 and say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will bring such a catastrophe on this place, that whoever hears of it, his ears will tingle. 4 “Because they have forsaken Me and made this an alien place, because they have burned incense in it to other gods whom neither they, their fathers, nor the kings of Judah have known, and have filled this place with the blood of the innocents Jer. 19:2-4***

By the time of Jesus, this valley had become the very thing God had foretold. Then it was called *gehenna*, which is the Greek rendering of this valley. It is the name we use translate “*hell*.”

*Gehenna, the name of a valley on the south and east of Jerusalem ... which was so called from the cries of the little children who were thrown into the fiery arms of Moloch (which see), i. e. of an idol having the form of a bull. The Jews so abhorred the place after these horrible sacrifices had been abolished by king Josiah (2 Kings 23:10), that they cast into it not only all manner of refuse, but even the dead bodies of animals and of unburied criminals who had been executed. And since fires were always needed to consume the dead bodies, that the air might not become tainted by the putrefaction, it came to pass that the place was called *gehenna* of fire., (Thayer ‘s Greek Lexicon)*

Jesus took this term and built upon it. All the disgust and evil that people thought of with the term *gehenna* Jesus took and then added the spiritual components that made it closer to the reality of what it truly is.

*43 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, **to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched** ... 47And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, **to be cast into hell fire — ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ Mk. 9:43-49***

*“And the **axe is already laid at the root** of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and **thrown into the fire.** Mt. 3:10*

*“And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will **burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**” Mt. 3:12*

*but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into **the outer darkness;** in that place there shall be **weeping and gnashing of teeth.**” Mt. 8:12*

*“Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and **burned with fire**, so shall it be at the end of the age. “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into **the furnace of fire**; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Mt. 13:40-42*

*and will cast them into **the furnace of fire**; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Mt. 13:50*

*“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into **the eternal fire** which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; Mt. 25:41*

*when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, **8 in flaming fire taking vengeance** on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 2Th. 1:7-9***

*But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of **judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 2Pet. 3:7***

*And the devil who deceived them was thrown into **the lake of fire and brimstone**, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be **tormented day and night forever and ever. ...** And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, **the lake of fire**. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the **lake of fire. Rev. 20:10,14-15***

*“But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in **the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.**” Rev. 21:8*

This is the terrible description Jesus and the Spirit give us of the terrible fire of Hell. As we ponder these things, I think the purpose is served. We may never know all that is involved in how the first of nature that was started by the tongue is set of fire by hell, but it is a fearful and awesome statement that ought to fill us dread and concern over how we use our tongue that we never start any of these fires ourselves, and that if we do, we will seek to the very best of our ability to put them out.

## **7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.**

The cunning nature of some animals has led to a deserved reputation of fear and dread. Poisonous serpents, falcons and killer whales on the one hand, lions, tigers, bears and elephants on the other are just a few of the animals that can create a visceral and nearly uncontrollable reaction when we see them in the wild. They can bring death and have brought death. Because of this fear, when one of them is tamed, and made safe, we are amazed! Taming such animals is a big business. Aquariums tame dolphins and killer whales, circuses tame lions, tigers, bears and elephants, and side shows tame and charm poisonous serpents. It is always something worth seeing when a wild and ferocious animal is changed into a docile pet. Man has always had and used this ability.

This passage reveals that the the dominion God gave man in the creation the animals were created in such a way that they have the ability to be tamed.

*Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Gen 1:26-28*

Although man lost much of the dominion when he transgressed God’s command and brought the curse into the world, there is still enough power that no matter how terrible their ability to harm man might be, if they can be captured young enough and handled skillfully, the instinct that leads them to be dangerous can be modified by a skillful man. This is universal! There is no “*beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea*” that cannot be tamed or even in that day had not been tamed by

man.

This is what makes the contrast so fearful. The deadly poisons of serpents do terrible things to the human body. Some block nerve transmission, others interfere with the beating rhythm of the heart, some break down muscle tissue or cause blood vessels to suddenly become leaky and the victim bleeds to death. They are gruesome deaths. Lions, leopards, tigers, cougars, rip and tear the flesh, killing in a few moments. Elephants, crush and gore hippos, bite and crush, alligators and crocodiles drag into the water and drown. Gruesome, fearsome and terrible are the deaths these wild animals can inflict and so we rightfully fear them. It is amazing to see them tamed and docile, yet we know that the danger still remains. No one should ever be comfortable when the stand before or beside them because of what they are capable of doing.

## **8 But no man can tame the tongue**

What makes the tongue so fearsome is that no one can tame their own tongue. Since the beginning some of the greatest men have sought to tame their tongue, but no one has ever been able to do it. As noted above, one would have to be a perfect individual to be able to do it and since no one every has, it is very obvious at this point that no one ever will. The point again is one of emphasis. We need to fear the tongue. We need to be so careful with it. If there is any doubt about what we are about to say, we should just not say it.

Man's fall into sin led to much more serious consequences than the animals becoming ferocious and snakes being given venom and fangs. With the knowledge of good and evil, came a grave and deadly spiritual poison that the tongue passes from mind to mind. When we compare the damage the tongue does to the soul with the damage a viper's venom does to the body, we comprehend the truth God reveals to us here. There are two types of deadly poison in the fangs of serpents. One causes a complete shutdown of the nervous system, that leads to paralysis and the inability of the heart to beat and the lungs to breath. The other attacks blood vessels, causing them to rupture and leading to the victim's bleeding to death. These deaths are so agonizing and frightening that we flee this deadly enemy before it can strike.

### **It is an unruly / restless evil**

The term restless is defined:

*"akatastatos... unstable, inconstant, restless..."* (Thayer, 22; 182)

*"akatastatos* "unsettled, unstable, disorderly" (*a*, negative, *kathistemi*, "to set in order"), is translated "unstable" in James 1:8; "restless" in 3:8, RV [in the latter, the KJV "unruly" represents the word *akataschetos*, signifying "that cannot be restrained" (*a*, negative, *katecho*, "to hold down, restrain") (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT 182)

This is what we find so frightening about animals in the wild. They are not to be trusted. They might walk away and they might charge, strike and kill. Yet this term goes a little further as it would also be water in a storm, or the violent winds in a tornado. They just can't be controlled and set in order. They are unstable, and inconstant. One moment they are save and the next they are fatal. This is what our tongues are capable of performing.

The biggest part of the problem centers on the instability of our own emotions and the unstable nature of the heart that controls the tongue. We do not always feel the same way and therefore our communications with others are not always the same. We become angry, jealous, or bitter with another and we pass that feeling from our mind to another with the tongue. Later we may completely change our minds about what we said, but we cannot erase the damage done. God's advice is that we bridle and contain it. At any moment the tongue can still blurt out something that causes irreparable harm. Unmeant, unthought of, yet causing such great pain and sorrow to those we love.

This is what makes it "evil."

*"kakos... bad* 1. univ. of a bad nature; not such as it ought to be. 2. [morally, i.e.] of a mode of thinking, feeling, acting; base, wrong, wicked:... neut. *kakon*, TO evil i.e. what is contrary to law, either divine

or human, *wrong, crime... spec. of wrongs inflicted... 3. troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive, baneful...* (Thayer, p. 320; 2556)

There are multitudes of things to fear in the tongue. It seduces to evil by sharing evil experiences in a palatable way. The evil companionship that corrupts good morals so often uses the tongue to convince the weak to follow. Lies and deceit, sowing discord, giving false witness, and the anguish of angry words upon the heart of a loved one are all examples of the deadly poison of the tongue. Through false teaching and lies men and women have been led into sin. Once sharpened and filled with evil, men have done terrible things to others:

*A perverse man spreads strife, and a slanderer separates intimate friends. 29 A man of violence entices his neighbor, and leads him in a way that is not good. ... 28 A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth works ruin. Pr. 16:28-29; 26:28*

### **full of deadly poison.**

Like the serpent, the tongue has the ability to inject deadly poison into the mind of another. We see this so clearly in the garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve were living a sinless life of service to God before the serpent came and injected the thoughts of rebellion and sinful lusts into her heart. Multitudes have followed in his steps since that day. Along with the tongue being a fire, it also has access to deadly poison.

*thanatephoros* lit., “death-bearing, deadly” (*thanatos*, “death,” *phero*, “to bear”), is used in James 3:8. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:2287)

“*thanatephoros...* (*thanatos* and *phero*), *death-bringing, deadly...*” (Thayer, 282; 2287)

The tongue has access to death bearing poison.

“*ios* ... denotes “something active” as (a) “rust,” as acting on metals, affecting their nature, James 5:3; (b) “poison,” as of asps, acting destructively on living tissues, figuratively of the evil use of the lips as the organs of speech, Rom 3:13; so of the tongue, James 3:8. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:2447)

As noted above the poison of serpents that brings death are of two varieties. One affecting the central nervous system and slowly lowering the body functions of the heart, lungs, and brain until death occurs. The other injects a substance that destroys the integrity of the tissues and leading to death. The tongue also has this ability. It can inject terrible emotions into the hearts through lies and slander. Separating the best of friends and doing irreparable harm to faith and devotion to God. We see this with Job’s three friends who came to console, but ended up slandering and speaking terrible things that led Job to words he had never spoken before they arrived.

*They sharpen their tongues as a serpent; poison of a viper is under their lips. Selah. Ps 140:3*

“*Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit*”; “*The poison of asps is under their lips*”; 14 “*Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.*” Rom 3:13-14

*Hide me from the secret counsel of evildoers, from the tumult of those who do iniquity, Who have sharpened their tongue like a sword. They aimed bitter speech as their arrow, Ps 64:2-3*

*Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue. Ps 120:2*

*Your tongue devises destruction, like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit... 4 You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue. Ps 52:2*

### **9 With it we bless our God and Father,**

The restless nature of the tongue is now illustrated. In one breath we can offer a prayer of thanksgiving and praise to our God. The highest possible use that the tongue could be employed to accomplish.

“*eulogeo* lit., to speak well of (*eu*, well, *logos*, a word), signifies, (a) to praise, to celebrate with praises, of that which is addressed to God, acknowledging His goodness, with desire for His glory, ... (b) to invoke blessings upon a person... (c) to consecrate a thing with solemn prayers, to ask God’s blessing on a thing... (d) to cause to prosper, to make happy, to bestow blessings on, ...” (Vine, Expository

Dictionary P. 132-133)

The tongue has been employed to sing beautiful words of song, to preach eloquent and moving sermons of praise and adoration and to offer up prayers of praise and thanksgiving. God has been praised, glorified, honored and worshipped with the tongue.

### **and with it we curse men who have been made in the similitude of God.**

Yet that same tongue on the same day can be used also to “curse” men:

*“kataraoimai... to curse, doom, imprecate evil on...” (Thayer, 336; 2672)*

*kat-araomai... to call down curses upon, imprecate upon, ... they pray that he may perish, ... to curse, execrate, ... 2. absol. to utter imprecations, ... 3. in passive sense, accursed, ...” (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:2672)*

These are the terrible words that we can hurl at our fellow men in moments of anger or bitterness. Words of disdain and derision on the one hand and words of cursing on the other.

*But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. Mt. 5:22-23*

*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, Mt. 5:44*

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Rom. 12:14-15*

Though they have been made in the image and likeness of God, and we have been forbidden by our God and our Lord against using our tongue in this way, still the inconsistency and restless nature of the tongue allows it to be misused and abused. This is another reason why we need to bridle and cage it.

### **10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing.**

James has finished his discourse on the tongue, but wants to leave us with these three thoughts. One is a direct statement of the inconsistency of this situation and then he offers two parables to strengthen the thought and leave us with these things to consider and contemplate.

First, how can the same mouth be used for two such polar opposite things? There should be consistency in the use of our tongues. If we are going to bless God then we should also bless men for we have been commanded to do so. The same mouth, in the same body with the same heart should not be producing two completely diverse things.

### **My brethren, these things ought not to be so.**

God’s people need to realize that the tongue is a part of the body that is to be used to the honor and glory of God just as the rest of our bodies. We were bought with a price and need to glorify God with all our body (I Cor 6:19-20). The tongue should not be employed in this manner.

*chre χρή ... it is fated, necessary, ... it must, must needs, one must or ought to do ... one must, one must needs, it behoves, befits one to ... to chrein (infinitive.) ... fate, destiny, ...” (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:5534)*

Such a thing ought never to happen and must not happen. It can’t happen in any part of the natural realm, but only in a perverted human heart.

### **11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening**

A fountain always puts forth good water, or it always puts forth bitter water. It doesn’t change from day to day. Neither should the tongue. The tongue should only be used to send forth sweet and wonderful words.

## 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs?

Again, trees are always consistent. Fig trees produce figs and never olives. Vines always produce grapes and never figs. Trees always produce what they were created and designed to produce.

### Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

This is also true of water. No one goes to the ocean or to the Dead Sea for a drink of water. If the water is salty, then everyone knows it is salty. They never think that they could go to that source of water and get something else from it.

The point he is making is that since the mouth is a prime source of spiritual truth for many people, it ought to be a pure source. Someone should not go to a teacher of the Word to hear that same tongue cursing another. The tongue needs to be bridled and carefully monitored. Those who teach the Word should be especially aware of this truth.

Jesus used this same figure twice in His ministry. Once for the words of the false prophets and once for the words of His disciples.

*“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Mt. 7:15-20*

*“For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. 44 For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. 45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. Lk. 6:43-45*

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## James 3:13-18

After James completes his discussion of the two different ways the tongue can be used, he follows the same basic theme with the wisdom and the knowledge that must first be in the heart before it can come out of the mouth. Since Jesus revealed that it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks, each disciple of Jesus must carefully assess the source of the wisdom that is guiding and directing the heart, which is guiding and directing the tongue. There are two distinct types of wisdom found within our heart. One came from the source Peter described several times in his letter:

*knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from **your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers**, 1Pet. 1:18*

*Therefore, **laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking**, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 1Pet. 2:1-2*

*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, **abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul**, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1Pet. 2:11-12*

*that he **no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God**. 3 **For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles** — when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. 4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. 1Pet. 4:2-4*

Before we became a Christian, we all learned the wisdom of this world. We gained much of our wisdom from the “aimless conduct” we received from by from our fathers. Sadly, it was a lesson in using the negative emotions of “malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking.” Others

learned all to well the wisdom of “*the fleshly lusts*” that “*now make war against our soul.*” We also learned how to best to utilize the wisdom and knowledge to accomplish those things from “*our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.*” This is a wisdom that must be destroyed, set aside and no longer used.

Paul also contrasts this wisdom as he warns the Corinthians of the grave danger it poses. There are two competing wisdom’s. There is the wisdom of this world that was created and designed by men and there is the wisdom that comes from God that leads to eternal life. Paul first speaks of the continuous problem the “pride of life” has caused God since the beginning of the creation. Satan used this faulty wisdom to tempt Eve to sin and it has continued to plague man ever since.

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.” 1Cor. 1:18-19*

No one can escape this and we must constantly be vigiaent against it. Paul urges all Christians to assess their wisdom. If it comes from this age, they must become foolish and this remove it from their lives and truly become wise.

*Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their own craftiness”; 20 and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.” 1Cor. 3:18-21*

Although awkward at first, we must learn a new set of wisdom that comes down from God. We must relearn all that we thought we knew and had become proficient at. We must learn the will of God as newborn babes, longing for the spiritual milk so we can grow.

While worldly people learn the wisdom they call sophistication, it is actually a wisdom that must be destroyed and removed. The Holy Spirit here asks us to assess the quality of this wisdom. Where did it come from, who does it serve?

### **13 Who is wise and understanding among you?**

He begins with a simple question designed to draw us out. This is one of the most important elements of self-esteem and feelings of importance. What we have gained that makes us proficient at things is certainly something we are all aware of. As this section begins, we would all answer in the affirmative in those areas that we are truly “wise.”

*“sophos... wise, i.e. a. skilled, expert... b. wise, i.e. skilled in letters, cultivated, learned... c. wise in a practical sense, i.e. one who in action is governed by piety and integrity: Eph 5:15; Jas. 3:13;... d. wise in a philosophic sense, forming the best plans and using the best means for their execution...” (Thayer, p. 582; 4680)*

*“sophos... properly, skilled in any handicraft or art, cunning in his craft, ... of a charioteer, Pind.; of poets and musicians, Id.; of a soothsayer, ... 2. clever in matters of common life, wise, prudent, shrewd, ... 3. skilled in the sciences, learned, profound, wise, II. passive, of things, cleverly devised, ...” (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:4680)*

*“sophos... pertaining to specialized knowledge resulting in the skill for accomplishing some purpose - ‘skillful, expert.’ ... a person of professional or semi-professional status who is regarded as particularly capable in understanding the philosophical aspects of knowledge and experience - ‘one who is wise, wise man.’ (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:4680)*

Who among you is a wise skilled expert in running your life? Who among you forms the best plans and uses the best means for their execution? Who among you finds that your life runs well because you have found the means to make things work? As you can see from all the definitions this is a very comprehensive term in the Greek speaking world. They used it of their own worldly wisdom and pursuits while God uses it of the same abilities except with His word and His will. Jesus had greater wisdom than all, but it was not a wisdom of this age.

The term “understanding” is closely aligned to wisdom except wisdom comes out in every day life in successful decisions while “understanding” is a blessing we are aware of as we make decisions. Some of our best decisions are never seen because they decisions made based on “*understanding*” that keeps us from making foolish choice that destroy otehrs.

“*epistemon... intelligent, experienced [esp. one having the knowledge of an expert;...]...*” (Thayer, p. 243; 1990)

“*epistemon ... knowing, wise, prudent, ... 2. acquainted with a thing, skilled or versed in, 3. infinitive. knowing how to do, II. possessed of perfect knowledge, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon NT 1990).*”

“*epistemon ... adjective from epístamai ... to know thoroughly, understand. Endued with knowledge, understanding, expertise (James 3:13; Sept.: Deut 1:13; 4:6), the equivalent to the Eng. “scientist.” ... Synonym gnostes ... one who knows, an expert. ... Antonym idotes ... a person without professional knowledge, an unskilled, unlearned person; ( Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT 1990)*”

This too is a philosophical and scientific term for those who have great knowledge insight and understanding. Both of these terms were very important to that culture and everyone sought something that would reveal that they too were among the enlightened and wise. Actually as we live our lives we all be come proficient in many things that could be called wisdom and understanding. So once again, James seeks to draw them out and get them to commit themselves.

### Let him show by his good conduct

God doesn’t want an affirmation, instead, he seeks a “demonstration.”

“*deiknuo... to show, exhibit; 1. prop. to show i. e. expose to the eyes... 2. metaph. ... to give evidence or proof of a thing ... b to show by words, to teach...*” (Thayer, p. 126-127; 1166)

*deiknumi or deiknuo ... to make known the character or significance of something by visual, auditory, gestural, or linguistic means - ‘to make known, to demonstrate, to show.’ ‘let him demonstrate his deeds by his good life’ James 3:13; (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT 1166)*

If you have developed such an experienced understanding of life, then you need to show and exhibit it. If it really exists, it can be exposed to the eyes, in a tangible and clear way. In some cases, it would be by visual or auditory methods, or even gesturing, but here, the wisdom James is seeking to be revealed can only be demonstrated by conduct or behaviour.

“*anastrophe... (fr. the pass. anastreophomai, see the preceding word\*), prop. `walk’ i. e. manner of life, behavior, conduct... Hence life in so far as it is comprised in conduct, ...*” (Thayer, p. 42; 391)

\*the preceding word is: “*anastrepho... 3. to turn hither and thither pass. reflexively, to turn one’s self about, sojourn, dwell... b. like the Hebr. ... to walk, of the manner of life and moral character, to conduct one’s self, behave one’s self, live... simply to conduct or behave one’s self, “walk” ...*” (Thayer, p. 42; 390)

*anastrophe to turn up, to move about. A turning about. In the NT, mode of life, conduct, behavior, deportment (Gal. 1:13; Eph. 4:22; 1Tim. 4:12; James 3:13; 1 Peter 2:7; 3:11); life, as made up of actions (Heb. 13:7; 1 Peter 1:15)....” (The Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:391)*

From the literal “turning hither and thither,” it came to mean what one does while they are “*turning hither and thither:*” Hence, manner of life, conduct or behavior. So this is the word that would be used to sum up the nature and quality of our life. Essentially, it is the entirety of the judgment day, where we will be judged by what we have done while moving hither and thither in this life.

Up to this point in the book, it would be demonstrated by:

The joy we have when falling into trials 1:-4	The wisdom we have prayed for and received 1:5
How the poor glory in their exaltation 1:9	How the rich glory in their humiliation. 1:10-11
How we endure trials 1:12	How we endure temptations to sin 1:13-15
Our understanding of the good gifts of God 1:17	Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath 1:19
Receiving with meekness the Word 1:21	Not a hearer only or a doer. 1:22-25

Bridling our tongue 1:26

Keeping ourselves unspotted from world 1:17

Fulfill the royal law of liberty 2:8

Show our faith by our works. 2:14-28

Visiting orphans and widows in affliction 1:27

Never show partiality and prejudice as Christians.2:1-7

Speak and do as those who will be judged 2:12

Control the tongue. 2:

This is all part of the behavior we can use to demonstrate that our wisdom and understanding are “good.”

“*kalos*... Sept for ... beautiful, but much oftener for ... good; *beautiful*, applied by the Greeks to everything so distinguished in form, excellence, goodness, usefulness, as to be *pleasing*; hence (acc. to the context) i.q. *beautiful, handsome, excellent, eminent, choice, surpassing, precious, useful, suitable, commendable, admirable*;... a. *beautiful to look at, shapely, magnificent*:... b. *good, excellent in its nature and characteristics, and therefore well-adapted to its ends*: ... c. *beautiful by reason of purity of heart and life, and hence praiseworthy; morally good, noble*... d. *honorable, conferring honor*...” (Thayer, p. 322).

When it has been validated and approved by the Holy Spirit as James has done thus far in the book, when our behavior comes from this wisdom and understanding, it is “*distinguished in form, excellence, goodness and usefulness as to be pleasing*.” The behavior and conduct of the wise and understanding Christian should be distinguished in

*form* (outward appearance *what is honorable, in the sight of men.*” 2 Cor 8:21),  
*excellence* (the outcome of the activities involved in),  
*goodness* (the quality of his life)  
*usefulness* (the value of his conduct to others).

In all these ways the outcome of our conduct ought to be pleasing and honorable in the sight of God and men. When this occurs, then all the other qualities described by this adjective will be produced. The behavior then becomes beautiful, excellent, eminent, choice, surpassing, precious, useful, commendable, admirable. The conduct is also excellent in its nature and characteristics, and therefore well-adapted to accomplish the goal.

### that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom

The term “*works*” is exactly the same term that James introduced in the previous chapter when he spoke of showing our faith by our “*works*” and that faith without such “*works*” is dead.

“*ergon*... 1. *business, employment, that with which anyone is occupied*... 2. *any product whatever, any thing accomplished by hand, art, industry, mind*... 3. *an act, deed, thing done*: ...” (Thayer, p. 248; 2041)

*ergon* ... *business*, 1. in ll. mostly of *deeds of war, to engage in battle*, ... 2. of *works of industry, tilled lands, fields, farms*, Hom.; the tilled lands of Ithaca, .... then, generally, *property, wealth, possessions*, ... b. of women’s work, *weaving*, c. of other occupations, *fishing*, as a way of life, Od.; ... also of all kinds of works, such as *mines, iron-works*, ... 3. a hard piece of work, a hard task, ... 4. a deed, action, often,... deed, not word...” (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon).

While behavior takes in the whole life, these works speak to each individual act. Every word, thought and deed is a part of what we produce. Whatever ones occupation, it is only the product at the end of the day that speaks of effort, toil, wisdom and diligence. We judge the farmer by the rows he has tilled, the woman’s weaving’s by their quality, the number of fish caught by the fishermen. In this case, the works of the Christian will be assessed by their quality of wisdom.

All the works, deeds that make up the quality of a life are done in the midst of (*en* - a preposition “in the interior of some whole,” “that with which a person is surrounded, equipped, furnished, assisted, or acts.”). Hence all the works must be in the midst of, surrounded by and assisted by “*meekness of wisdom*.” Each individual action we take should manifest these characteristics. If they are not there, then they are not good works.

Since this is not the first time this term is used in the book, we can easily see that James is building upon it.

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. Jas. 1:21

If we truly have “received with meekness” the engrafted word, then meekness will be the defining characteristic of all our wisdom. Since the definition warns us that there is no English word that can really capture the essence of the term, and since it has such a prominent role in the life of a Christian, it will be wise to take a some time to really seek to understand what it really means. As we look at how it is translated in the New Testament, we get a composite idea of the term.

### Uses of the term “meek” in the NT (Adjective & Noun)

Blessed are the **meek**, For they shall inherit the earth. Mt. 5:5

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am **gentle** and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Mt. 11:29-30

“Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, **Lowly**, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’” Mt. 21:5

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, **gentleness**. 1Tim. 6:11-12

rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a **gentle** and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. 1Pet. 3:4-5

What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of **gentleness**? 1Cor. 4:21

Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the **meekness** and gentleness of Christ 2Cor. 10:1

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of **gentleness**, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Gal. 6:1-2

4 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and **gentleness**, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Eph. 4:1-3

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, **meekness**, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. Col. 3:12-15

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in **humility** correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 2Tim. 2:24-26

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all **humility** to all men. Titus 3:1-3

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with **meekness** the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. Jes. 1:21

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the **meekness** of wisdom. Jas. 3:13-14

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with **meekness** and fear; 1Pet. 3:15-16

Yet as we go through the various ways our translators chose to translate this word, we see the terms “**meek**,” “**lowly**,” “**gentle**,” “**gentleness**,” “**humility**” and “**meekness**.” Yet since most of them are in the context of other vocabulary words, it is hard to pinpoint exactly what the term itself means. A look at the definition is helpful, but also problematic. Since it can’t be readily expressed in English, we have to be prepared to roll up our sleeves and be ready to do some work.

Coming out of strength meekness is a choice that can never be forced upon us. We choose to respond gently, humbly, and lowly. We are always ready to take the second place. It appears to be the real reason why we can turn the other cheek and go the second, and accept being treated wrongly. We realize that we are not the important part of any equation. God and His will always take precedence over all activities. Whether we come out ahead or behind should not be the issue at all.

The meaning of “*prautes*” is **not readily expressed in English**, for the terms **meekness, mildness**, commonly used, **suggest weakness** to a greater or less extent, whereas “*prautes*” **does nothing of the kind. It must be clearly understood**, therefore, that the common assumption is that when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself; but **the Lord was ‘meek’ because he had the infinite resources of God at His command** Described negatively, **meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest**; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because **it is not occupied with self at all**. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary)

This second definition has two basic components. The first is the mild and gentle friendliness that is always ready to be kind and gentle regardless of the circumstances. We may be being mistreated and wronged, but because God has willed to put us in that situation we take it just as Jesus did. It is the ability to control the anger and not use the anger unless anger is warranted. Moses was called the meekest man in all the earth (Num. 12:3), after Miriam and Aaron spoke against him and he did not respond, but left it to God.

“*prautes*... **“mild and gentle friendliness,”**... the **opposite of roughness ...bad temper, or sudden anger/brusqueness...** Among the Greeks “gentle friendliness” is highly prized as a social virtue in human relationships... The systematic thinker Aristotle places *praotes* as... a mean between “*orgilotes*” (“anger,” “bad temper”) and the spineless incompetence of “*aorgesia*” ... (Kittel, Vol 6 p 645-646)

It is also helpful to see the two extremes James will give regarding the quality of wisdom “*meekness*” will bring to us. It leads away from “*the wisdom that does not descend from above*” and instead leads us to the “*wisdom that comes from above*.”

### Meekness of Wisdom

#### Does Not Possess

Bitter Envy  
 Self - Seeking  
 Boasting; Lying against the Truth  
 This Wisdom is Not From above  
 Earthly, Sensual, Demonic

#### Possesses

Pure Peaceable Gentle  
 Willing to yield; full of mercy  
 Without Partiality; Without Hypocrisy  
 This Wisdom is from Above

*But if you have **bitter envy and self-seeking** in your hearts, do not **boast and lie against the truth**. 15 This **wisdom does not descend from above**, but is **earthly, sensual, demonic**. 16 For where **envy and self-seeking** exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 17 But **the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy**. James 3:14-18*

The Greek term “*wisdom*” is an adjective while the term above was a noun, but there isn’t much difference in meaning.

“*sophia*... *wisdom, broad and full intelligence*,... used of the knowledge of very diverse matters, so that the shade of meaning in which the word is taken must be discovered from the context in every particular case... a. the wisdom which belongs to men... the varied knowledge of things human and divine, acquired by acuteness and experience... an acquaintance with divine things and human duties, joined to a power of discoursing concerning them and interpreting and applying sacred Scripture... b. *supreme intelligence*, such as belongs to God... also to Christ, exalted to God’s right hand... the wisdom of God as evinced in forming and executing his counsels...” (Thayer, p. 581-582 #4678)

Although the definitions are similar, the context is very different. In the first use, the context is broad enough for both the wisdom of men and the wisdom of God. This “*meekness of wisdom*” is only the wisdom from

above that can only be gained through the Scriptures. This is the wisdom of the Proverbs, the wisdom that only comes by following His counsel.

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; 8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; Ps. 19:7-8

#### **14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts**

“*Bitter envy*” and “*self-seeking*” would be taking us in exactly the wrong direction. Regardless of how wise we have become in such a realm, we need to take Paul’s advice and become a fool so we could start over again and by starting from the beginning but this time moving in the right direction actually gain true wisdom. If there is any bitter envy in our “wisdom,” we have a very serious problem. The greatest blight that could even begin in the church will start with these two emotions.

The Scriptures teach that the church and the home are both to work for the good of all. Everything good that happens to one happens to all.

*But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 1 Cor 12:20-26*

These two emotions destroy this very heart and rip the very fabric of the purpose of the church. When someone who is self-seeking filled with bitter envy enters the church, the exact opposite of what should be happening will begin. Since these emotions are so destructive, they must be identified and dealt with as quickly as possible. When all other members exist to serve and be a blessing to one another and someone enters in who only wants to use them for their own ends, terrible things can happen. Often those without this terrible malady can’t believe that it could exist in another and while they continue to try and help, irreparable damage can occur.

The Greek term translated “*envy*” has both a good and a bad sense in the NT. Here the adjective “*bitter*” reveals that this is only the bad sense.

***zelos* is a *meson*, (middle), being used sometimes in a good (as John 2:17; Rom 10:2; 2 Cor 9:2), sometimes, and in Scripture oftener, in an evil sense (as Acts 5:17; Rom 13:13; Gal 5:20; James 3:14, in which last place, to make quite clear what *zelos* is meant, it is qualified by the addition of *pikros*, and is linked with *eritheia*. ... When *zelos* is taken in good part, it signifies the honorable emulation, with the consequent imitation, of that which presents itself to the mind’s eye as excellent: By Aristotle *zelos* is employed exclusively in this nobler sense, as that active emulation which grieves, not that another has the good, but that itself has it not; and which, not pausing here, seeks to supply the deficiencies which it finds in itself. From this point of view he contrasts it with envy ... But it is only too easy for this zeal and honorable rivalry to degenerate into a meaner passion; ... These degeneracies which wait so near upon emulation, and which sometimes cause the word itself to be used for that into which it degenerates (‘pale and bloodless emulation,’ Shakespeare), may assume two shapes: either that of a desire to make war upon the good which it beholds in another, and thus to trouble that good, and make it less; therefore we find *zelos* and *eris* continually joined together (Rom 13:13; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20; ... or, where there is not vigour and energy enough to attempt the making of it less, there may be at least the wishing of it less; with such petty carping and fault-finding as it may dare to indulge in—”** (Trench, Synonyms of the NT: 2205)

What begins as an understanding that there are in others things that are worthy of imitation, when it finds that it cannot attain it, will sour and fester into an envy that no longer wants to life oneself, but to tear down what one sees as being better in another. In this way the good qualities of elders can be resented and despised in the hearts of those who cannot attain to it. Instead they resort to murmuring and complaining. This appears to be what happened to Korah.

Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; 2 and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. 3 **They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?** Num. 16:1-3

Then Moses said to Korah, Hear now, you sons of Levi: 9 **Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to serve them;** 10 and that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? **And are you seeking the priesthood also?** Num. 16:8-10

Then Moses said: By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will. 29 If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. 30 But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, **then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD.** Num. 16:28-30

Even Pilate understood that the Jews who were delivering Jesus to him had this terrible and sinister motive. But they had already worked their evil work and had stirred up the crowds against Jesus with their slander and lies.

Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. 9 But Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" 10 **For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.** 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. 12 Pilate answered and said to them again, "What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?" 13 So they cried out again, "Crucify Him!" 14 Then Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, "Crucify Him!" Mk 15:8-14

Peter later charged them for exactly what their bitter envy had led them to do.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom **you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. 14 But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and killed the Prince of life,** Acts 3:13-15

This is what envy will always do. It leads to terrible words and deeds. As it descends further and further, the worst qualities come out and it becomes "bitter."

"pikros... fr. r. meaning 'to cut,' 'prick,'...] ... bitter prop. ... metaph. harsh, virulent..." (Thayer, p. 509; 4089)

*pikrós* ... originally means "pointed," "sharp" (e.g., arrows), then "penetrating" (e.g., a smell), then "painful" (to the feelings), and "bitter" (to the taste). The sense of bitterness yields such transferred senses as "unpleasant," "unexpected," "painful," "severe," "cruel," "stern," "embittered." *pikría* has the meaning "severity" or "bitterness," *pikraínœ* means "to provoke," and the deponent *pikraínomai* means "to become angry, bitter." ... 4. The NT uses *pikrós* literally in James 3:11 for spring water which is bitter or brackish to the taste. The great star in Rev 8:11 makes the rivers and fountains bitter (*pikraínesthai*). In Rev 10:9-10 the divine finds the message of God bitter, i.e., painful to proclaim. *pikrós* is used for Peter's weeping in Matt 26:75; the adverb expresses his utter despair following the denial. In James 3:14 jealousy is bitter. Heb 12:15 quotes Deut 29:17 to show what harm the sin of an individual can do in the community. The OT association of poison and bitterness stands behind Peter's saying to Simon Magus in Acts 8:23. Rom 3:14 quotes Ps 10:7, and *pikría* heads a short list of vices in Eph 4:31 (in the sense of resentment). In Col 3:19 husbands are directed not to be harsh or angry with their wives. (Kittel, TDWNT NT:4089)

This would certainly fit what Korah did to Moses and the Sanhedrin did to Jesus. Their bitter jealousy led them to terrible deeds. Envy/jealousy is a fierce, indignant punitive zeal, making it more bitter harsh and virulent. It is a terrible emotion. It enters families, churches and countries and

destroys those who are its victims.

Those possessed by this bitter jealousy become very wise in its use. They know how to conceal it until just the right time to destroy the one to whom it is directed. If you have such feelings toward a teacher, preacher, elder, or member, you must remove it from your heart. It is not an emotion or ability you want to become wise in. It often leads to the next term.

### **and self-seeking in your hearts**

Self-seeking is a single Greek term.

*“eritheia, ... used of those who electioneer for office, courting popular applause by trickery and low arts... the verb is derived from erithos working for hire, a hireling... a mean, sordid fellow) electioneering or intriguing for office... hence apparently in the N. T. a courting distinction, a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and factious spirit which does not disdain low arts; partisanship, factiousness”* (Thayer, p. 249; 2052).

*erithia (or —eia) ... denotes “ambition, self-seeking, rivalry,” self-will being an underlying idea in the word; hence it denotes “party-making.” It is derived, not from eris, “strife,” but from erithos, “a hireling”; hence the meaning of “seeking to win followers,” “factions,” so rendered in the RV of 2 Cor 12:20, KJV, “strifes”; not improbably the meaning here is rivalries, or base ambitions (all the other words in the list express abstract ideas rather than factions); Gal 5:20 (ditto); Phil 1:17 (RV; KJV, v. 16, “contention”); 2:3 (KJV, “strife”); James 3:14,16 (ditto); in Rom 2:8 it is translated as an adjective, “factious” (KJV, “contentious”). The order “strife, jealousy, wrath, faction,” is the same in 2 Cor 12:20 and Gal 5:20. “Faction” is the fruit of jealousy. Cf. the synonymous adjective *hairetikos*, Titus 3:10, causing division (marg., “factious”), not necessarily “heretical,” in the sense of holding false doctrine. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:2052)*

*“eritheia, ... is found 7 times in the NT, only in the Epistles... 2. The origin of this rare word, which is attested before the NT only in Aristotle ... in the sense of selfish striving for advantage in a group, is obscure. Probably it is derived from eritheuo “be active as a laborer,” and not from eris a) In Phil 1:17 the proclaimers who are determined by self-interest are contrasted to those whose motivation is love (v. 16). eritheia can mean here only conduct determined by selfishness. This is also the case in 2:3, where self-interest and “conceit” are contrasted with humility. Christians who act in this way are concerned with their own well-being, not that of others (cf. v. 4). Rom 2:8 characterizes people who are determined by selfishness also as those who do not obey the truth, are compliant toward unrighteousness, and fall under judgment because they in their stubbornness and impenitent hearts store up for themselves wrath for the day of judgment (v. 5). ...”* (Balz, Horst; Schneider, Gerhard (Editors), Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament 2052)

If one closely examines and considers this definition carefully they will find pure selfishness to be the root. These are people whose lives are self-centered and who will do anything to keep themselves prominent. This was what prompted the attitude of Caiaphas.

*The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many signs. 48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. 49 But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said unto them, ye know nothing at all, 50 nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. Jn. 11:47-50.*

It was also this attitude that prompted some in Rome to preach Christ even though they did not truly believe:

*Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: 16 the one do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel; 17 but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds. Phil 1:15-17*

They did not care in the least about the suffering and loss their own desires would cause for others. They could not even see the damage they were doing to others as being an issue. In spite of all the evidence and the many signs they even admitted that Jesus did, the Jewish leaders would rather kill Jesus than lose their position of leadership in Jerusalem. For them murder was a better alternative. This is factiousness. This is also what Paul found among those in Rome while

imprisoned. Some would actually preach what they did not believe in order to destroy Paul. Many who reject the gospel have been filled with the lust of factiousness.

It is a word for those in politics who court popularity and favor by trickery and low arts, such as lying, deception, and seeking to destroy the opponent by any means. It then left politics and moved out into the general population and ultimately into the church as a term that mean someone who has a desire to put themselves on the top. Who have a factious spirit which will use whatever is necessary to get to the top, including the lowest and basest means. This is one of the works of the flesh that God condemns strongly.

*19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, **factions**, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Gal 5:19-21*

Even the apostles had this “wisdom,” and while Jesus worked very hard to remove it, it was still there even at the institution of the Lord’s supper. Yet Jesus gave them the tools necessary to rip up this terrible emotion by the roots. We are all servants, working together to help each other.

*Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, “**What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?**” 34 **But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.** 35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “**If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.**” Mk. 9:33-36*

*Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.” 36 And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” 37 They said to Him, “**Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.**”... 41 **And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.** 42 **But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. 44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”** Mark 10:35-37 41-45*

*Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the **greatest**. 25 And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ 26 But not so among you; on the contrary, **he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. 27 For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.**” Lk. 22:24-27*

Mt. 23:5-12, though a long reading is also very good to consider in this context. We cannot afford to get good at this. It is a sin and those who practice it in the church or anywhere else will not inherit the kingdom of God.

### **do not boast**

The Spirit now gives strong counsel on this matter. If you have even the remotest feelings in your heart of arrogance of bitter jealous or factious feelings, then there is one thing you must not do. You must not “boast.” This term has the preposition “kata - down” placed in front of it. It is not used in secular Greek, and only used three times in the NT. It refers to those who boast and feel a sense of superiority because they look down on others.

*“kata-kauchaomai ... Except for an inscription, kata-kauchomai, this is found only in biblical and Christian writings. It brings out strongly the element of comparative superiority expressed in boasting, “to boast in triumphant comparison with others.” This sense is not prominent in the LXX, where the word is simply a stronger form of kauchasthai, but it is plain in Rom. 11:18 and in the figurative expression at James 2:13 ... cf. also James 3:14: me katakauchasthe (in pride at one’s own wisdom) ...” . (Kittel, TDWNT, NT: 2620)*

*kata-kauchaomai* a: to boast about something by downgrading something else - 'to boast against, to degrade.' ... 'you must not boast and in so doing degrade the branches' Rom 11:18. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT: 2620)

Those who have bitter envy and are factious and self-seeking tend to do that. They see their own abilities as so much greater than others that it makes perfect sense to them that they should be leading and ruling over them. We see this attitude among the chief priests and Pharisees when they contemptuously look down on anyone who thinks Jesus is a prophet as being "accursed."

*Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?" 46 The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" 47 Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? 48 Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? 49 But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." 50 Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, 51 "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" 52 They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee." John 7:45-52*

This is a terrible blight on the church when those who are humble and forbearing are looked down upon by the strong as being unworthy to make any decisions. It is what happens when wolves come in upon the sheep and it also happens when sheep begin to turn into wolves.

James speaks to these people at that pivotal moment when they still might listen. If we feel such a sense of moral and mental superiority over others we must stop and realize that Jesus never felt such emotions and God doesn't either.

### **and lie against the truth.**

The truth refers to the Scriptures as Jesus made clear:

*Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Jn. 8:31-32*

All that are included in the Scriptures of the New Covenant which contains Jesus words is "of the truth." Anything outside of that word is a lie. Since Jesus taught exactly the opposite of this arrogance that puts down others to stand above them in their own eyes, if they continue to hold to those emotions they are "lying against the truth."

*"pseudomai... 'to deceive,' 'cheat'; hence prop. to show one's self deceitful, to play false)... to deceive one by a lie, to lie to..." (Thayer, 675-676; 5574)*

*"pseudomai... to communicate what is false, with the evident purpose of misleading - 'to lie, to tell falsehoods.' ... 'what I say is true; I belong to Christ and I do not lie' Rom 9:1. The Greek term pseudomai and the English equivalent 'to lie' involve more than simply telling what is not true, for this could occur without an intent to deceive or mislead. pseudomai, therefore, involves not only the communication of a falsehood but also the intent to deceive. (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon, NT 5574)*

This is the art of the false teacher. They communicate what is false with the intent of misleading and deceiving others. The existence of the emotion of a boasting derision toward others is wrong and evil. To hold to it and seek to have others accept it is a lie. So unless we stop at the moment we become aware of it and admit that this is a sinful attitude that needs to be destroyed, not something we need to become better at. If we refuse to accept this then they are deceiving with a lie. There just isn't any room for this in the hearts of men. This is not what Jesus died on the cross to produce. It destroys the very attitudes Jesus sought to instill within each of us.

When Jesus washed the disciples feet, He knew He was far greater than any of them, but He was seeking to teach this lesson in a graphic way

*Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, 4 rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. 5 After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. ... 12 So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call*

*Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. 16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. Jn. 13:3-5;12-17*

As the teacher and Lord, He did not look down on any of them. He sought to lift them to a higher level and never boasted. He condemned this in the Pharisees and commanded that it not be seen in any of His disciples.

*But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. 6 They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' 8 But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. 11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Matt 23:5-12*

The truth, NT Scriptures and the Gospel of Jesus Christ teaches that humility, submission, lowliness of heart are the keys to true wisdom and greatness in the kingdom of God. Those who have chosen a different only deceive themselves and lie against the very truth that they must submit to in order to be saved.

### **This wisdom does not descend from above,**

The Spirit now revealed that there are actually two sources of all wisdom. One that comes down from above and one that has arisen exclusively from here below.

*"anōthen... Adv. of Place, from above, from on high, ... i.e. rain, from the upper country, from inland, ... 2. above, on high, II. of Time, from the beginning, ... first principles, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT: 509)*

*"katerchomai... to come down, go down; prop. of one who goes from a higher to a lower locality..." (Thayer, 339; 2718)*

*katérchomai ... from katá (2596), down, and érchomai (2064), to come or go. To go or come down, descend, used of persons going from a higher to a lower region of a country, as to the sea coast (Luke 4:31; Acts 8:5; 13:4) ... "Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:2718)*

This clearly refers to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to the wisdom that God and His Christ have sent down from heaven for the benefit of man and for the honor and glory of both God and of all His people who will submit to the truth.

The type of wisdom shown by politicians, the pharisees, and Diotrephes had were not from above:

*I wrote to the church, but **Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. 10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church. 11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. 3Jn. 9-11***

### **but is earthly, sensual, demonic.**

God characterizes this kind of wisdom as earthly, natural and demonic. These are not compliments brethren. These are fearful terms that no true child of God would desire to have any part of once anything was labeled with them. The term "earthly" is defined:

*"epigeios... existing upon the earth, earthly, terrestrial... those who are on earth, the inhabitants of the earth, men... the wisdom of men, liable to error and misleading, Jas 3:15..." (Thayer, 236-237; 1919)*

*epigeion ... adj. from epí (1909), upon, and ge (1093), the earth. **Earthly, being upon the earth** (Phil 2:10; 3:19). Earthly, belonging to the earth or wrought in men upon the earth (John 3:12). Earthly, terrestrial, made of earth (1 Cor 15:40; 2 Cor 5:1 [cf. Job 4:19]). **Earthly, arising from the earth and attached to it (James 3:15)**. In the NT, opposed to epouránios (2032), that which pertains to heaven*

(1 Cor 15:40);(Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT 1919)

This is a wisdom that originated here on the earth after the fall. It can only be found here, for it doesn't exist above in heaven. This term is thus clearly synonymous with the "*world that is passing away.*" It is not of the Father but is of the world.

*Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever. 1Jn. 2:15-17*

Since this quality of wisdom is earthly and worldly, it only belongs to the soul. The term "sensual" is also translated "*natural* - NASB," or "*unspiritual* - ESV." It is a difficult term that can really only be understood in the context of Scripture.

*psuchikos* ... **occurs six times in the N. T. On three of these it cannot be said to have a distinctly ethical employment; seeing that in them it is only the meanness of the "*soma psuchikon*" which the faithful now bear about that is contrasted with the glory of the "*soma pneumatikon*" which they shall bear (1 Cor 15:44, 46). On the other three occasions a moral emphasis rests on the word, and in every instance a most depreciatory.** Thus St. Paul declares the *psuchikos* receives not and cannot receive, as having no organ for their reception, the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:14); St. James (3:15) characterizes the wisdom which is *psuchikos*, as also *epigeios*, 'earthly,' and *daimoniodes*, 'devilish;' St. Jude explains the *psuchikoi* as those *pneuma me echontes* (does not have the spirit) (ver. 19). (Trench's Synonyms of the NT: 3391)

*"psuchikos... of or belonging to the psuche; a. having the nature and characteristics of the psuche i. e. of the principle of animal life, which men have in common with the brutes... b. governed by the psuche i.e. the sensuous nature with its subjection to appetite and passion... a wisdom in harmony with the corrupt desires and affections and springing from them... Jas 3:15..."* (Thayer, 677-678; 5591)

The soul, the flesh, and the spirit can only be understood as God reveals them since we have no means of understanding or separating them.

*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. Heb. 4:12-13*

Paul helps us understand the flesh and spirit in Romans 7-8 and Galatians 5:13-23. The soul and spirit are more complicated. But greatly simplified with the passage in Corinthians. Since it follows one of the greatest descriptions of inspiration, it is evident that this is the contrast. Those who are still "*psuchikos*" are the "*natural*" men who can't even comprehend the spiritual things God has revealed through the Holy Spirit.

*But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. 1Cor. 2:14-16*

Since it does not originate in God and His Spirit, there is no real good source. It comes from the animal sensuous side of our being.

The final and ultimate source of these terrible emotions is "*demonic.*" This term is the worst possible commentary on the source of these emotions.

*"daimoniodes... (daimonion, q.v.) resembling or proceeding from an evil spirit, demon-like Jas. 3:15... (Thayer, p. 124; 1141)*

This term, and the one it comes from take in most of the uses in the NT. When Jesus cast out demons, he cast out (*daimonion*), the doctrines of demons that the men branded in conscience with a hot iron were teaching came from (*daiminion*). This is the source of this vile bitter jealousy and wicked partisan spirit that selfishly puts one own desires over that of souls, the glory of God, and the edification of the church. Terrible indeed is the source of this wisdom. This is very similar to what he said about the tongue being set on fire by hell. James now speaks of their fruits, for "by

their fruits you shall know them.”(Mt. 7:16-20).

## 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist,

Using “*gar* - he gives *the reason and cause of the previous statement*.” He repeats the two qualities from above, and now lays at the feet of this *envious and contentious rivalry*,” the terrible fruits that come into the church. Therefore, whenever we see these fruits, we know we are dealing with them.

### confusion

It matters now where it exists. Look at our own presidency, senate and congress. When these terrible attributes rear their ugly head, there is disorder. Whether it is on a team, in a classroom, or in the NT church, there will be disorder. This term is defined:

“*akatastasia... instability, a state of disorder, disturbance, confusion... plur. disturbances, disorders: of dissensions... of seditions... of the tumults of commotions of war...*” (Thayer, 21; 181)

*akatastasia* “instability,” (*a*, negative, *kata*, “down,” *stasis*, “a standing”), denotes “a state of disorder, disturbance, confusion, tumult,” 1Cor. 14:33; James 3:16, “revolution or anarchy”; translated “tumults” in Luke 21:9 (KJV, “commotions”); 2 Cor 6:5; 12:20. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT: 181)

Things will be unstable. Members will not know from one week to the next how things are or whether a split or worse is imminent. There will be disorder. Things cannot be done in an orderly manner because with these emotions there, there are conflicting ideas of what is orderly. There are disturbances when one or another does not get their way, and there is confusion as those who love the Lord look with astonishment and those seeking to take over only look at what they can get. Note how strong it can get. It can reach even to revolution, anarchy, sedition (treason) and war.

### and every evil thing are there.

It also leads to every evil thing you can imagine and even evil things you cannot even imagine. The term “evil” is defined:

“*phaulos... easy, slight, ordinary, mean, worthless, of no account;... ethically, bad, wicked, base...*” (Thayer, p. 650; 5337)

*phaulos* ... there are words in most languages, and *phaulos* is one of them, which contemplate evil under another aspect, not so much that either of active or passive malignity, but that rather of its good-for-nothingness, the impossibility of any true gain ever coming forth from it. ... This notion of worthlessness is the central notion of *phaulos* ... mediocre, of no account, worthless, bad; but still bad predominantly in the sense of worthless; (Trench’s Synonyms of the NT: 5337)

This is not a common word for “evil.” It is only used five times in the NT, and notably by Jesus in a context very similar to the one James speaks of here.

*For everyone practicing **evil** hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” John 3:20-21*

*those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done **evil**, to the resurrection of condemnation. John 5:29-30*

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or **bad**. 2Cor. 5:10*

The word describes our conduct from the perspective of things that are worthless and of no account. Every bad, wicked, base and worthless thing you can think of will occur when motivated by jealousy and selfish ambition. The term “thing” is also an unusual one only used about 11 times in the NT. It is defined:

“*pragma... a. that which has been done, a deed, an accomplished fact... b. what is doing or being accomplished... spec. business (commercial transaction... c. a matter (in question), affair... spec. in a forensic sense, a matter at law, a case, suit... d. that which is or exists, a thing...*” (Thayer, 534; 4229)

## 17 But the wisdom that is from above

James now repeats again the term wisdom which means “the knowledge of very diverse matters,” “the varied knowledge of things human and divine acquired by acuteness and experience.” The wisdom that comes down from God and has its source from above also has some very special fruits. Fruits that cannot be hid. As we consider them, see which are in your heart.

### is first pure,

The first thing you will note about the wisdom from above is that it is pure. This term is defined:

*“hagnos, ... 1. exciting reverence, venerable, sacred ... 2. pure ... a. pure from carnality, chaste, modest,... b. pure from every fault, immaculate ...”* (Thayer, Joseph Henry, op. cit., p. 8; 53).

*hagnos... full of religious awe: I. of places and things dedicated to gods, hallowed, holy, sacred, Od., Att. 2. of divine persons, chaste, pure, Od. II. of persons, undefiled, chaste, pure, Aesch., Eur.: c. gen. pure from a thing, (Liddell and Scott, Abridged Greek Lexicon NT: 53)*

*“hagnos... originally signifies “that which awakens religious awe”... It is the proper term for “taboo.” ... the original meaning is soon softened. It comes to be used simply for things connected with deity. ... “ritually clean”... it refers negatively to the lack of defects arising e.g. from blood guiltiness... contact with corpses, or ... sexual intercourse... this gives rise to the meaning “chaste.” the originally purely externally religious concept now acquires a more ethical and inward significance... In this sense it is much used in Hellenism. In civic life *hagnos* is a term of honor denoting the blameless discharge of office... In the NT it signifies “moral purity and sincerity,” as in relation to Christ in 1 Jn. 3:3. It demands especially of those who bear office in the community (1 Tim 5:22... Titus 2:5); of the conversation of Christian wives (1 Pt. 3:2) of the pious wisdom which avoids all self-seeking (Jm. 3:17).”* (Kittel Vol 1 p. 122)

The wisdom from above is first, in order of prominence and importance has a great sense of reverence and awe for all that is revealed as holy. It is primarily a wisdom that will hold God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Word He revealed in great reverence and respect and awe. Based upon this awe, all that God has revealed as impure is banished and removed. With an absolute sense of our hallowed and sacred relationship to Him through the death of His Son, we respect and hold in the highest regard everything connected with Him, especially in regard to our relationship with all who are also blood bought and therefore precious and elect to Him.

### then peaceable,

After it has shown itself pure (and without this, the rest will not follow even if they did exist, for without the awe and reverence to God, all falls into dust. James emphasizes this not only with the term “*first*” but also with “*then*.”

*“epeita, adv.,... thereupon, thereafter, then, afterwards; used a. of time... b. in enumerations it is used a. of time and order... b of order alone...”* (Thayer, p. 230; 1899)

It is used of time and order or of order alone. The purity must come first then, thereafter, thereupon and afterwards it will also be peaceable. So this wisdom is “peaceable,” but only after it is pure. The term “peaceable” is defined:

*“eirenikos... 1. relating to peace.... the art of peace... 2. peaceable, pacific, loving peace: Jas. 3:17... 3. bringing peace with it, peaceful, salutary...”* (Thayer, 182-183; 1516)

*“eirenikos... a. “That which relates to peace,” ... b. “peaceful,” of words and men, also in opp. to war, ... c. in a wider sense as the opposite of unrest, In the NT only *eirenikos* is used, and this only in Heb. 12:1 and James 3:17. In the latter: *eirenikos* is the opposite of *zelos pikros* and *eritheia*, and means “ready for peace,” “peaceful.”* (Kittel, TDWNT NT:1516)

This is a peace coming from a heart that loves peace and seeks it.

*Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Rom. 14:19*

*endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Eph 4:3-4*

*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Col 3:15-16*

*Be at peace among yourselves. 1 Thess 5:13*

*Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. Titus 3:1-3*

Peace with God, peace with man, peace within the church.

## **gentle,**

It is also, “*gentle*,” which is a very difficult emotion and attitude to translate into English. It too is from above and must be carefully assessed. It is a moderation that leads to to recognize that under the law of Christ, we are under grace and deal with things gently and moderately. We go show the fault, but at the least sign of repentance we manifest forgiveness.

*epieikes* “It expresses exactly that moderation which recognizes the impossibility cleaving to all formal law, of anticipating and providing for all cases that will emerge, and present themselves to it for a decision; which, with this, recognizes the danger triumphs triumphs waits upon the assertion of legal rights, lest they should be pushed into moral wrongs. ...It is thus more truly just than strict justice would have been. ...This aspect of *epieikeia*, namely that it is a going back from the letter of right for the better preserving of the spirit, must never be lost sight of. (Trench p 153-157; NT:1933)

“...Aristotle describes in full the action of *epieikeia*: ‘to pardon human failings; to look to the law-giver, not to the law; to the intention, not to the action; to the whole, not to the part; to the character of the actor in the long run and not in the present moment; to remember good rather than evil, and the good that one has received rather than the good that one has done; to bear being injured; to wish to settle a matter by words rather than deeds’...” (Barclay, William, “Daily Study Bible Timothy Titus & Philemon,” p 96)

“*epieikes*... (*eikos* what is reasonable); 1. *seemly, suitable*... 2. *equitable, fair, mild, gentle*...” (Thayer, p. 238; 1933)

“*epieikes*, from *epi*, unto, and *eikos*, likely, denotes seemly, fitting; hence, equitable, fair moderate, forbearing, not insisting on the letter of the law; it expresses that considerateness that looks “humanely and reasonably at the facts of the case”; ...” (Vine, Vol. 2, p 144-145; NT:1933)

A Christian under the influence of the wisdom from above is gentle, moderate and kind. He recognizes that God is the final judge and that we are not to judge but to let Him judge. Mercy triumphs over judgment so we use mercy and patience. It is sometimes better to leave things to God than it is to be so tight on everything that stress and discomfort abound.

Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Phil 4:5

With repentance and confession, strict justice is removed and replaced with compassion. Aristotle captured the word, but again it must be interpreted through the lense of Scripture. Pardoning human failings is a core belief of a mature servant of God. Look to Paul as he wrote to the Corinthian church about their human failings then turned around in the Second letter and set it all aside. It is the ability to look to the long run of faithfulness and submission, and not to the single sin that has been repented of and must now be forgiven. It is also the ability to “*bear being injured and wish to settle a matter with words*.” This is the essence of turning the other cheek and loving our enemies and praying for those who spitefully use us.

The “*gentle*,” “*forbearing*,” “*reasonable* and “*moderate*” man will manifest the most gentle, merciful, and compassionate aspects of service to Jesus.

*Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, Mt. 5:23-25*

*But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. 41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him who asks you, and from*

him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. Mt. 5:39-42

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. Mt. 5:44-46

Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? 8 On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that your brethren. 1 Cor 6:7-9

As you watch a man or woman with true wisdom working out some grave problem and using the wisdom from above to deal with it, you will see someone who is *equitable, fair, mild, and gentle...*

### **willing to yield,**

Another thing that true wisdom from above will bring is that it is willing to yield. Once again we have a word that defies translation. It has been translated:

“easy to be entreated – ASV,” “submissive – NIV,” “open to reason – ESV,  
“reasonable, – NASU” “willing to yield – NKJV,”

It comes from a Greek word that literally means “to obey well”, or “easily obeying” and “compliant.” It refers to someone who can be “easily persuaded with the implication of being open to reason or willing to listen.”

“*eupeithes...* (*eu*, and *peithosai* to comply with, obey), *easily obeying, compliant*, [A. V. *easy to be intreated*]: Jas. 3:17...” (Thayer, 261; 2138)

*eupeithes* “ready to obey” (*eu*, “well,” *peithomai*, “to obey, to be persuaded”), “*compliant*,” is translated “*easy to be intreated*” in James 3:17, said of the wisdom that is from above. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:2138)

*eupeithes* : pertaining to being easily persuaded, with the implication of being open to reason or willing to listen - ‘one who is easily persuaded, open to reason.’ (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, NT 2138)

They keep their emotions of pride and always being even in the background and instead seek to be easy to change it there is no reason to hold on to something. Multitudes of things are expedients and can be let go if need be. Paul speaks of this in Romans 14 and 1Cor 8-10. We can allow our liberties to be ignored in order to be a blessing to others.

*We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. Rom. 15:1-3*

*Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? 8 No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! 1Cor. 6:7-9*

*You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. 41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. Mt. 5:38-41*

### **full of mercy**

The term “*full*” strengthens the term mercy:

“*mestos... full...* in reference to persons whose minds are as it were filled with thoughts and emotions either good or bad...” (Thayer, 402; 3324)

*mestos* probably akin to a root signifying “to measure,” hence conveys the sense of “having full measure,” (a) of material things, a vessel, John 19:29; a net, 21:11; (b) metaphorically, of thoughts and feelings, exercised ((from Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:3324)

If we are filled with the wisdom from above we have as much mercy as is possible at all times.

“*eleos... mercy; kindness or good will toward the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve*

them; 1. of men towards men... 2. of God towards men... 3. the mercy of Christ, whereby at his return to judgment he will bless true Christians with eternal life... (Thayer, p. 203-204; 1656)

"In Greek, *eleos*(mercy) is a *pathos*(strong emotion), ...the emotion roused by contact with an affliction which comes undeservedly on someone else. ... in the face of the unfortunate this emotion is an *eleein* which includes the elements of both awe and mercy... in this sense of mercy, sympathy is very common. (Kittel Vol 2 p. 477-487)

The easiest way to remember this term is that it is the feelings of kindness and good will toward those who are in need of it, joined with a compelling desire to do something to help them. If it lacks the former part of the definition, it is hypocrisy. If it lacks the latter, it is only pity or compassion, but it cannot become mercy until the person helps.

### and good fruits,

The term "good" is different from the one used in verse 13. This one is defined:

"*agathos*... *excelling in any respect, distinguished, good*. It can be predicated of persons, things, conditions, qualities and affections of the soul, deeds, times and seasons.... 1. of good constitution or nature... 2. useful, salutary... 3. of the feeling awakened by what is good, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy... 4. excellent, distinguished... 5. upright, honorable... upright, free from guile, particularly from a desire to corrupt the people... pre-eminently of God, as consummately and essentially good... The neuter used substantively denotes 1. a good thing, convenience, advantage, ... 2. what is upright, honorable, and acceptable to God... " (Thayer, p. 2-3; 18)

The wisdom from above brings about that which excels, is useful, pleasant, joyful, and excellent. The fruits of this wisdom are good. There is little difference between good fruits and good works and the Scriptures are filled with commands for us to be busy in such things.

"who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, **zealous for good works**. ... Titus 2:14

This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that **those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works**. These things are good and profitable to men. ... Titus 3:8

14 And let our people also **learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful**. Titus 3:14

For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them**. Eph 2:10

### without partiality

Since this is the only time in the NT where this word is used, and it has two different senses, there has been some variation in the translation: The ASV uses "without variance," the NASB, "unwavering," and the ESV/NIV, "impartial." It is defined:

"*adiakritos*... This is found from the time of Hippocrates (d. 356 B.C. ), also as an adverb. It is much used in various senses. Basic distinction should be made between the passive senses: "indistinguishable," "imprecise," "obscure," and the active "not differentiating," "impartial," "of one mind," "without distinction." Its only occurrence in the NT is at James 3:17. ... It means "without doubts and hypocrisy." A passive sense is not suitable, nor is "without division," i.e., undeviating ..." (Kittel, TDWNT, 87)

"*adiakritos*... primarily signifies "not to be parted" (a, negative, and an adjectival form akin to A), hence, "without uncertainty," or "indecision," James 3:17, KJV, "without partiality" (marg. "wrangling"), RV, "without variance" (marg., "Or, doubtfulness Or, partiality"). (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT 87)

Since both the idea of "unwavering in mind," and "impartial" are Scriptural concepts, we will look at both of them. God has had a lot to say about partiality in judging and assessing others.

*You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice. 3 You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute. Ex. 23:2-3*

*'You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor. Lev. 19:15-16*

*You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.' Dt. 1:17-18*

*You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. 20 You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord your God is giving you. Dt. 16:19-20*

*I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. 22 Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure. 1Tim. 5:21-22*

*but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. Jas. 2:9-10*

If the term means "unwavering," then the wisdom that comes from above has no ambiguity about it. There is no uncertainty. You know exactly where the person who has it is standing, day after day. They do not waver because they know whom they have believed.

*For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. 2 Tim 1:12*

More than this, it was this very unwavering faith that led God to account Abraham righteous and if we do not waver it will be accounted to us also.

*And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. 22 And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification. Rom 4:19-25*

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. Heb. 10:23-24*

### **and without hypocrisy.**

This term is defined:

*"anupokritos... (a priv. and hupokrinomai, unfeigned, undisguised... " (Thayer, 52; 505)*

*"anupokritos pertaining to being genuine and sincere, and hence lacking in pretense or show..." (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:505)*

They never act. They never pretend. They are always open and genuine. They never disguise or feign.

*Let love be without hypocrisy. Rom. 12:9*

*Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, 6 from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, 1Tim. 1:5-7*

*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another from a pure heart. 1Pet. 1:22*

The wisdom from above never finds that it needs to pretend and fake such conduct. It flows naturally like a fountain from a pure heart.

### **18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace**

This is the third and last time James uses this term in his letter. Righteousness is the state of being right with God because we are always treating others fairly and justly. We never want to take

something that belongs to them and always want to be a friend whom they can trust. When we have the character where we never want to be unfair and unjust to others we are sowing the precious seed of righteousness which will always keep peace and harmony.

**by those who make peace.**

James uses the general word for working that results in a product here. Those under the wisdom from above are seeking peace and trying to keep peace with everyone.

*My soul has dwelt too long With one who hates peace. 7 I am for peace; But when I speak, they are for war. Ps 120:6-7*

*Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. Mt. 5:9*

*Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Rom 12:17-18*

*Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Rom. 14:19*

*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: Heb. 12:14*

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## James – Chapter Four

Although there is a chapter break here, it is important to remember that James has just finished a section on the two types of wisdom each Christians has developed to deal with others. There is a wisdom that we have developed from this world that is dangerous and must be removed. There is also a wisdom that God has sent down from above, wherein He wants us to grow and become proficient. We all deal with people from one of these two perspectives.

The Holy Spirit is now building on the previous section. We move from the emotions and attitudes of the wisdom from below which is of this earth, proceeding from the soul of fleshly man and which aligns us with the demons and not God. If there are quarrels and conflicts in the lives of God's people, He wants us to reflect on where they come from. When husbands and wives are not getting along, when parents and children are not quarreling, and brethren are fighting, what is the source and reason? Can such things occur when the wisdom from above is being used? Do they proceed from the earthly, natural, demonic wisdom from beneath, or are they from the first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy wisdom from above?

With all the commands and examples in the Scriptures on human relationships and how to properly deal with all the strains and stresses of human relationships, if people would do all of these things, we would greatly minimize such things.

### **1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? (NKJV) What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? (NASB)**

James opens the section with a question. The Holy Spirit wants each Christian to give serious consideration and to ponder the reason that there are quarrels and conflicts in their lives. He wants us to think about the source of these conflicts. The term "where" is defined:

*"pothen... whence... a. of place, from what place... b. of origin or source, i.q. from what author or giver... c. of cause, how is it that? how can it be that? ..."* (Thayer, 524; 4159)

*"pothen... interrog. Adv. whence? 1. of place, ... who and from what country art thou? ... 2. of origin; from what source does he boast that his race is? ... 3. in speaking, 4. alone, pothen of the cause, whence? Wherefore? ..."* (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:4159)

This is a term used to describe where something came from. It can refer either to place, origin or cause depending on what is being discussed. Quarrels and conflicts come from somewhere. They have a source, an origin and a cause. What is it? Often in the midst of such a quarrel, the source and origin is discussed. We seek to place fault and blame. Often, we want to pin the source of our quarrels and conflicts on the person we are quarrelling and having conflicts with. But as an old English proverb puts it: "It takes two to quarrel." Or as the proverbs of God put it:

*For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down. 21 Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife. Pr 26:20-21*

The source of any quarrel may be pinpointed to a certain word, or a certain act on one person's part, but it can only escalate into a quarrel if both parties allow it to do so. God is very clear on the part a Christian is to play in any quarrel or conflict:

*If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Rom 12:18*

For the Christian, their side should always lead to a peaceful resolution to all conflicts. Hence the source of conflicts that have developed should be carefully considered. The term "quarrels" is defined:

*"polemos... to turn, to range about, ... 1. prop. a. war ... b. a fight, a battle, ... 2. a dispute, strife, quarrel..."* (Thayer, 528; 4170)

*polemos* and *mache* occur often together (Homer, Il. i. 177; v. 891; Plato, ...Job 38:23; James 4:1); and in like manner *polemein* and *machesthai*. There is the same difference between them as between our own 'war' and 'battle'; *o polemos peloponhsiakos*, the Peloponnesian War; hen *Marathoni mache*,

the battle of Marathon. Dealing with the words in this antithesis, namely that *polemos* embraces the whole course of hostilities, *mache* the actual shock in arms of hostile armies, (Trench's Synonyms of the NT 4171)

This term takes in conflicts of all extremes. It can range from a husband wife quarrel that is quickly resolved to the ravages of an all out war between nations. Where do the disputes, strifes, quarrels, battles, fights and wars that occur come from? As the Psalmist stated, it must never come from us.

*My soul has dwelt too long With one who hates peace. 7 I am for peace; But when I speak, they are for war. Ps 120:6-7*

Where do the bickering and quarreling that leads to the war of divorce come from? Where do the quarrels that split congregations and destroy friendships come from? Where do the quarrels that lead to world wars come from? Before he answers, he asks one other thing? Where do "conflicts" come from? This term is defined:

"*mache... fight, combat;... 1. of those in arms, a battle. 2. of persons at variance, disputants, etc., strife, contention; a quarrel...*" (Thayer, 394; 3163)

*mache machomai ... battle, fight, combat, sea fights, ... to fight a battle, ... to engage battle with one, to win a battle, battle with an enemy, 2. in pl. quarrels, strifes, wranglings, 3. agon, a contest for a prize in the games, Pind.: generally a struggle, II. a mode of fighting, way of battle, III. a field of battle, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:3163)*

This word too can encompass everything from the conflict of men in battle who are preparing to kill one another to the minor quarrels that are quickly resolved. What is the source of such strife and contention that leads to quarrels and fights? With all the positive commands and lessons on love, mercy, forbearance, mercy, peace, self-control and gentleness, along with all the negative commands against anger, strife, wrath, jealousy, and envy, how can the Lord's church ever see such things occur among the members?

**Do they not come from your desires for pleasure (NKJV) Is not the source your pleasures (NASB)**

To stress the answer, James used two terms for source. Our English only translates one of them, but the literal terms would be: "*not hence*," "*out of*" your lusts that war in your members?" "Hence" is defined:

"*enteuthen... adv. of place, from this place, hence,.... metaph. hence, i. e. from that cause or origin, from this source...*" (Thayer, 218; 1782)

"*enteuthen b: a reference to reason or source - 'from this.' 'is it not from this, namely, from your desires which are at war within you' (a reference to an occasion or set of circumstances regarded as present) James 4:1. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:1782)*

As we look at the definition, it doesn't differ a lot from the one above "*whence*" Except in this case, it is the answer to "*whence*." It clearly focuses on the "*cause, origin, source, and reason*." The cause, origin and source of quarrelling and fighting is then defined as "*out of...*"

"*ek... It denotes as well exit or emission out of, as separation from, something with which there has been close connection; opp. to the preposition EIS into and EN in: from out of, out from, forth from, from... I. of PLACE,.... II of the ORIGIN, SOURCE, CAUSE...*" (Thayer, p. 189; 1537)

Quarrels and fights comes "from out of," "out from," "forth from." The term stresses origin, source and cause. It is almost identical to meaning to the first term. The first term is used only about 10 times in the NT while the second is used about 900 times. The first term is very specific a term of source while the second is a general term for it. Using them both together stresses this as the **SOURCE** and **ORIGIN** of all wars and fights. This is where they come from.

The place from which these things originate, their cause and source develops from within the heart of men. They come from the desires for pleasure which each individual member allows to take too much precedence in their lives. When desire for pleasure takes priority over peace with brethren then wars and fightings will come. The term "desire for pleasure" is defined:

“hedone... pleasure... by meton. desires for pleasure... “ (Thayer, p. 276; 2237)

“hedone.... pleasure, gratification; esp. sensual pleasure,... a passion,... Harper’s Analytical 185

“hedone.... In the NT hedone represents one of the many forces which belong to the world of unsanctified carnality, which strive against the work of God and His Spirit and which drag man back again into the kingdom of evil... derives from the same root as hedus, “sweet,” “pleasant,” “delightful” .... what is pleasant to the senses, namely, to the sense of taste... “feeling of pleasure” or “enjoyment”... hedone is one of the marks of a definite orientation of life opposed to the Christian. As such it has its place in the antithesis on which the world of NT thinking is based. (Kittel, Vol 2 p 909-926).

This term “desire for pleasure” is a term that was taken by the Holy Spirit to describe the very opposite of what Christian’s are supposed to be feeling. This is the “if it feels good do it” philosophy of our age. It denotes the craving for pleasure that sets God’s limitations aside and does as it pleases. Often the very fact that God condemns it makes it that much more sweeter to do it. Consider two Scriptures that use the term with the term underlined.

*Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. Lk. 8:14*

*For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. Titus 3:3-4*

Every quarrel and every conflict finds it’s source in the area of man’s character that sets aside God’s limitations to fulfill its own desires. It comes when we seek for the pleasure that selfishly sets aside the rights of others in order to make us feel good. When they respond with an objection the battle and war begins. All quarrels come from giving in to our own feelings that make us feel good rather than following the rule and order that God has instituted. Quarrels and conflicts are impossible to the Christian who has placed God’s limitations on every area of their life. They can only come when men give in to their sensual lusts.

Why is this so? How can the Spirit make a conclusion like that? Consider the very nature and essence of the gospel: God is a God of peace

*Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Heb. 13:20-21*

Jesus was the Prince of Peace for exactly that reason and left this peace to His disciples, by following the same rule.

*For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. Isa 9:6*

*“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. John 14:27*

We are commanded to be at peace and told it will be one of the fruits of the spirit.

*If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Rom 12:18*

*for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 ~~So~~ let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Rom 14:17-19*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Gal 5:22-23*

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Eph 4:1-3*

*Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. Heb 12:14*

With all this, where can quarrels and conflicts come from? We are supposed to get along and forbear and on our end learn to get along with every one. They have to come another source than the gospel and God so what is left. As the Spirit here reveals it is because we take some form of subtle pleasure in hurting others when we don't get our way. God commanded just the exact opposite. If we allow them to surface, then must be giving in to our own pleasures. If we were doing the will of the Lord, they would never happen.

### **that war in your members**

The term "members" is a term used in the Scriptures (See ICor. 12:12-20) for both the individual members of the human body and the individual members of Christ's body, the church. It is defined:

*"melos... a member, limb... prop. a member of the human body... "* (Thayer, 397; 3196)

*melos ... "a limb of the body," is used (a) literally, Matt 5:29-30; Rom 6:13 (twice), in Col 3:5, "mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth"; since our bodies and their "members" belong to the earth, and are the instruments of sin, they are referred to as such (cf. Matt 5:29-30; Rom 7:5,23, mentioned above); the putting to death is not physical, but ethical; as the physical "members" have distinct individualities, so those evils, of which the physical "members" are agents, are by analogy regarded as examples of the way in which the "members" work if not put to death..." (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:3196)*

The idea that the pleasures of this world make war in our members against our spirit is clearly described in the books of Romans and Galatians:

*21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Rom. 7:20-23*

*16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. Gal. 5:16-19*

The members of our body cry out for gratification. Their desires for fulfillment sometimes take a higher priority in our mind than the desire to be right with God. When this occurs we sin. This is true of every lust and the deeds they prompt to. Adultery occurs when the lust for a woman wars in a man's members until he succumbs to it. Stealing occurs when greed and desire for money wars in a man's members until he succumbs to it. Quarrels and conflicts also occur as a result of these warring desires. Note the works of the flesh and deeds of the flesh that war in the members and create these conflicts:

*For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. Gal 5:14-15*

*Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Gal 5:19-21*

*But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Col 3:8*

*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Eph 4:31-32*

With these passages it is clear that there are many "pleasures" that war in our members that can lead toward quarrels and conflicts. "Enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, wrath, malice, slander, bitterness and clamor are all fully capable of beginning a quarrel or a conflict. We don't normally think of these as "pleasures," but when angry, giving in to that anger and allowing these other emotions full reign does bring a pleasure to enough of us that all the quarrels in the world are created. This takes us back on step from the tongue in chapter three. While the tongue is the fire, these emotions are the pleasures that create it and the

source that brings it out of the heart and into the world.

Many of the other lusts described in the Bible are also capable of beginning conflicts. The interesting point that we ought to ponder is “why are these things pleasures. Is enmity a pleasure? Are strife, jealousy, factions, wrath, slander and bitterness pleasures? The answer is yes and no. The emotions themselves are not pleasurable, but giving in to them often is. I may not seek for the emotion of anger, wrath, jealousy or vindictiveness. I may not enjoy the feelings when they come, but there is something very sweet to the human heart in giving in to them and either in word or deed paying them back. Vengeance is a very good feeling to many people.

Think of the pull these things have in our movies and entertainment. Movies that begin with injustice and terrible acts of violence against the innocent, then slowly build until the innocent victim is able to kill and destroy those who did those terrible things. There is a terrible pleasure when the wicked are destroyed.

There are no conflicts that do not trace back to the war that the lusts are waging in our members. The term “wage war” is defined:

*“strateuomai... to make a military expedition, to lead soldiers to war or to battle, (spoken of a commander; to do military duty, be on active service, be a soldier; in the N. T. only in the mid. ... to fight... trop. of the conflicts of the apostolic office...” of passions that disquiet the soul...” (Thayer, p. 590; 4754)*

*“strateia... an expedition, campaign; military service, warfare:...” (Thayer, p. 590; 4752)*

The lusts above and others like them make a military expedition in our members. It is a terrible war between the flesh and the spirit. The lusts and desires for pleasure war against the controlling elements in our spirit. When we lose these battles they often erupt in ways that others can see. These in turn often lead to the fightings within a congregation lead to splits and loss of souls. The fight should be within and never see the light of day:

*26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1 Cor 9:21-31).*

This fight is to the death.

*“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Gal. 2:19-22*

## **2 You lust and do not have.**

James continues his inspired explanation of where all fights and wars begin. Whether it be nations, churches or families, these wars, feuds, battles and skirmishes do not have any source in God or righteousness. Whenever we are in such a battle, we must realize that there can be no scriptural excuse for it. These things only exist in “*our desire for pleasure*” that exists in our members. If we have not yet found that desire, we need to keep digging for it, because it is there. Hiding in the midst of the lust of the flesh or eyes, or within the pride of life, it is not of the Father, but of the World. Jesus is the prince of peace and in much as lies within all of us we too must be for peace. There is some perverse pleasure or lust that is at the bottom of it and until it is addressed and removed, there will never be peace.

The term “*lust*” is a synonym and an extension for the “*desire of pleasure.*” They both describe the desires of the flesh and mind that war against the soul.

*11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly **lusts** which war against the soul, 1Pet. 2:11*

He is repeating the same term that was used in the first chapter.

*14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own **desires (lusts)** and enticed. 15 Then, when **desire (lust)** has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*

These are the powerful emotions that lead us directly to sin. They are found in our members and exist to fulfill the lusts and cravings of the flesh.

*“epithumeo... prop. to keep the thumos (passion and desire) turned upon a thing, hence [cf. our to set one’s heart upon] to have a desire for, long for; absol. to desire [A. V.] to lust after, covet, of those who seek things forbidden ...”* (Thayer, pdd. 238; 1937)

*epithumia ... to set one’s heart upon a thing, lust after, long for, covet, desire, ... to desire to do, ... eagerness for it, ...”* (Liddell and Scott, Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:1937)

The context makes clear that these are unlawful and sinful fleshly desires. When God’s people keep their powerful desires and cravings turned upon things that are unlawful, terrible consequences like this are always going to follow. If we compare the manifest works of the flesh we see the lusts that lead to wars and fights.

*Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, **hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like**; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

On the other side are the spiritual fruits that always lead away from such sinful things.

*But the fruit of the Spirit **is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control**. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Gal 5:19-25*

Sadly, these lusts never lead to possession. Once one lust has dissipated into fulfillment, a new one arises that is stronger yet. So that that can never “have” what the seek.

*“echo... I. Transitively. 1. to have i. q. to hold; a. to have (hold) in the hand: ... d. to hold fast, keep... e. to have (in itself or as a consequence), 2. to have i. q. to own, possess;...”* (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon 2192)

It is evident from this expression that this is a special class of those in the church. Not everyone has such lusts leading to such desires and to ever greater battles for dominion and power. Such people never find what they seek because it is an insatiable desire that can never be fulfilled and possessed. Those who are responsible for splitting churches are those who are factious, putting their own personal desires above the needs of the Jesus and His church.

**You murder (NKJV)... so you commit murder. (NASB)**

The term “murder” is repeated from the second chapter when James quoted one of the ten commandments of the Old law: “*you shall not kill.*”

*“phoneuo...to kill, slay, murder; absol. to commit murder...”* (Thayer, 657;5407)

*phoneuo ... to deprive a person of life by illegal, intentional killing - ‘to murder, to commit murder.’* (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:5407).

Although the definition is clear that this is the actual act of murder, it seldom reaches that level, since the person who did that would then be arrested, imprisoned and probably executed. This is the murder Jesus described in the Sermon on the Mount:

*“You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder,” and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. 22 “But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, “Raca!” shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, “You fool!” shall be in danger of hell fire. (Mt 5:21-22).*

Anger is but one of many lusts that lead to murder, yet Jesus revealed that the guilt of murder is accrued at the moment of anger. We can be angered over the sin and the evil consequences that may have occurred, but the moment our anger focuses on the brother and not the sin, we have crossed the line and committed murder. When we compound that by our use of derisive terms of disgust and bitterness, the guilt becomes more severe. James spoke of the anger that blazed up and ruins the relationships of a lifetime. It comes because of strong lusts for something, but do not

and never can have it. This causes the loss of souls, and the loss of the harmony and peace in a congregation.

### **and covet and cannot obtain. And you are envious and cannot obtain; (NASB)**

Since the term “covet” has a completely different Greek term than “envious,” it is better translated as the NASB chose.

*“zeloo... to burn with zeal;... 1. absol. to be heated or to boil [A. V. to be moved] with envy, hatred, anger... in a good sense, to be zealous in the pursuit of good... 2. trans... to desire earnestly, pursue...”* (Thayer, 271; 2206)

This is the verb form of the noun used back in chapter 3:14 that was translated “bitter jealousy.” It is used elsewhere in the NT, and although it is sometimes used in a good sense, here it is clearly an evil emotion that fits in well with a few other uses in the NT. This was the emotion that led the brothers of Joseph to sell him to Egypt and the same emotion that led the Jews to find some evil men and through slander and lies set the entire city into an uproar. Yet *agape* - love will not allow this emotion any foothold in the heart.

*“And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him Acts 7:9*

*But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. Acts 17:5*

*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; 1 Cor 13:4*

This is a terrible emotion that we should never allow to enter the heart for it can lead to terrible things. Thus heated and boiling up of anger along with the terrible raging of envy wages war in our members. The only release of such emotions requires the destruction of others. It is a powerful pleasure for those who are filled with it. Truly it is an emotion of great horror and damage and its proximity here to murder describes how awful an emotion it can be. Just the descriptions ought to cause God’s people to run from them.

But this emotion does not find the type of release they are seeking. They cannot get what the envy is leading them to desire.

*“dunamai... to be able, have power, whether by virtue of one’s own ability and resources, or of a state of mind, or through favorable circumstances, or by permission of law or custom... to be able to do something... to be able, capable, strong, powerful...”* (Thayer, p. 158-159; 1410)

The power to master the above is not within the human realm. Such emotions cannot be fulfilled. They grow, they eat like gangrene, they die, but they are never fulfilled in a way that anyone could say they really attained or gained something:

*“epitugchano... 1. to light or hit upon any person or thing... 2. to attain to, to obtain...”* (Thayer, p. 245; 2013)

### **You fight and war. So you fight and quarrel. (NASB)**

So now we have come full circle. While in the first verse he asked each of us to consider their source. Where did these things come from? Though he now substitutes verbs for nouns. These two terms are exactly the same words as those found in verse one. That question has now been answered. They come because of the sinful lusts and pleasures of sin that are waging a war in the members of our fleshly body. They have no good source and any time they appear, it is because of the lusts that lead to sin. Their very existence is proof of sin. They stem from the anger and derision that bring murder and the envy that leads people to act in destructive ways.

Having said all the above, it is obvious that when we “fight” and “war,” we are sinning.

*“polemeo... to war, carry one war; to fight... to wrangle, quarrel...”* (Thayer, 528; 4170)

*“machomai... to fight prop. of armed combatants, or those who engage in a hand-to-hand struggle,... trop of those who engage in a war of words, to quarrel, wrangle, dispute... of those who contend at law*

for property and privileges... “ (Thayer, 394; 3163)

If we would all carefully look back at our last quarrel, fight or conflict, or carefully consider the source of the next one, it will always be the same. We wanted something we could not or did not get. Either because it was not possible to gain it or because it was sinful to have it. So we became angry or jealous of another. This led to the fight. Watch and see if they don't all do this. Next time stop it in its infancy.

### **Yet you do not have because you do not ask.**

James repeats “*echo*” from above. They do not have, they cannot take possession of or own it “because” they do not ask for it. The term “because” is “*dia*.. the means or instrument by which anything is effected.” They did not have because they did not use the means or instrument to get it. While this asking could be what we ask of another, the next verse makes clear that this is prayer. The only real way to get something we want is to ask God for it. The things they really needed to have they were not getting because they were not asking for them. They were not making requests and had overlooked the great value of asking, seeking or knocking.

*“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. (Mt 7:7-11).*

God has made some precious and exceeding great promises through prayer. God could help us grow out of all the terrible thing James described in 4:1-2, but these people had never asked God to help them with their envy, anger and desires for pleasure in their members. It never occurred to them to seek help from God to help them with these things.

### **3 You ask and do not receive, 3 You ask and do not receive,**

Some were asking. Some were praying, but from the next phrase, we see that they were not praying for the right things, or were not praying with the right motives. As a result of this their prayers were not being answered and they were not “receiving:”

*“lambano,... to take, i.e. 1. To take with the hand, lay hold of... any pers. or thing in order to use it: absol., 3. to take what is one's own, to take to one's self, to make one's own... II to receive (what is given) to gain, get, obtain...” (Thayer, p. 370-371; 2983).*

God was not answering their prayers. They were not gaining any benefits from the prayers. This is always a clear sign to any Christian that something is wrong. When we ask for the things God has asked us for, God is very pleased to answer and give the things that we need:

*Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. 1Jn. 5:14-15*

The key to receiving what we ask for is learning His will and asking according to His will. Those who fight and war have a long way to travel to be right with Him and they must be asking for those things that would lead them back to the way of peace.

*not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For “He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” 1 Peter 3:9-12*

### **because you ask amiss, because you ask with wrong motives,**

This term “because” is defined:

*“dioti, conjunction, equiv to dia touto, hoti; 1. on this account that, because...” (Thayer, p. 162; 1360)*

It was “*on this account*” that they were not receiving. This is the exact reason why God could not and would not answer their prayers. They were asking with the wrong motives. Their prayers were

“tainted:”

“*kakos... badly, ill, i.e. a. [in a physical sense] miserably ... to be ill, sick... b. [morally] improperly, wrongly... with bad intent...*” (Thayer, 321; 2560)

The requests that made up their prayers were miserable, improper and wrong. They were spiritually ill and diseased requests. Their motives were tainted and their view of things wrong. Their prayers (probably indirectly) were leading to the fulfillment of their evil desires. Their prayers were directed in such a way that God could see they were evil. It was leading entirely in the wrong direction.

Even praying for wisdom, praying for strength, praying for character and ability can be tainted if the reason someone wants it is to show up another or in some way use it evilly.

**that you may spend it on your pleasures. so that you may spend {it} on your pleasures.**

This is a key ingredient of all improperly motivated and sickly prayers. We need to carefully consider this motive and banish it if it is even possible in any of our prayers.

“*hina... If a final conjunction (for from local direction, indicated by the adverb, the transition was easy to mental direction or intention) denoting purpose and end: to the intent that; to the end that, in order that;... it is used 1. prop of the purpose or end;...*” (Thayer, p. 302-304; 2443)

If the intent, direction and end of the prayer is to spend it on pleasure, even if it be ever so slightly tinted that way it is forbidden. We need to look carefully at the intent of every prayer. If it even might be used to “*spend*” on pleasure it should not be asked. The term “*spend*” is defined:

“*dapano... to incur expense, expend, spend... in a bad sense, to waste, squander, consume...*” (Thayer, p. 125; 1159)

Note that in a bad sense this is a wasted and squandered thing. To even ask for it is a fault. The term “*pleasure*” is the same terrible word defined and described back in the first verse of this chapter. It is a negative term and one that God will not even give an answer to. If the only motive behind our prayers is the means to fulfill the things of this life, then we have missed the entire point not only of prayer, but of the death of Christ and the kingdom of God. Jesus warned very strongly in the sermon on the mount that no one could properly serve God if they were too concerned with the affairs of this life.

#### **4 You adulteresses,**

James now calls such exactly what they are. Their marriage to Christ has been tainted with a compromise with the world that can bring no other condemnation than this. Those who hold to the attitudes above deserve the spiritual designation James gives to them. They are not faithful in their service or relations with Christ. He died to purchase so that we would not spend the rest of our time in such pursuits.

*Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — 1Pet. 4:1-3*

#### **do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?**

The term “*know*” is defined:

“*oida,... 1. like the Lat. NOVI it has the signification of a present to know, understand; and in the plpf. the signif. of an impf. 1. to know,... 2. to know i. e. get knowledge of, understand, perceive; a. any fact... b. the force and meaning of something that has definite meaning:... c. as in class. Grk., foll. by an inf. in the sense of to know how (Lat. calleo, to be skilled in ...Phil 4:12)...*” (Thayer, p. 174).

This is the knowledge of experience. The knowledge of doing and of the understanding gained by doing. Every Christian ought to know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God by personal experience. They have already lived through it once. They know that these things bring them right back to what they were before they came to the Lord. They know they are giving in to their weaknesses and not serving the Lord, or at least they should. This is something all Christians

need to know clearly and to avoid it at all costs.

No Christian can have “friendship” with the world.

“*philia... friendship...*” (Thayer, 654; 5373)

It is “enmity” with God.

“*echthra...* (fr. the adj. *echthros*), *enmity...*” (Thayer, p. 265; 2189)

“*echthra ... a state of enmity with someone - ‘enmity, being an enemy of.’* (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:2189)

One either hates the world and is loved by God, or makes himself a friend of the world and detestable to God. Consider the figure. What husband or wife would compliment or feel close to their mate after adultery? What husband or wife finds this a loveable characteristic of their mate? How can we expect God to view us with love and favor after we commit such an act? Make no mistake here, every such act is an act of adultery in the sight of God!

**Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**

This conclusion cannot be denied. It will always be true just as it is in the marriage realm. Any husband or wife who makes him/herself friendly to another in a romantic way makes themselves an enemy in that act to the one they love. So it is with God. We can seek to deny this conclusion, but God will hold us to it. If we are “friendly.”

“*philos... friendly ... 1. ... a friend... he who associates familiarly with one, a companion ... one who finds his pleasure in a thing...*” (Thayer, 654-655; 5384)

With the world,

“*kosmos... 5. the inhabitants of the world... particularly the inhabitants of the earth, men, the human race... 6. the ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ... 7. worldly affairs; the aggregate of things earthly; the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments, riches, advantages, pleasures, etc., which, although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ...*” (Thayer p 356-357; 2889)

In the context of sin and evil, the world refers to those who are alienated from God and stir desire and seduce from God. If we go after the world, then we “make” ourselves God’s enemies. “Make” is defined:

“*kathistemi...* (prop. *to set down, put down*), *to set, place, put*: a. ... *to set one over a thing* (in charge of it)... b. *to appoint one to administer an office...* c. *to set down as, constitute...* i. q. *to declare, show to be...* d. *to constitute...* i. q. *to render, make, cause to be...* e. *to conduct or bring to a certain place...* f. Mid. *to show or exhibit one’s self; come forward as:...*” (Thayer, p. 314)

This is a term or setting, placing or appointing. If we do any of these things, we make ourselves God’s enemies. If you want to appoint yourself to be an enemy of God, then all you have to do is compromise with and become friendly with the world. If all the condemnation in the Scriptures about not practicing these vile things will not keep us away from them, then perhaps this stern rebuke will. We are appointing ourselves God’s enemies. The term “enemy” is a different form of the term used earlier and translated *enmity*.

“*echthros... 1. passively, hated, odious, hateful,... 2. actively, hostile, hating and opposing another... , used of men at enmity with God by their sin...*” (Thayer, p. 265; 2190)

*echthros* an adjective signifying “hated, hateful, or hostile,” is used also as a noun denoting “an enemy,” translated “foes” in Matt 10:36 (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:2190)

*echthros ... : pertaining to being at enmity with someone - ‘being an enemy, in opposition to.’ ‘being enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son’ Rom 5:10; (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:2190)*

Before we became a Christian, we were the enemies of God. If we restore our friendship with the world, we return to that state.

*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." 17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." 18 'I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.' 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2Cor. 6:14-18; 7:1*

## **5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, speaks to no purpose: (NASB)**

Having now completed the first section, James offers the only possible alternative to the above conclusions. Either they must now acknowledge the truth that the true source of wars, battles, and conflicts are coming from exactly where he has revealed them to be: "**Or**" which is a disjunctive conjunction giving two things that "*mutually exclude each other*" or revealing that one of these "*one of which can take the place of the other.*"

"ñ - e, a disjunctive conjunction... Used 1. to distinguish things or thoughts which either mutually exclude each other, or one of which can take the place of the other..." (Thayer, p. 275; 2228)

Thus all conflicts arise from one of two causes. Either, first, because of "*your desires for pleasure that war in your members,*" and more specifically because, "*you lust and do not have,*" "*you murder and covet and cannot obtain,*" "*you do not have because you do not ask,*" and "*you ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.*" If they will carefully look into their heart and soul they will find that this is exactly what their problem is.

They will then be forced to conclude that if it is because of them that these problems have occurred then they truly are "*adulterers and adulteresses,*" in the sight of God. Everyone who acts in this way must understand that "*friendship with the world is enmity with God*" and "*whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*"

The only other possibility is that you believe the the Scriptures speak in vain. These are the only two possibilities. When these problems are occurring in a congregation or a home either one is a friend of the world, an enemy of God, an adulterer / adulteress, or they don't really believe the Scriptures and don't trust them.

We remember one who must have thought the Scriptures spoke in vain. It was Solomon. He set aside the commands God had given to the king, and in spite of all his wisdom, inspiration and all that he had seen, the very issue that God had warned against came upon him.

*"When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,' 15 you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. 16 But **he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.'** 17 **Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away;** nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. 18 "Also it shall be, **when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites.** 19 And it shall be with him, and **he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes,** 20 **that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.** Deut 17:14-20*

These are the only commands God gave to the king, and it is very unlikely he did not know them. It is specifically stated that it was because he multiplied wives to himself in spite of what the Scriptures had said (thought they spoke in vain), that this came upon him. Yet it was not only because of these two commands, but all the other commands in the Scriptures regarding the marriage of foreign women that led to this:

***But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites — 2 from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. 3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. 4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. 8 And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. 9 So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded. 1Kings 11:1-11***

It is the height of folly to think the Scriptures speak in vain. Many have said in their hearts, this has happened to others, but it will not happen to me. They set aside or set at nought the Scriptures! All who have done this have paid the price.

What happened to Solomon will surely happen to all who create and cause strife in the manner described above. So each of us are not brought face to face with the question:

### **Do you think the Scriptures speak in vain?**

These are not good choices, either you have made yourself God’s enemy or you think the Scriptures speak in vain and do not mean what they say. Yet Jesus said the Scripture can’t be broken. Would you like to affirm that this is what you “*think*.”

*“dokeo... 1. to be of opinion, think, suppose... 2. intrans. to seem, be accounted, reputed... 3. inpers. ... it seems to me; i.e. a. I think judge...” (Thayer, p. 154; 1380).*

Maybe you have judged and are of the opinion that you don’t have to worry about what the Scriptures say about things. Maybe you can do what Solomon could not do? You can set aside Scripture as you like because they are actually void of power and speak with no real meaning (*vain*). James has already used this term to describe the “vain man” who thinks that faith without works will save him. Now he repeats the same emptiness and applies it to Scripture.

*“kenos,... empty; 1. prop. of places, vessels, etc., which contain nothing... metaph. empty, vain; devoid of truth... 2. of men, empty-handed, without a gift:... metaph. destitute of spiritual wealth, ... 3. metaph. of endeavors, labors, acts, which result in nothing, vain, fruitless, without effect... in vain to no purpose...” (Thayer, p. 343; 2756)*

*kenos outside the NT. ... 1. Lit. “empty,” “without content,” ... 2. Fig. a. of persons, “hollow,” “vain,” ... In biblical Gk. the moral element becomes stronger. ... not just foolish and vain but useless and careless persons ... “frothy,” “frivolous,” ...” (Kittel, TDWNT NT:2756)*

*kenos ... 1. of things, empty, opp. to full ... 2. metaph. empty, vain, ... to no purpose, in vain, ... II. of persons, 1. c. gen. void, destitute, bereft, ... Soph.: -empty of wit, empty-headed, (Liddell and Scott, Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT 2756)*

Who would dare to even speak such blasphemy? Anyone with any faith at all knows all Scripture is given by inspiration and nothing is vain. Yet that is the only real alternative if we don’t repent and change our thinking. God not only has the wisdom to see that everything He speaks is true. He also has the power to make it true.

Many Christians have sought and searched for a specific Scripture that teaches this truth. But there is no single verse in the Old or New Testament that makes this exact statement. But though there is no single Scripture, the entire OT breathes it in example after example. It appears Eve was moved by it when she hoped to be like God, God warned Cain of exactly the same thing James speaks of here.

*but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6 So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." Gen. 4:5-7*

It is a recurrent theme throughout the Scriptures. "Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, 'Give me children, or else I die!'" (Gen. 30:1). Joseph's brothers envied him when he spoke of his dreams (Gen. 37:11; Acts 7:9). We see it with Moses and Korah. When God saw it in Aaron and Miriam in their feelings toward Moses, He dealt with it swiftly and clearly. When it reared up again in King Saul, as he sought to kill David, but only ended up dead. Over and over again the scriptures we see this. There is no denying that this is the truth. It worked in their members. It will work the same in ours!

It is spoken of in the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

*A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones. Pr. 14:30*

*Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind. Ecc. 4:4*

One of the most enlightening is seen in what Pilate saw in the Jewish leaders and later in others of Israel.

*Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. 9 But Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" 10 For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. Mark 15:8-10*

*But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Acts 13:45-46*

*But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. Acts 17:5*

The one passage that sets this forth as clearly as anywhere in the New Testament Scriptures is the one where Paul condemned those in Corinth for exactly the same thing and later told them that *agape* - love would remove it.

*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; 3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? 4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? 1Cor. 3:1-4*

*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1Cor. 13:4-7*

There are many passages that express exactly what James does here.

*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Gal 5:25-26*

*Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: 16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; 17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. Phil 1:15-18*

*If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, 4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, 5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. 1 Tim 6:3-5*

*For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. Titus 3:3-4*

With all these passages do we think the Scriptures speak in vain? Do we honestly believe we can set all this aside and it won't be a problem to us? What Solomon could not do, no one else can do. No Scripture speaks in vain and if we don't listen, someday, we too will be caught.

### “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?”

Although there are two distinct and differing possible translations of this phrase, only one really fits the context of all that was just said. This is not a compliment since God needs to give more grace as a result. All the translations except the NASB and NKJV take the same view. While these later translations are a fair way to translate the words, it doesn't fit the context or agree with the other translations.

*scripture saith in vain, **The spirit** that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? (KJV)*  
*speaketh in vain? Doth **the spirit** which he made to dwell in us long unto envying? (ASV)*  
*says without reason that **the spirit** he caused to live in us envies intensely? (NIV)*

*the Scripture says in vain, “**The Spirit** who dwells in us yearns jealously”? (NKJ)*  
*speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires **the Spirit** which He has made to dwell in us”? (NAS)*

As note above, Eve clearly yearned enviously for God's knowledge as the pride of life took control. Cain's clearly yearned enviously for his brothers praise and Joseph's brothers yearned jealously for his dreams. It just goes on and on and on. This is a major problem of the human race and one we must seriously consider.

Whenever the Greek term “*pneuma*” is used, we are forced to wrestle with the same questions. Should this be capitalized as the Holy Spirit or lower case for my spirit? The translators only have the context to decide. There is nothing in the word itself.

*“pneuma... 1. a movement of air, (gentle) blast; a. of the wind..., hence the wind itself... b. breath of the nostrils or mouth often in Greek writings... the breath of life... 2. the spirit, i.e. the vital principle by which the body is animated... the rational spirit, the power by which a human being feels, thinks, wills, decides; the soul... to pneuma is the rational part of man, the power of perceiving and grasping divine and eternal things, and upon which the Spirit of God exerts its influence;... 3. a spirit, i.e. a simple essence, devoid of all or at least all grosser matter, and possessed of the power of knowing, desiring, deciding, and acting;... b. a human soul that has left the body... c. a spirit higher than man but lower than God, i.e. an angel... 4. The Scriptures also ascribe a pneuma to GOD, i.e. God's power and agency-- distinguishable in thought... from God's essence in itself considered... The Holy Spirit... 5. univ. the disposition or influence which fills and governs the soul of any one; the efficient source of any power, affection, emotion, desire, etc...” (Thayer, p. 520-523; 4151)*

The vocabulary and word order of the verse are:

πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν,  
to envy is lusting the spirit that is dwelling in us

This is all the translators have to work with and some of these terms are ambiguous because they can be translated in more than one way. But I believe after careful study we will be led to the conclusion that the translations that have our spirit are the correct rendering.

The preposition translated “to” is used with the accusative to denote a direction, position or state. Hence the spirit is set in the direction, position and state of lusting toward envy.

*“pros. a preposition, ... I. with the ACCUSATIVE ... to, towards, ... denoting direction towards a thing, or position and state looking towards a thing... 1. of the goal or limit towards which a movement is directed... e. of an intended end or purpose... Eph 4:12...” (Thayer, Joseph Henry, op. cit., p 541-543)*

The intended direction of the spirit was to dwell within us. But in dwelling within us it longs to “envy.” This term is defined:

*“phthonos... envy, is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing the advantage or prosperity of others; this evil sense always attaches to this word...” (\*Vine vol 2 p 37; 5355)*

*“phthonos... a state of ill will toward someone because of some real or presumed advantage*

experienced by such a person - 'envy, jealousy.' (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:5355)

This term is only used in an evil way in the NT, which is one of the stronger arguments that it is out of place to translate this with the Holy Spirit since it is never used anywhere else in Scripture in a good way. It is not like zealous that has both a good and bad side.

*“phthonos... , masc. noun. Envy, jealousy, pain felt and malignity conceived at the sight of excellence or happiness (Matt 27:18; Mark 15:10; Rom 1:29; Phil 1:15; 1 Tim 6:4; Titus 3:3; James 4:5). phthónoi, envyings, bursts of envy (Gal 5:21; 1 Peter 2:1). Phthónos, unlike zelos (2205), zeal, is incapable of good and always is used with an evil meaning. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT: 5355)*

When our spirit is “lusting” toward this evil “envy, jealousy, and the pain felt and malignity conceived at the sight of excellence of happiness,” it is never a good thing and no good thing comes from it.

*“epipotheo... to long for, desire... to be possessed with a desire for, long for,... to pursue with love, to long after... absol. to lust [i.e. harbor forbidden desire]... (Thayer, p. 241 NT:1971).*

*epipotheo.... : to long for something, with the implication of recognizing a lack - ‘to long for, to deeply desire, deep desire.’ ‘the spirit which he has placed in us longs jealously’ or ‘the spirit that he placed in us is filled with jealous desire’ James 4:5. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT 1971)*

*epipotheo.... “to long for greatly” (a strengthened form of potheo, “to long for,” not found in the NT), is translated “I long,” in Rom 1:11; in 2 Cor 5:2, RV, “longing” (KJV, “earnestly desiring”); in 1 Thess 3:6 and 2 Tim 1:4, RV, “longing” (KJV, “desiring greatly”); (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:1971)*

Man’s spirit longs toward envy, jealousy and selfishness. Though God made man upright, since the fall, man has tended toward these terrible emotions. The marvel of it all is that God didn’t just give up in disgust. But instead, God gave greater “grace.” He actually became more merciful and compassionate as man degraded to a lower and lower levels. This is the wonder and amazing love and mercy of our God. As man went lower and lower, God continued to lower the standards so he could meet them. This came a great cost to Himself. He had to offer His Son as the sacrifice to make this possible.

## **6 But He gives more grace. 6 But He gives a greater grace.**

Whether we are fully aware of the above in our heart of hearts is doubtful. We simply can’t see how far into envy and jealousy we are influenced. But it is a universal problem that we must all become aware of. We have been promised however that even though God can see it clearly within us, He still gives us greater grace as we catch up.

This is a gift God offers to all Christians as they grow from ignorance into knowledge and weakness into strength. It is truly our only hope for salvation, because no matter how long we are allowed to live we will never reach perfection and worthiness. We are to repent of all we know about and all we are aware of and we change our convictions as quickly as we learn that we are wrong, but the sad truth is that without this wonderful promise we could have not hope. God gives us us greater grace when we are striving as hard as we can to must the strength and effort to grow.

Since this is something God “gives,” it is something we can ask for.

*“didomi... to give... A. absolutely and generally... B. In construction... I to give something to some one, - in various senses; 1. of one’s own accord to give one something, to his advantage; to bestow; give as a gift... 2. to grant, give to one asking, let have... 3. to supply, furnish, necessary things... 4. to give over, deliver, ... 5. to give what is due or obligatory, to pay: wages or reward... 6. didomi is joined with nouns denoting an act or an effect... “ (Thayer, p. 145-147; 1325)*

God, of His own accord, bestows, gives as a gift, supplies, furnishes and delivers greater grace to us. He saw the need that we had and He met it for us. The term “greater” was a superlative term for Greek speaking people. It is defined:

*“megas... great; 1. predicated a. of external form or sensible appearance of things (or persons); in particular, of space and its dimensions-- as respects... bb compass and extent; large, spacious... gg. measure and height... long... b. of number and quantity, numerous, large... used of intensity and degree... of natural events powerfully affecting the senses, i.q. violent, mighty, strong... 2 predicated of rank, as*

belonging to a. persons, eminent for ability, virtue, authority, power; ... univ. *eminent, distinguished... something higher, more exalted, more majestic...* b. things to be esteemed highly for their importance, ... 3. *splendid, prepared on a grand scale...*" (Thayer, Joseph Henry, op. cit., p. 394-395; 3173).

What God gave to those men and women of faith was grace prepared on a grand scale. It was more exalted, more majestic, distinguished and eminent grace. He gave grace that was large in extent, long in measure, numerous in quantity, mighty in intensity and eminent in rank. By using such a superlative, the Spirit gives us the comfort and hope that God's character and mercy ought to bestow and instill in our hearts.

Again, God's grace always exceeds the flaws in our heart. The gospel was designed and planned to far exceed any character flaw and depths of degradation that man could possibly descend into. There is no person who has ever lived who has sunk so low or become so degraded, or allowed his character so much latitude to grow that it has exceeded God's grace. Even in these worst areas of human conduct coupled with the vile things such character weaknesses bring about God's grace is greater.

The term "grace" is defined:

*charis* ... connected with *charin* is first of all that property in a thing which causes it to give joy to the hearers or beholders of it,... and then, seeing that to a Greek there was nothing so joy-inspiring as grace or beauty, it implied the presence of this, ... *charis* after a while came to signify not necessarily the grace or beauty of a thing, as a quality appertaining to it; but the gracious or beautiful thing, act, thought, speech, or person it might be, itself—the grace embodying and uttering itself, where there was room or call for this, in gracious outcomings toward such as might be its objects; not any longer 'favour' in the sense of beauty, but 'the favour'; (Trench's Synonyms of the NT:5485)

"*charis... grace*; Latin *gratia*: I. *outward grace or favour (as we say well or ill favoured), grace, loveliness, Hom., etc.*; II. *grace or favour felt, whether on the part of the Doer or the Receiver*: 1. on the part of the Doer, *grace, graciousness, kindness, goodwill, ... for or towards one, ...* 2. on the part of the Receiver, *the sense of favour received, thankfulness, thanks, gratitude, ... for a thing, ... to acknowledge a sense of favour, feel grateful, ... to feel gratitude to one for a thing, ...* (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT: 5485)

"*charis... grace*; i. e. 1. prop. that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, *sweetness, charm, loveliness*: grace of speech... 2. *good will, lovingkindness, favor*: in a broad sense... (*favor* (i.e. act of favoring...)) ... used of the kindness of a master towards his inferiors or servants, and so esp. of God towards men... ...the word *charis* contains the idea of *kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved...* pre-eminently of that kindness by which God bestows favors even upon the ill-deserving, and grants to sinners the pardon of their offenses, and bids them accept eternal salvation through Christ... 4. *thanks* (for benefits, services, favors). to be thankful to one..." (Thayer, p. p 665-666; 5485)

Of all the terms that can be used to describe the character of one who is in the position to give things to another, this term is one of the sweetest. It begins with the character of the person giving. It refers to a sweetness that leads to good will, lovingkindness and favor. This is the heart of grace. Grace is an emotion that leads to action. It is kindness and feelings of favor.

God holds humanity as something very special to Him. He has feelings of kindness, mercy and love toward them. This prompts Him to give us things that we do not deserve or merit.

*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. Eph 2:4-10*

**Therefore He says: God resists the proud, Therefore {it} says, God is opposed to the proud,**

Since this is a conclusion, it is important to tie the two together.

*dio* relatively emphatic markers of result, usually denoting the fact that the inference is self-evident - 'therefore, for this reason, for this very reason, so then.' (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:1352)

There is a “*inference that is self evident*” here and before we move further we must find and understand it. Since our spirit longs for and strongly desires the fruits of envy and malice when confronted with someone who is better than we are, God found the need to give greater grace to those who truly wanted to serve Him. It is for this reason that is self-evident, that God will resist the proud and give grace to the humble.

What is James’ point? That since we are now aware of the tendency to feel envy whenever someone gets something better than we thought they should under the circumstances to become humble and recognize that our feelings are out of bounds and have no place. Pride exacerbates the problem of envy. The more pride we have the problems we are going to have. In our own best interests God is going to have to resist and help us overcome it.

“*huperephanos*... the proper seat of the *huperphania* ... is within. **He that is sick of this sin compares himself, it may be secretly or openly, with others, and lifts himself above others, in honor preferring himself**; The bearing of the *uperphanos* toward others is not of the essence, is only the consequence, of his sin. His ‘arrogance,’ as we say, his claiming to himself of honour and observance

“*huperephanos*... **is the one who with pride, arrogance and foolish presumption brags of his position, power and wealth and despises others.** (Kittel, TWDNT NT 5244)

“*huperephanos*... “**showing oneself above others**” (*huper*, “over,” *phainomai*, “to appear”), is always used in the NT in the evil sense of “**arrogant, disdainful, haughty**”; it is rendered “haughty” in Rom 1:30 and 2 Tim 3:2, Jas. 4:6, and 1Pet. 5:5; I (Vine’s Expository Dictionary, NT:5244),

“*huperephanos*... 1. *showing oneself above others, overtopping, conspicuous above others, pre-eminent*,... 2. especially in a bad sense, **with an overweening estimate of one’s means or merits, despising others or even treating them with contempt, haughty**...” (Thayer, 641; 5244)

This is a difficult term to nail down because it has a large variety of meanings. It focuses on an attitude of self-importance that stems from the selfishness we never quite grew out of in our youth. Because we are SO important others have not importance and no value in the eyes of some afflicted with this sin. They don’t care, can’t empathize or sympathize with others. They despise others and see them as a hindrance and a problem when they keep us from getting what we believe we should be receiving. The Old Testament term that was used in the quotation takes it from a little different perspective:

“*luwts* (loots); a primitive root; properly, to make mouths at, i.e. to scoff; (Strong’s, Concordance OT:3887)

“*luwts* (loots); ... A verb meaning to boast, to scorn, to mock, to deride, or to imitate. This Hebrew verb is frequently found in the book of Proverbs (Prov 9:7,8; 13:1; 20:1), and means to deride or to boast so as to express utter contempt. The activity of the scornful is condemned as an abomination to people (Prov 24:9) and contrary to the Law of the Lord (Ps 1:1). (Complete Word Study Dictionary: OT:3887)

Pride is a terrible emotion and state of mind that some in the human race have fallen into. It is a fatal flaw in our character and one that God’s grace cannot help. It must be destroyed. There is no excuse for it because there is no reason for it. Everything that man possesses is a gift. His soul, body, mind, emotions, looks, possessions, health, and every other thing. Nothing we possess can lead us to pride. It should lead to humility.

*For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? 1Cor. 4:7*

*For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. Rom. 12:3-4*

The only thing God can do with the proud is seek to undermine and remove it. He will therefore resist and overthrow them.

*antitasso* anti, against, tasso, to arrange, originally a military term, to range in battle against, and frequently so found... to set oneself against, resist...” (Vine Vol 3 p 286; NT:498).

*antitasso... to post in adverse array, as an army; mid. to set one's self in opposition, resist... to be averse...*" Harpers Analytical Concordance p. 33; NT:498 )

*antitássœ*; from *antí* (473), against, and *tássœ* (5021), to arrange. To set an army in array against, to arrange in battle order. In the NT, *antitássomai* is used metaphorically to set oneself in opposition to or in array against, to resist (Acts 18:6; Rom 13:2; James 4:6; 5:6; 1 Peter 5:5; Sept.: Prov 3:34). (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:498)

This was originally a military term of setting up both sides in an arrangement in which they will oppose each other in battle. God sets himself in opposition toward and resists those who are proud. The proud need to realize that pride is an emotion that leads to God's going to battle against them. God sets himself in opposition against the proud. In order to help any human being reach his potential, pride must be broken, and God will do all He can to break it. The proud can count on God's opposition to this attitude. There is only one thing one can do with pride, kill it. God will never bless one of His servants who possesses it. He will have to knock it out of us.

**but gives grace to the humble."**

The characteristic that God most desires to see in humanity is "*humility*."

*"tapeinos... low ... a. prop. not rising far from the ground... b. metaph a. as to condition, lowly, of low degree... i. q. brought low with grief, depressed, B. lowly in spirit, humble... (Thayer, 614; 5011)*

*"tapeinos... low in situation; of condition, humble, poor, mean, depressed, ... met. of the mind, humble, lowly, modest..." (Harper's Analytical Concordance p 397).*

*"tapeinos... to live in low regions, Pind.; of stature or size, low, ... 2. of the condition of persons, brought down, humbled, submissive, ... of low rank, lowly, mean, ... small, poor, weak, ... to be poorly off, ..." (from Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:5011)*

What is the essence of the definition above? Is it not the recognition of the created being and creature that he owes it all to his Creator? The human being who understands the nature of the creation and of redemption will be humble, lowly and modest. There is nothing to be proud of! Everything was a gift from our loving and gracious God.

Humility is only by product of the faith that comes to God.

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. Heb. 11:1-3*

Once we have the recognition and admit that we are created and that everything that is made is out of things that don't appear, we are prepared to be humble.

Those who understand this are humble and meet for their Master's use and God can offer them the greatest amount of grace that He can bestow. Hence by being humble we are positioning ourselves for the richest and most wonderful blessings the Lord can give in this life. This is a wonderful and powerful promise. God offers His grace, kindness and love to those who are destroying their pride and seeking to gain this humility.

*Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. 1 Pet 5:5-7*

*Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; 24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD. Jer. 9:23-24*

*The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate. Pr. 8:13*

*When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom. Pr. 11:2*

*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Pr. 16:18*

*For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Isaiah 57:15*

## **7 Therefore submit to God. Submit therefore to God. NASB**

James now makes another conclusion "*oun... a conjunction indicating that something follows from another necessarily*" By using this conjunction the Holy Spirit ties together the promise of the previous verse with the obvious conclusion of this one. It necessarily follows that since God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble that we ought to submit to God and thus show ourselves to be humble so we can enjoy the fullest benefits of His grace. The term "submit" is defined:

*"hupotasso... to arrange under, to subordinate; to subject, put in subjection... mid. to subject one's self, to obey; to submit to one's control; to yield to one's admonition or advice... to obey [R.V. subject one's self...] ... obey, be subject ..."* (Thayer, p. 645; 5293)

*hupotasso ... primarily a military term, "to rank under" (hupo, "under," tasso, "to arrange"), denotes (a) "to put in subjection, to subject,"* (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:5293).

God's greatest hope for all men is that they will willingly arrange themselves under His will. They will subordinate and subject themselves to His Word and obey it. All who listen to His wise and good counsel and submit to it are going to be blessed and will successfully fulfill all that must be done. Paul explained the difference between being the slaves of the terrible and selfish taskmaster of sin or being the slaves of the meek and gentle Savior in Romans 6-8. Jesus also summed it up:

*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Mt. 11:28-30*

We must never forget the wages of serving sin is eternal death, while the free gift of those who submit to God is eternal life. So this will be the greatest and most crucial decision that any of us will ever make. The further we take this the greater the blessings and the more wonderful the grace. We need to learn to give up more and more every day. To quit walking in our own understanding and trust in the Lord with all our heart. More and more of our time, mind, money, and life are given to Him. This is the true nature of submission to God. We give Him more and more of everything we have, and as we give up more and more to Him He can give more and more to us.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. 8 It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones. Pr. 3:5-8*

This is what Jesus did the entire time He dwelt among us on this earth. He came to do God's will and willingly set aside His own. This is exactly what God is seeking from His brethren.

*Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; 8 and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient (even) unto death, yea, the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; 10 that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of (things) in heaven and (things) on earth and (things) under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil. 2:5-11*

## **Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**

In order to submit to God we must resist the one who seeks to keep us in rebellion against Him. The term "*resist*" is the same term that was used earlier to describe God's opposition to the proud.

*antitássœ; from antí (473), against, and tássœ (5021), to arrange. To set an army in array against, to arrange in battle order. In the NT, antitássomai is used metaphorically to set oneself in opposition to or in array against, to resist (Acts 18:6; Rom 13:2; James 4:6; 5:6; 1 Peter 5:5; Sept.: Prov 3:34).*

(Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:498)

Just as God opposes the proud, the true servant of the Lord must oppose the devil. Since this was originally a military term, it reveals that Satan and God are on different sides and we must choose our side. This is a battle, and we must set ourselves in opposition against the devil. If we are to conquer the power that Satan holds in our lives, we must resist and oppose the temptations he places before us. Paul revealed some of the things we can do to resist him.

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; Eph. 6:10-23*

If we will put on this whole armor of God we will have the tools necessary to resist the devil as James described here. The Spirit of God promised us that if we resist the devil, he will “flee.”

*“pheugo... to flee, i.e. a. to flee away, seek safety by flight: absol. ... b. metaph. to flee(to shun or avoid by flight) something abhorrent, esp. vices: ... c. to be saved by flight, to escape safe out of danger... d. poetically, to flee away i. q. to vanish... “ (Thayer, p. 651; 5343)*

*pheugo* “to flee from or away” (Lat., fugio; Eng., “fugitive,” etc.), besides its literal significance, is used metaphorically, (a) transitively, of “fleeing” fornication, 1 Cor 6:18; idolatry, 10:14; evil doctrine, questionings, disputes of words, envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings, and the love of money, 1 Tim 6:11; youthful lusts, (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:5343)

As noted in the definition, it was used literally by Jesus of fleeing a place out of fear of destruction. But since this is the only place where it is used of Satan, we have to be careful. Some will describe him fleeing in fear of a strong Christian with his armor on, but that may be carrying this term further than it is intended. The Devil is depicted elsewhere as someone we should fear and not the opposite.

*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. 1Pet. 5:8-9*

No one could resist the devil better than Jesus, yet though he did depart from him, it was only to wait for a better opportunity in the future.

*Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time. Lk. 4:13*

This appears to be the furthest we would want to carry this figure. Yet the passage is given to offer hope for victory. If we resist, we will win and the battle will end in our foe withdrawing and us standing victorious in that confrontation. Yet the verse is not here to create any overconfidence. We should always fear and have an awe when it comes to the power of this great adversary and foe. Respect for the word of God and the concept of authority keeps one from going very far.

*Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” Jude 1:9*

The devil has a position of authority. We should fear him, we should resist him and know in our hearts that our confidence is in the power of the weapons God has given us to use against him.

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. 2Cor. 10:3-6*

## **Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.**

Another command (imperative mode) with a promise now follows the other. Since God can only be as close to each of us as we allow Him, it will always be our own initiative that will bring Him as close as possible. James has already described how we are to draw near to Him. We must repudiate all friendship with this world, become humble so God can give us more grace, and resist the devil who is the enemy of God. The more we remove ourselves from these hindrances, the closer we can be to God and this will allow God to respond.

*“eggizo... 1. trans. to bring near, to join one thing to another... 2. intrans. to draw or come near, to approach... in Sept. used esp. of the priests entering the temple to offer sacrifices or to perform other ministrations there... to worship God... to turn one’s thoughts to God, to become acquainted with him...”*  
(Thayer, 164; 1448)

This is exactly what Abraham did. Everything God asked him to do, he did it to the very best of his ability and at the end of his life, he became the only man that God called his friend. If we want God to consider us his friend and allow him to draw close to us, we have to remove all the things that would force him away from us.

We live in the midst of those who have chosen to live their lives out of the presence of the Lord. The pressure is always there to imitate them. We see the danger after the sons of God chose to marry the daughters of men and we soon had every imagination of the thoughts of men’s heart evil continually. If we truly want to draw near to God, we must set aside this life as a priority and seek those things that are above where Christ is seated. Life becomes so much simpler when we learn to submit to God. As more and more of our life is turned over to God, it becomes easier and easier to do all God asks. The real difficulty is found by those Christians who don’t fulfill the above commands. They keep just enough of the world to constantly have trouble.

## **Cleanse your hands, you sinners;**

This is not the direction we might have thought James would move after speaking of resisting the devil and drawing near to God. Is this a rebuking of a certain class of Christians here, or is this part of the process of drawing near to God? When he calls out to sinners is this only a certain class or group or should we all heed this call? After carefully studying the first few verse of 1 John, we have the answer.

*This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:5-10*

A normal part of walking in the light is confessing our sins and of course prior to that by repenting of them. If we are not confessing, we are not being forgiven and we are not drawing near to God. We are all sinners and we are all in need of cleansing our hands. If we can’t see that, then we are deceiving ourselves. This is not a specific rebuke to an evil group of Christians, but a clarion call to all Christians. This is all part of drawing near to God and to humbling ourselves in the sight of God. It is also the real heart of drawing near to God and also of resisting the devil. There is nothing high or noble here. We are constantly looking for committed sin and whenever we find it, we “cleanse” it.

*“katharizo... to make clean, to cleanse... ; a. from physical stains and dirt... to remove by cleansing... b. in a moral sense; aa. to free from the defilement of sin and from faults; to purify from wickedness... bb. to free from the guilt of sin, to purify... cc. to consecrate by cleansing or purifying... to consecrate, dedicate... 2. to pronounce clean in a levitical sense...”* (Thayer, p. 312; 2511)

The cleansing of the hands is another way of saying get your life cleansed. There is only way to get free from the defilement of sin and its guilt, we must repent of all sins and make up our minds that we will forever remove them from our lives. It certainly requires a resisting of the devil and the

temptations he casts in front of us. It also requires that we remove the veneer from sin and see it for what it is, a rebelling against God, a drawing near to the devil, a giving in to lusts, and the rebellion they cause, and it makes us a friend to the world and an enemy of God. There is no path to draw near to God but a path of continued repentance, contrition, and confession.

*The LORD is near them that are of a broken heart and contrite spirit. Ps. 34:18*

*I dwell with him that is of a humble and contrite spirit. Isa. 57:15*

*To this man will I look; to him that is poor and has a contrite spirit and that trembles at my word Isa. 66:2*

All sin separates us from God and He can't hear us until we remove it.

*Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear. 3 For your hands are defiled with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken lies, Your tongue has muttered perversity. Isa. 59:1-3*

This is why becoming acutely aware of this and continually searching for it is one of our greatest lines of defense. These things must be cleansed. We must get rid of them. James uses a different term for "sin:"

*"hamartolos... devoted to sin, a sinner ... In the NT distinctions are so drawn that one is called hamartolos who is a. not free from sin. In this sense all men are sinners... b. pre-eminently sinful, especially wicked... a. univ... Jas 4:8... b. Spec., of men stained with certain definite vices or crimes, e. g. the tax-gatherers..." (Thayer, p. 31; 268)*

Since this most often refers to those who are devoted to sin, pre-eminently sinful or especially wicked, we are again forced to question whether James is singling out the weaker Christians here, or is he expecting us to say "Is he talking about me?" Do I fit this description. Clearly as blood bought servants of the Lord by grace the answer is "no." But if we are speaking of what I have actually done since obeying the gospel and thinking of what more might have been done, we should all be saying:

*And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? 8 But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? 9 Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. 10 So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" Lk. 17:7-10*

Anyone who compares themselves to Jesus and all that he performed would have to admit that there absolute truth to this parable and its application. In this respect James could speak to any Christian in this manner.

### **and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**

The term "purify" is very close in meaning to "cleanse" above. It is defined:

*"hagnizo... to purify; 1. ceremonially... to cleanse themselves from levitical pollution by means of prayers, abstinence, washings, sacrifices... the pass. has a reflexive force, to take upon one's self a purification... 2. morally..." (Thayer, 7; 48)*

Instead of the hands, he now focuses on the heart. The heart is to be cleansed, purified or made holy. It is to become the dwelling place of God. If we want God to dwell within our hearts, if we want Him to draw near to us and bless us, then we must make our hearts a place where He is comfortable. The heart is the center of our being. For a fuller definition of the term see notes on 1:26. But carefully consider the shortened definition:

*"kardia,... 2. univ. kardia denotes the seat and centre of all physical and spiritual life; and a. the vigor and seat of physical life... b. the centre and seat of spiritual life, the soul or mind, as it is the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affection, purposes, endeavors... BB ... the faculty and seat of intelligence... GG of the will and character... the seat of the sensibilities, affections,*

*emotions, desires, appetites, passions...* (Thayer, p. 325-326; 2588).

The heart is the seat, essence and center of all that is man. It is where all decisions, plans, desires, emotions, purposes reside. It must be cleansed for it is from the heart that all sin proceeds:

*“Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? 18 “But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 19 “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. 20 “These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.” Matt 15:17-20*

In the midst of the lusts of the flesh, works of the flesh, deeds of the body and workings of the old man, we will all find the weaknesses and sins that still plague us. They are in our hearts because we opened the door to them in our youth and once present they are very difficult if not impossible to eradicate. We must cleanse this part of our being if we are to ever truly be near to the Lord.

James here calls them (and us?) doubleminded! This term is defined:

*“dipsuchos... double-minded; a. wavering, uncertain, doubting... b. divided in interests sc between God and the world: Jas 4:8... (Thayer, 153)*

Are we double-minded? Do we waver and doubt in our hearts in the realm of sin? When it comes to our lusts and desires whenever we waver and see sin as an enjoyment that tempts us instead of a wicked and vile thing that could separate us from God forever, we are clearly manifesting a double-mindedness. All who are sinners must first be double-minded because when the spirit is willing and the flesh is weak, we reflect our double-mindedness.

Those who hear the commands above at services and get excited about them and make up their minds to do them, then when they leave and find the temptations just too strong to fight against are double-minded. They cannot make up their minds what is the most important. James is clear here as to what they must do. Think about it!

While many would reserve these words not for all Christians, but only for those who are still weak and are not growing, it again seems safer to see this as the normal attribute of the Christian that we need to work to overcome. Even if we have been a Christian for many years, and have conquered many lusts and sinful desires we still have to add in all the things that James is leading to when he says, *“to him who knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin.”*

### **Lament and mourn and weep!      9 Be miserable and mourn and weep;**

Here is the nature of true repentance. We don't feel these emotions all the time, but whenever we need to cleanse our hands or purify our hearts, these are the emotions that need to be present. It is not just a little remorse of a small amount of sorrow. These are the deep feelings one ought to have whenever they find themselves in the condition spoken of above and know that they are a sinner.

*“talaiporeo... to toil heavily, to endure labors and hardships; to be afflicted; to feel afflicted and miserable: Jas 4:9... b. in Grk. writ... to afflict...” (Thayer, 613; 5003)*

Since this is in the middle voice, it is something we make ourselves feel whenever we need to cleanse ourselves. We need to feel the feelings similar to those after working hard all day to the point of exhaustion. We need to feel afflicted and miserable. We are in a sorry state and need to feel bad about it. We also need to mourn, which refers to the sorrow we feel over the terrible condition they are in.

We also need to mourn, which is the same term Jesus used when he said, *“blessed are they that mourn.”*

*pentheo .... to experience sadness or grief as the result of depressing circumstances or the condition of persons - ‘to be sad, to grieve for, to weep for, sorrow, grief.’ ...” (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:3996).*

This is the time for mourning. When we need our hands cleansed and our hearts purified. In

addition, we will need to “weep.”

“*klaio*, ... *to mourn, weep, lament*;... *to weep for, mourn for, bewail one*...” (Thayer, p. 347).

This are natural reactions to the sinful things God condemns so strongly. They are the proper and natural state of man if they we not hardened their hearts. If we feel these emotions, then there is great hope for us. If we crush them, and not act upon them, then we will never draw near to God, never submit to God and never resist the devil.

### **Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.**

The Spirit of God does not let go of this until He has fully expressed how critical the proper emotions of repentance and godly sorrow are manifested. When there is sin in the camp or in the heart, it is a time for great sorrow and gloom. It is not wrong to allow one’s joy and mirth to be changed into mourning and gloom after we have sinned. It is good and natural and we are blessed if we do it. It is certainly not a sign of spiritual immaturity. Whenever we have sinned, God is not laughing, and it is not a time for us to be laughing either. We should be “*mourning*” over any condition of weakness that has not yet been repented of and forgiven.

“*pentheo*... *to mourn* ... b. ... *to mourn for, lament, one*...” (Thayer, 500; 3996) “

We ought to love God enough to grieve when we are not as close to Him as we could be with no one to blame but ourselves. Every time we are brought face to face with sin, we are to mourn and sorrow and grieve. We need to be capable and willing to “turn” or change our state.

“*metastrepho*... *to turn about, turn around*...” (Thayer, 406; 3344)

“*metastrepho*... *to cause a change of state, with emphasis upon the difference in the resulting state - ‘to change to, to turn into, to cause to be different from, to transform.’* (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon Based NT:3344)

All joy, regardless of outward circumstances should immediately be turned to “gloom” any time we realize we have just sinned. It is not a casual moment.

“*katepheia*... *prop. a downcast look expressive of sorrow; hence shame, dejection, gloom, [A. V. heaviness].*...” (Thayer, 340; 2726)

*katepheia* probably denotes a downcast look, expressive of sorrow; hence, “dejection, heaviness”; it is used in James 4:9...” ( Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:2726)

*katepheia* ... a state of mental gloominess and dejection - ‘gloom, depression.’ (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:2726)

Our term depression fairly well fits this Greek term. We should be ashamed, dejected and filled with gloom over the prospects of meeting our God in an unprepared condition. Remember he is speaking to the worldly church member, the weak on who is double-minded and not giving himself completely to God.

### **10 Humble yourselves in the sight (*presence* NASB) of the Lord,**

This is the second of three times that James will emphasize the difference between the proud and the humble. He spoke of it in verse six when he contrasted the wars and fightings of those who are envious because of a proud and selfish midset that doesn’t allow them to see the harm they are causing. God’s promise there was that if we can become humble enough to recognize the world does not exist for our selfish uses, He can give us grace. But if we continue to remain proud, He will have no choice but to resist and battle against us.

Here the humility stems from our desire to submit to God and recognize that we are under His authority and His will for our lives is far better than our selfish and short-sighted one. If we can recognize the importance of humility it will ultimately lead to our being placed in a far greater position than if we had sought out our own glory. This time he uses the verb instead of the noun.

“*tapeinoo*... *to make low, bring low*... a. *to level, reduce to a plain*... b. *metaph. to bring into a humble condition, reduce to meaner circumstances*; i.e. a. *to assign a lower rank or place to; to abase*... c. *to*

*lower, depress, [Eng. humble]:... one's soul, bring down one's pride... to have a modest opinion of one's self, to behave in an unassuming manner devoid of all haughtiness..." (Thayer p 614)*

This was a theme that Jesus spoke of many times in His ministry. We must bring ourselves down to our true level and see ourselves in our own failure and folly before we can come to God empty enough for Him to fill. When we can see ourselves as a part of God's creation, created for His purposes, then we can become truly great and useful for Him.

Jesus spoke of the humility of children who recognize they are under the authority of their parents and teachers and made it clear that only when we see our relationship to God as these children can we become great in the kingdom of Heaven.

*At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, 3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore whoever **humbles** himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. Mt. 18:1-5*

Jesus also contrasted the terrible pride of the scribes and Pharisees with His own expectations of His servants. Their pride made them short sighted and therefore of little value to God. His servants must see themselves clearly. We are over no one and no abilities, accomplishments or mastery can ever lead us to be more than brethren to one another. Only those who humble themselves now as He did, can be exalted in the world to come.

*But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. 6 They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' 8 But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. 11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whoever exalts himself will be **humbled**, and he who **humbles** himself will be exalted. Mt. 23:5-12*

Jesus also spoke two parables in Luke to emphasize the importance of being humble and seeing ourselves as servants of God with nothing special about ourselves. The first was at a wedding feast where the self-importance of some of the guests had led them to pick the seats that they thought belonged to them. But when the one who invited all to the feast arrives, he might see things differently and move them lower. So also Jesus warns will God do on the day of judgement and only those who have been humble here will be exalted then.

*So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: 8 "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; 9 and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. 11 For whoever exalts himself will be **humbled**, and he who **humbles** himself will be exalted." Lk. 14:7-11*

*Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be **humbled**, and he who **humbles** himself will be exalted." Lk. 18:9-14*

Paul used this same term to describe the mind of Jesus Christ while He served God on earth. Since He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross, we too need to learn to have the same mind.

*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a*

*bondsman, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He **humbled** Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil. 2:5-11*

Humility is thus the recognition that this is God's world. He is the Creator and His will ultimately will be done. If we submit and help Him, we will be exalted on the last day. We have nothing that we did not receive. They are all gifts of God and we are to use them for His glory and to help serve others.

As Paul told the Corinthians and the Romans, all that we have either in ability and material attributes, or in spiritual growth and development, were gifts God gave to each of us at our birth. There is nothing we have that we did not receive and we should not act like we are somehow precious and special because we have them.

*that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. 7 For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? 8 You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us — and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you! 1Cor. 4:6-9*

*For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us Rom. 12:3-6*

Peter plainly states that they are all gifts and they were given to minister to each other. Again, no matter what innate special attributes we have, or the opportunities God has given us to serve, they were all gifts that we should praise God and humble ourselves in His sight because without Him, we would have and be nothing.

*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1Pet. 4:10-11*

When we can finally see these things clearly, it will be safe for God to bless us with other things. Paul had to be humbled before he could become great, so must we.

### **and He will lift you up. (exalt you. NASB)**

The term “*lift up*” forms the heart of this phrase.

*“hupsoo... to lift up on high, to exalt... metaph... to raise to the very summit of opulence and prosperity... simply TINA, to exalt, to raise to dignity, honor, and happiness...” (Thayer, 647; 5312)*

God can only exalt those who humble themselves, who recognize their sins and mourn over them who seek to resist the devil and to draw near to God in humble submission to His commands. This can be done through answered prayers, providence, and the judgement of being worthy of life.

James is going to make two powerful applications on the basis that we have agreed to the above truths. These things he now commands follow naturally from the above truths.

- \* The humble servant of the Lord will not presume to speak evil of or judge his brother (11-12).
- \* The humble servant of the Lord will not presume to plan for the future outside of the will of his Lord (13-17).

### **11 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren.**

It is interesting and important to note that James returns to this subject for the third time in his short book. The Spirit of God has already revealed us that we must bridle our tongue if our religion is to

be of any value (1:26). James also gave one of the most comprehensive and instructive passages anywhere in the Scripture (3:1-10), on the variety of dangers the tongue can place us in and the horrible damage it has done and continues to do in our world.

The fact that it is repeated again by the Spirit, manifests the extreme danger of where the tongue places us. The same envy that causes fights and wars also leads us to say terrible things about one another and only our own humility and recognition of our true place in God's plan can protect us. We are commanded (Greek Imperative) not to speak "*against one another*."

"*kata-laleo* to speak against one, to criminate, traduce..." (Thayer, 322; 2635)

"*kata-laleo*, "to importune someone with speeches," "to prattle something to someone.... "to blurt out"... esp. "to speak against, to accuse, someone," with a suggestion of the false and exaggerated: "to calumniate"... in the LXX ..."to scorn," "to mock at"... "to revile" "to calumniate" the main emphasis is on the hostility denoted by *kata-* whether against God, his servant Moses, or frequently ones neighbor... In the NT... the only emphasis and content of the group is that of speaking evil against one's neighbor... The essence of the matter is probably to be sought in the KATA-, I.e., in the hostility and malice of speech directed against one's neighbor.... uncharitableness rather than its falsity..." (Kittel, Vol 4 p 3-4)

The root term "*- laleo*" simply means to speak. It is in the prefix "*kata-*" that the sin arises. We are allowed to speak of our neighbor as long as the golden rule is observed. As long as the law of love, kindness and concern is being observed, then speaking of others can be a good and wholesome activity. It is the means of bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ.

But it is so easy that this fountain having put forth some sweet water can then move to putting forth the bitter as well. How often does a conversation that began with good intentions of speaking only good of someone degenerate into speaking evil. Where is the line? "*kata-*" When it drops to prattling, blurting out secrets, speaking against, scorning, mocking, belittling and just generally being uncharitable and unkind, then we must stop, or we must stop the one doing it in our presence.

A most difficult yet important question to ask ourselves centers on the line between concerned speaking about the faults of another and speaking evil of another. The line centers on *agape* - love. If we are truly acting in their best interests in this discussion, and only seeking help then all is well, but if we are passing on information only for the excitement of passing it on, then it is sin. When speaking of our brethren, we must be exceedingly careful that we do not violate this command. There is no excuse for speaking evil about another member of the Lord's church. It simply should not happen. The command here is that it does not happen.

"*allelon*... one another; reciprocally, mutually..." (Thayer, p. 28; 240)

### **He who speaks evil of (*against* NASB) a brother and (or - NASB) judges his brother,**

As James moves to his next point, he repeats the speaking against, then adds judging. This is very helpful in determining when we are crossing the line from right into wrong. If our conversation ever crosses into having to pass some type of judgement on a brother, then it is evil. When speaking about a brother or sister requires us to draw conclusions that we have no way of knowing, then we are first "*judging*" and then "*speaking evil*" of them.

"*krino*... 1. to separate, put asunder; to pick out, select, choose... 2. to approve, esteem... 3. to be of opinion, deem, think... 4. to determine, resolve, decree... 5. to judge; a. to pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong... Pass. to be judged, i.e. summoned to trial that one's case may be examined and judgement passed upon it,... b. to pronounce judgment; to subject to censure; of those who act the part of judges or arbiters in the matters of common life, or pass judgment on the deeds and words of others..." (Thayer, p. 361-362; 2919)

Judging a brother requires us to determine, resolve or decree something about his conduct. We then pronounce an opinion concerning the rightness or wrongness of what they have done. When we make these types of assessments on the words or deeds of others, then we are judging them. We are not to judge because God commands us not to do it. We can assess conduct on the basis

of God's Word, but we cannot make our own judgements. We are not equipped to do it. Those who do:

This is such a complicated passage. One fraught with danger on both sides. Carried too far to one extreme, we could never disfellowship, reprove, rebuke, and exhort, convict the gainsayer, mark the false teacher, or refuse the factious man.

Carried too far to the other extreme of not keeping it would allow us to gossip, pass any and all judgements on the conduct and character and pass those opinions on freely to others. This verse has to mean something, but our understanding cannot conflict with other commands. These are the commands that must be approached with the most caution. They are the most dangerous for the Christian. Here more than anywhere else the "when in doubt don't..." attitude will protect us. When we are commanded to pass judgment, we will pass it, as we are when sin is committed, or error is preached, then we will content ourselves to point out their own violation of the law as we have been commanded.

When we are commanded not to judge, then we will refuse to speak evil or judge a brother in that area. Even Jesus demanded that we never judge unless we are commanded to do so. This passage is very clear and specific. We are not to judge at all! That makes it simple. Now only when I am commanded to judge am I safe to do so. If there is not command to judge then we must never do it!

*"Do not judge lest you be judged. 2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. 3 "And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? 5 "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Mt. 7:1-5*

*"And do not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Lk 6:37*

*"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." Jn. 7:24*

Paul makes it clear that in the realm of those matters where God has not given any specific command for or against something, we are commanded not to judge and not to speak evil of someone who does not measure up to our own views of that matter.

*Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. Rom 14:3-4*

*But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." 12 So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. Rom 14:10-13*

*Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. 1 Cor 4:5*

God could not have been any clearer! We are not to pass judgment on any brother over matters where God has not spoken. Since the law changed, God no longer had anything to say about the Sabbath, food distinctions, feast days, or other matters he has left to each individual to decide for himself. In Romans 14 and 1Cor. 8-10, Paul lists many of these things. They are liberties that some enjoy and others forego, but neither side is right or wrong regardless of what they decide to do with it. Every general command God has placed in the Scriptures gives each Christian the right to choose how to fulfill it. No one has the right to speak evil of or judge a brother in these realms.

The simplest solution is the best. Unless we are commanded to judge we won't. Unless we are forced to act or speak we don't. This is not a contradiction but a serious limitation. When Jesus

commanded that if our brother sins against us, we must go and show him his fault, then we must judge. But since sin is the transgression of God's law, and it can't be a sin unless fit is a command that has been violated.

### **speaks evil of (against - NASB) the law**

James has already spoken of the law of liberty twice and there is no reason to think he is speaking of the Old Law here.

*But he who looks into **the perfect law of liberty** and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. Jas. 1:25*

*So speak and so do **as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.** Jas. 2:12*

*For **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** has made me free from the law of sin and death. Rom. 8:2*

*so fulfill **the law of Christ.** Gal. 6:2*

Jesus Christ is the one who gave these commands. If we do not abide under them, then we are manifesting a flagrant lack of respect for the law of Christ. We are actually speaking against it. One the one side is Jesus saying Don't judge and on the other is the Christian who is judging and not repenting for doing it. In that act he is not only speaking down the Christian, but also the law that forbids it.

Those who would rather argue that there is nothing wrong with what they have done instead of repenting and admitting what they did was a sin and a violation of Jesus law are manifesting the same arrogance and lack of humility as was condemned above. If we are truly filled with agape-love, we would never do such things.

*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1 Cor 13:4-7*

While few Christians would say it is a bad law, or an unfair law, or a ridiculous law, that does not allow us to by rude, think evil, or assume evil motives against another, if we easily set it aside with no remorse of repentance, then that it what we have done in practice.

### **and judges the law.**

This is an even graver charge. God gave the law of Christ to be obeyed, and those who submit to Him do so without question. Those with questions, or even worse those who take it upon themselves to decide which laws will apply to them and which ones do not have gone a step beyond rebellion. We are back into pride and arrogance again. God is the Creator, God is the law giver and the judge. No mere human could possibly judge God's law and decide which ones to keep and which ones to reject. To even consider that we might be able to do it takes great pride and no humility. Jesus has already said what will happen to anyone who rejects him or does not receive any of His sayings.

*48 "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. 49 "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak. (Jn 12:48-49).*

If we speak evil of or pass judgement on this law, mark it up and keep only what we desire we are acting in a very foolish manner. Jesus still has the original document on heaven. It is the original document in heaven that will judge us, not the marked up Bibles of today.

### **But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.**

In our society, we have judges whose job it is to judge laws. to decide whether laws should be kept or not. Such are the judges on America's supreme court. They determine whether laws are fair, constitutional and fairly meted out. If they determine that a law is not fair, or was not fairly

administered, they are empowered to overturn the case. In some cases they can even free the person who has been charged. Though nations need people with this type of power, God does not. God needs people who will keep His law. People who will humbly submit to all His commandments. Though our own society may deem some laws unconstitutional, decreeing that no one else need keep them, a Christian can not do it. Any Christian who does to the law of Christ, what these judges are doing does not comprehend the chain of authority and submission.

The only role for any law in the life of a Christian is to do and submit fully to it. When we comply with His laws, we are a law doer or a law keeper. But if we have decided that we have the strength, wisdom and ability to judge which of God's laws need to be kept and which ones can be set aside, we have placed ourselves on an equality with God himself as judge.

## **12 There is one Lawgiver, (and Judge NASB) who is able to save and to destroy.**

God is the Lawgiver and His Son Jesus Christ is the Mediator who gave it to us.

*6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. ... 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Heb 8:6, 10*

*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; Heb 1:1-2*

At the end of these days God speaks to us through His new covenant of which His Son the mediator. Now God is writing His laws in our heart through the Spirit.

*clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. 2 Cor 3:3*

With only God giving this law, and the Spirit and Jesus working with Him, the rest of us are only law - keepers not "lawgivers."

*"nomothetes... (nomos and tithemi), a lawgiver..." (Thayer, 427; 3550)*

This lawgiver has the ability to both save those who keep it and destroy those who do not. There is only one who can do this. Therefore we must submit to Him and not find ways to rebel by thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought. And deciding which laws we will keep and which ones we will set aside. This is especially true when we remember:

*For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. Jas. 2:10-13*

It doesn't matter what law we violate, we are still transgressors of the whole law. If we don't like what God said about any topic, we have only one choice. We either submit because He is God and we are humble enough to recognize that none of these laws are given except for our own good. Even the Law of Moses had that as its standard! How much more the law of Christ.

*And the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. 25 Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us.' Deut. 6:24-25*

We may not understand why, but every command, ordinance and expectation stated in the Scriptures is for our good and must be obeyed for it to be righteousness for us. If we refuse we don't have God any longer.

*Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 2Jn. 9*

Without God, we have no hope. If we don't trust Him or if we are not humble enough to submit to Him, Only God is "able" to save or destroy. It is folly to refuse submission and trust in Him.

*"dunamai... to be able, have power, whether by virtue of one's own ability and resources, or of a state of mind, or through favorable circumstances, or by permission of law or custom... to be able to do something... to be able, capable, strong, powerful..."* (Thayer, p. 158-159; 1410)

God has the power and the ability to save those who keep His law to His satisfaction and to destroy those who do not. Jesus used this same powerful truth in the gospels:

*"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him! Lk 12:4-5*

James speaks of the other side as well. If we submit to God and keep his commands, He has the power and ability to save. But if we reject His commands He has the power to destroy. discusses both God's ability to destroy and to save.

*"sozo... to save, to keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction (opp. to APOLLUMI)... a. univ., TINA ... one (from injury or peril); to save a suffering one (from perishing) e. g. one suffering from disease to make well, heal, restore to health: to preserve one who is in danger of destruction, to save (i.e. to rescue)... b. to save in the technical biblical sense; negatively, to deliver from the penalties of the Messianic judgment,... to save from the evils which obstruct the reception of the Messianic deliverance..."* (Thayer, p. 610-611; 4982)

Those who in pride and arrogance judge for themselves which parts they will keep and which parts they will not keep will be "destroyed."

*"apoleia,... 1. actively, a destroying, utter destruction... 2. passively, a perishing, ruin, destruction... in particular, the destruction which consists in the loss of eternal life, eternal misery, perdition, the lot of those excluded from the kingdom of God."* (Thayer, p. 70-71; 684)

### **Who are you to judge another (your neighbor NASB)?**

Who do we think we are if we do such a thing? What are we making of ourselves? When we elevate ourselves to the position of God, can we really believe that God will be pleased with our service? We have been commanded again and again not to Judge! We are to be humble human beings with enough difficulty living the Christian life ourselves, that we do not dare to pass any other judgements on others than we are specifically commanded to do. Who would we be making ourselves if we decide in spite of all this to judge our brother anyway? At this point every true child of God who is guilty of this ought to be hanging their head in shame. We ought to remember something Paul told the Corinthians when they were doing a similar thing with foods offered to idols. Are we stronger than He?

*Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He? 1 Cor 10:20-22*

### **13 Come now, you who say,**

"Come now" is made up of the imperative (command) Come! It may be an idiom like our "come on now!" or "oh come on!" which we often use to express a strong disbelief at the assertion or belief of another. While the term "come" generally means moving to a physical location, it can also be used as it is here for mental location.

*"age, ageite properly imperative of ago used as Adverb Come! Come on! Well! ..."* (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:33)

As an imperative command, it is forcing those who are thinking such thoughts to draw near to hear what James has to say. By adding "now," he adds urgency to the command. This needs to be done immediately.

*"nun... adv. now ... 1. adv. of Time, now, i. e. at the present time; ... it stands in a conclusion or*

sequence; as things now are, as the matter now stands; under these circumstances; in the present state of affairs; since these things are so; as it is..." (Thayer, p. 430; 3596)

It was used twice in a similar way in the Old Testament.

*I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure"; but surely, this also was vanity. Eccl. 2:1-2*

*"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; 20 But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword;" For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Isa. 1:18-20*

For the thinking Christian, who recognizes the sovereignty of God and the fragility of life such a statement could never be verbalized or thought. No wise and humble Christian would make a statement that expresses either control or power over any aspect of our lives. Those who have humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God recognize the folly of such a statement. We simply do not have this kind of dominion. This is something that only God can do. So if we have ever said such a thing we are now compelled to come before the Holy Spirit to hear His verdict on all such thoughts or words.

**"Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit" (engage in business and make a profit. NASB)"**

At first glance, the statement does not really appear too far out of line. We all might be asked: "What are you going to do today? and answer "Today I am going to..." We could also be asked: "What are you going to do tomorrow?" and again we might answer: "Tomorrow I am going to..."

Those who work and live among those in the world will now really see much if any problem with these words. Because this is clearly the philosophy and attitude of all worldly people who do not believe or trust in God. First, it makes the flawed assumption that what happened today is exactly what is going to happen tomorrow. Life just continues on as it always has. Yet this is the very thing Peter had warned against.

*knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." 5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, 6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. 7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 2Pet. 3:3-7*

It is also the exact opposite of how Paul told us think whenever we consider something that is to happen in the future. The Second coming of Christ is going to come without warning and we must always be prepared for it.

*But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 1Th. 5:1-5*

It can't overtake us as a thief because we are always ready and prepared for it to happen and our thinking and planning for the future is prefaced with this understanding. We don't know what tomorrow will bring and we are not looking at the continuation of this life in this way.

Second, it fails to consider or take into consideration that we are no longer our own, but have been bought with a price. We have a master who is in control of all things and before we make any statements about what we are going or not going to do we have to take into consideration that God also has plans for our lives which may not include what we want. And that is the essential issue with this statement. It marks out the difference between those who are proud and those who are humble. The more humble we become the more we will recognize our own insignificance in this

world. We did not choose when we were born, we have no control over the health or weaknesses of our body, We do not know when we are going to die, and we have absolutely no control over any of the events of this world.

Hence to make the statement “**TODAY** or **TOMORROW** We **SHALL** go to **THIS** city, **SPEND** a year there, **BUY** and **SELL** and make a **PROFIT**,” is far too proud and arrogant for any true servant of the Lord to say them. If we want to be truly humble and submissive servants of the Lord, we must stop thinking and saying things in this way.

We have no control over today or tomorrow, so to speak of any future event as though we have such control is where the problem begins. This is what James is going to reveal to us and force us to take into consideration whenever we are speaking about the future. Everyone one of these verbs are in the future tense and are assumptions based on our ability and are therefore completely inappropriate for a Christian to say.

We can make the plans, but we have to submit them to the Lord and allow Him to determine what will actually occur. Choosing which city we are going to be and expressing exactly what is going to happen while there is the root of the problem.

They are going to “*carry out and execute*” the plans that are in their mind.

*poieo*... II *to do*... i.e. to follow some method in expressing by deeds the feelings and thoughts of the mind... a. univ., with adverbs describing the mode of action... with nouns which denote a command, or some rule of action POIO signifies *to carry out, to execute*... in bibl. Grk. to *do* the law, meet its demands... weith nouns describing a plan or course of action, *to perform, accomplish*...” (Thayer, p. 524-527; 4160)

While there, they have it fixed in their minds that they are to “*trade - buy and sell*.” Using the term from which we get “*emporium*.”

*emporeuomai*... (from *emporos* which see); to go a trading, to travel for business, to traffic, trade (Thucydides and following; the Sept.): James 4:13...” (Thayer’s, NT:1710)

*emporeuomai*... to carry on a business involving buying and selling - ‘to be in business, to engage in a business, to trade, business.’ (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT 1710)

They also have it in their minds that all this trading is going to end with gain.

*kerdaino* ... to gain by means of one’s activity or investment - ‘to earn, to gain, to make a profit.’ ... ‘we shall go into business and make a profit’ James 4:13; (from Greek-English Lexicon NT:2770)

*kerdaino* ... to gain by means of one’s activity or investment - ‘to earn, to gain, to make a profit.’ ‘we shall go into business and make a profit’ James 4:13; ... ‘he invested his money (literally ‘he did business with them’) and earned another five’ Matt 25:16; ; ‘what will a person accomplish if he gains the whole world but is himself lost or must suffer for it?’ Luke 9:25. ... ‘your mina ... has earned five minas’ Luke 19:18...” (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:2770)

Thus the entire statement is one of control and power that can only be made by one who holds his own destiny in his hand. To make this statement literally we would have to know that we are not going to die and not going to get sick, the Lord is not going to return, the world is going to be what it is today, no plans are not going to change, the city will still be there, and we will have the power to make that a profit and not a loss.

Truly humble people recognize that they have no control over any of these things. “*spending a year there*” stresses control over time and life. “*make a profit*” stresses control over success and failure.

**14 whereas (yet - NASB) you do not know what will happen (what your life will be like - NASB) tomorrow.**

This is the truth that all men must acknowledge if they are to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. As human beings, we have no idea what our life will be like tomorrow. There is absolutely no way for us to know what tomorrow will be like. James captures this with the term “*whereas*” which infers the consequence or reason why the above statement should not have been

made.

“*hostis*...2. it refers to a single person or thing, but so that regard is had to a general notion or class to which this individual person or thing belongs, and thus it indicates quality: *one who, such as one as, of such a nature that*... 3. Akin to the last usage is that whereby it serves to give a reason, *such as equiv. to seeing that he, inasmuch as he*... 4. Acc to a later Greek usage it is put for the interrogative *tis* in direct questions...” (Thayer, p. 457; 3748)

This term gives “a general notion” or “reason” and could also be translated “seeing that” or “inasmuch as.” So this is the true reason why such statements should never be made. The simple truth is that no one knows the future or what will happen tomorrow.

Will a natural disaster forever change all the we know and have? Will a man made disaster change everything? Will I die, will I become disabled, will the Lord return? We just don’t know and we need to become humble enough to admit it. The term “know” is defined:

*epistamai* ... a: to possess information about, with the implication of an understanding of the significance of such information - ‘to know.’ (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon NT:1987)

*epistamai* ... c. inf. to know how to do, to be able to do, capable of doing, Hom., Att. 2. to be assured or believe that a thing is, II. c. acc. to understand a matter, know, be versed in or acquainted with, Hom., etc.: -after Hom. to know as a fact, know for certain, know well, Hdt., Att. (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:1987)

This term is used less than 15 times in entire New Testament. As can be seen by the definitions, it is a term used for those who “*possess information and understand the significance of the information,*” or “*to understand a matter as a fact or certainty.*” One cannot turn their attention with this type of knowledge. As we say, “hindsight is 20/20!” We can see the past with certainty but the future is unseen. We cannot become acquainted with it. There is nothing to fix upon and nothing to become acquainted with. It is still a blank page with nothing written upon it. Only God knows how this page will be written.

### **For what is your life?**

With “*gar* the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added.”

The reason the above statements are so foolish is that our life has no permanency to it. We have no control over the day. We cannot keep our life. What is life? The term “what is defined:

“*poios*... of what nature? of what sort? Lat. *qualis*? used in questions: expressing surprise and anger,...” (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:4169)

What sort of life are we living, what is its essential nature and quality? What does it consist of and what is it made of? Is it a solid stable firm and fixed reality? No, after the curse and with the introduction of death, God now informs us of the nature of life, brace yourselves, this is a humbling statement:

### **It is even (You are {just} - NASB) a vapor that appears for a little time (while - NASB) and then vanishes away.**

It is only a vapor. A mist, a fog, the white droplets of water that form in the cool of the morning or the steam that is coming off the boiling water.

*atmis* a hot steamy vapor - ‘steam,’ ‘signs on the earth below; there will be blood and fire and steam’ Acts 2:19. *atmis* is also used figuratively: ‘for you are a vapor which appears for a moment’ James 4:14. An important connotation in the use of the term *atmis* is the fact that it disappears so readily. This is a particularly significant element in James 4:14. The closest equivalent of *atmis* is normally a term which refers to the steam rising from a boiling pot or cauldron. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon Based NT 822)

He draws his own conclusion. It appears for a little time and then it is gone. The term “appear” is defined:

“*phaino*... to bring forth into the light, cause to shine; to show. in bibl. Grk. 1. ... to shine, shed light...”

a. *to shine, be bright or resplendent...* b. *to become evident, to be brought forth into light, come to view, appear...* (Thayer, p. 647-648; 5316)

*phaino* ... signifies, in the active voice, "to shine"; in the passive, "to be brought forth into light, to become evident, to appear." (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:5316)

It comes into view, you can see it, for a little while:

"*oligos...* *little, small, few*, of number, multitude, quantity, or size: joined to nouns... of time, *short*: ... of degree or intensity, *light, slight...* *in brief, briefly...*" (Thayer, p. 443; 3641)

Then it "vanishes:"

"*aphanizo...* a. *to snatch out of sight, to put out of view, to make unseen, ...* b. *to cause to vanish away, to destroy, consume...* c. *to deprive of lustre, render unsightly; to disfigure...*" (Thayer, 88; 853)

*aphanizomai* ... to cease to exist, with the implication of no longer being evident or visible - 'to cease to exist, to disappear, to die, disappearance...' (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:853)

*aphanizomai* ... a: to become such as not to be seen - 'to become invisible' (in the passive, 'to disappear, to vanish'). 'you are like a mist that appears for a moment and then vanishes' James 4:14. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domain, NT: 853)

Suddenly it is gone, without a trace. With a mist, it often doesn't even leave any water on the ground to mark its passing. This is God's definition of human life. It is the very heart and theme of Ecclesiastes and why life under the sun is so vain, and nothing in the gospel has changed this. We have no control over our life. We cannot extend it even by a cubit. Therefore we cannot control the future and are truly foolish to make plans on the basis that we can.

There are many passages in the Old Testament that teach similar things so this isn't something new for them. They should have known this.

*Lord, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am. 5 Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor. Selah 6 Surely every man walks about like a shadow; Surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up riches, And does not know who will gather them. Ps. 39:4-6*

*Boast not thyself of tomorrow; For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. Pr. 27:1*

*But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You. 15 For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, As were all our fathers; Our days on earth are as a shadow, And without hope. 1Chron. 29:14-15*

*For He remembered that they were but flesh, A breath that passes away and does not come again. Ps. 78:39*

**15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and (also -NASB) do this or that."**

The problem with the statements above and the solution to the problem is now offered. The term "instead" is defined:

"*anti...* 1. prop. it seems to have signified *over against, opposite to, before*, in a local sense... Hence 2. indicating exchange, successions, *for, instead of, in place of* (something). a. univ. *instead of...* b. of that *for* which anything is given received, endured..." (Thayer, p. 50; 473)

James now places the true and humble reality as properly stated in direct contrast to the improper statement of pride, arrogance, and illusion above. The main issue goes right back to earlier statements in this chapter.

*6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ... 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*

The pride in the statement of verse 13 is now contrast with the humility of this one. We need to bring the mighty hand of God into all calculations for the future. We need to consider His will in all our plans for the future.

*“thelo... to will, (have in mind,) intend; i.e. 1. to be resolved or determined, to purpose ... 2. to desire, to wish:...”* (Thayer p 285-286; 2309)

What does God have in mind, what does He intend? What does He desire and want? This is a critical question that all humble and submissive Christians never get far from. It is only if God wills that we will be “living” tomorrow:

*“zao... to live... I prop. 1. to live, be among the living, be alive (not lifeless, not dead)... 2. to enjoy real life, i.e. to have true life and worthy of the name, --active, blessed, endless in the kingdom of god... 3. to live i. e. pass life, of the manner of living and acting; of morals or character...”* (Thayer, p. 269-270; 2198)

Only God has the power and the control and we need to submit to His mighty hand. Jesus spoke often of the will of God and His presence here to fulfill it. Even the one who truly had dominion refused to speak the way worldly people do.

I am not sure if what James is after is our own desire that God give us what we think is best and not what we ourselves want or if he is more concerned about our will getting in the way of His. We need to be humble and submissive enough to want both of these things. We *“know that all things work together for good to those who love God,”* (Rom. 8:28), so we don't want anything that God doesn't want for us. One of the classic examples of this is Hezekiah, who seeks to impose his own desires over God's, and although God graciously gave him an extra 15 years of life, it was not better for Hezekiah as he thought it would be.

*“Thus says the Lord: ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.’” 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, 3 and said, “Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly. 4 And the word of the Lord came to Isaiah, saying, 5 “Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years. Isa. 38:1-6”*

*In those days Hezekiah was sick even unto death: and he prayed unto Jehovah; and he spake unto him, and gave him a sign. 25 But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. 26 Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of Jehovah came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah. 2Chr. 32:24-26*

One of Jesus parables speaks directly to this very issue.

*Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ 18 So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”” 20 But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ 21 “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” Lk. 12:16-21*

**16 But now (as it is - NASB, )you boast in your arrogance.**

Here is the true nature of the problem. It is boasting, it is arrogance and pride to talk like that. The term “boast” is defined:

*kauchaomai ... Some Greek lexicons deduce it from *auchen* ... the neck, which vain persons are apt to carry in a proud manner (Ps. 75:5; Isa. 3:16). To boast, glory, exult, both in a good and bad sense. Used in an absolute sense (1 Cor 1:29,31; 4:7; 2 Cor 10:13,17; 11:18,30; 12:1,6,11; Gal 6:14; Eph 2:9). (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:2744)*

*kauchaomai ... to speak loud, be loud-tongued, Pind.: to boast or vaunt oneself, c. inf., to boast that, Hdt.:c. acc. to boast of a thing, c. acc., N.T. From *kauche* ...” (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon, NT:2744)*

*kauchaomai ... to express an unusually high degree of confidence in someone or something being exceptionally noteworthy - ‘to boast.’ ‘whoever boasts must boast of the Lord’ 1 Cor 1:31. ‘your boasting is not right’ 1 Cor 5:6. ‘all such boasting is wrong’ James 4:16. ‘that is why we ourselves*

boast about you in the churches of God' 2 Thess 1:4. 'this is how it is with the tongue: small as it is, it can boast about great things' James 3:5. Whether in any particular context the boasting is legitimate or not depends upon what is boasted about. In a number of languages, however, quite different terms are employed, depending upon the differing degrees of justification for such boasting. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, NT:2744)

This is clearly a boasting and taking glory in something that we have no reason to have and every reason not to have it. When someone says:

**“Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”**

It is idle boasting coming from a heart of “*arrogance*.” this statement is being made by a heart, whether in ignorance or not of having a confidence and pride without any basis. It is pretentious pride to say what they were saying. We have certainly made more of ourselves than we have any right to make if we think or talk like this.

*alazoneia* ... a state of pride or arrogance, but with the implication of complete lack of basis for such an attitude - 'false arrogance, pretentious pride, boastful haughtiness.' 'but now you are boasting in your pretentious pride' James 4:16. 'Pretentious pride' may be rendered as 'constantly talking about how great oneself is.'

*alazon* ... *alazoneia* 'pretentious pride,' .... one who is pretentiously proud and given to bragging about it - 'braggart, arrogant person. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:213)

*alazon, alazoneia* ... The *alazon* is the one who “makes more of himself” than the reality justifies, “ascribing to himself either more and better things than he has, or even what he does not possess at all”; who “promises what he cannot perform”; ... Very often the orator, philosopher, poet, magician, doctor, cook or officer is called *alazon* and especially the last of these ... as “arousing of the expectation of certain *agatha* ... which are not in fact there” A religious connotation is suggested by the link with *hubris*, which is always punished by the gods.(Kittel, TDWNT; NT:213)

### **All such boasting is evil.**

It is a boast of arrogance because we are making a confident statement we have no power to perform. No one has control over any of the things mentioned above. Although related in meaning the definitions are slightly different.

“*kauchesis*... *the act of glorying*... ... crown of which we can boast... that of which one glories, cause of glorying...” (Thayer, p. 342; 2746)

“*kauchaomai, kauchema, kauchesis*,... the sense of *cauchasthai* is “to boast,” usually in a bad sense, which also attaches to *kauchema* and *kauchesis*. If there are occasions for the expression of legitimate pride, to Greek sensibility too loud a trumpeting of one’s own renown is a violation of - *aidos* and the sign of an *aneleutheros*. Warning against self-glory, and the ridiculing of it are common themes in popular philosophers and satirists... In the OT there are many proverbs against self-glorying or boasting... though places is also found for justifiable pride... Self-glorying, however is not merely a casual fault. In many passages it is regarded as the basic attitude of the foolish and ungodly man... For in it we see that man desires to stand on his own feet and not to depend on God, that he builds on that which he himself can accomplish and control...” Kittel Vol 3 p 645-646

The arrogance of the boaster is in his belief that he can stand on his own two feet and does not need God. Even in word it is a fatal flaw for the Christian to have this type of attitude. Therefore, this type of talk is “evil:”

“*poneros*... 2. *bad, of a bad nature or condition*; a. in a physical sense... b. in an ethical sense, *evil, wicked, bad*, etc. substantively *hoi poneroi. the wicked, bad men, ... ho poneros* is used pre-eminently of *the devil, the evil one*...” (Thayer, p. 530-531; 4190)

*kakos* [NT:2556] frequently means evil rather negatively, referring to the absence of the qualities which constitute a person or thing what it should be or what it claims to be. It is also used meaning evil in a moral sense. ... *poneros* [NT:4190] is a word at once **stronger and more active**, it means ***mischief-making, delighting in injury, doing evil to others, dangerous, destructive***. (Berry’s Synonyms of the NT 4190)

But the *poneros* is, as Ammonius calls him, ο *drastikos kakou* = **the active worker out of evil**; ... 'aptness to do shrewd turns, to delight in mischiefs and tragedies; a loving to trouble our neighbour and to do him ill offices; crossness, perverseness, and peevishness of action in our intercourse' ... the *kakos* may be content to perish in his own corruption, but **the *poneros* is not content unless he is corrupting others as well, and drawing them into the same destruction with himself**. 'They sleep not except they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away except they cause some to fall' (Prov 4:16). (Trench's Synonyms NT 4190)

This type of talking is dangerous and brings great harm. We need to do our absolute best to stay away from it. This is a tough one because we don't want it to turn into a vain repetition. Yet it needs to be kept in the forefront of our mind. When we are speaking of things in the future, we need to make certain we don't speak in absolutes but in relatives. It is good from time to time to even say "if the Lord wills" at some point in the conversation to make certain every one knows you feel that way.

**17 Therefore, to him (one -NASB) who knows (the} right thing NASB) to do good and does not do it,**

With all the above clearly in mind, James now draws a conclusion. He uses the term *oun* - indicating that something follows from another necessarily," thus summing everything up. The only proper conclusion to be drawn from the above. Those who "know" to do good must do good. This time James selects ""*eido*... Latin *video*... which can *to see* or *to know*." So this is the term for the knowledge that we learn initially, then visualize and see it clearly in our minds eye. This follows closely the same line of reasoning the Hebrew writer chastised his readers.

*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Heb. 5:12-14*

The time for them to see it initially and understand it well enough to teach it to others had passed. They were still "unskilled in the word of righteousness." But those who had pressed on had "*their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*."

These same people are now under consideration here. Once we reach this level of spiritual maturity this principle is also activated. Not only do we "know" to do good, but now we are responsible to do it.

Those who know how to do good and are skilled in knowing how to do good must do that good. Whenever we find a new piece of the puzzle of being godly we must put it on. This is all a part of the upward call of God.

*I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. 16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Phil. 3:14-16*

The upward call of God demands that we do what we know is right, that to the degree that we have attained, we walk in it. The Scriptures define what is good and what is evil, but knowing to do good without doing it leads to sin.

**to him it is sin.**

Sin is a terrible word in the Scriptures. A term we generally attribute to those things that God has specifically commanded against. When we violate the positive and negative commands of God we know we have sinned. James here expands it out to all the things God has told us are good and we know we ought to be doing them. If we neglect to do them, then we have sinned.

*"hamartia... a failing to hit the mark... a bad action, evil deed ... In the N. T. always in an ethical sense, and 1. equiv. to ... a sinning, whether it occurs by omission or commission, in thought and feeling or in speech and action... 2. that which is done wrong committed or resultant sin, an offense, a violation*

*of the divine law in thought or in act... 3. collectively, the complex or aggregate of sins committed either by a single person or by many..." (Thayer, p. 31; 266)*

We have failed to hit the mark. It makes it wrong, and a violation of divine law. It becomes such a violation because this verse makes divine law any act or thing we know we ought to do because it is good and then we refuse to do it.

I believe the Holy Spirit is broadening out what James just did for us into infinity. James has taken the principle of submission and humility and applied it to the tongue and to our attitude to the future. It can also be applied to our conquering of lusts, adding on the spiritual fruits of the Spirit, being faithful to the Lord, etc., etc., and etc. As we grow in Christ we will continue to make new and exciting applications to the Word of God. As we do so, we must be prepared to do what these conclusions compel us to do. Only in this way is our faith growing and our lives changing and metamorphosing properly. It becomes a sin when we see where the next rung in the upward call is leading us to walk and we refuse to go there.

When we speak of these things, we generally divide them into two categories. There are sins of commission when we do what God has commanded us not to do. These things are evil because God has defined them as evil. All the works and lusts of the flesh are sins if we do them. Here we have what is generally called the sin of omission. It is also evil, when we know we are supposed to do something, but we don't do it. These can also fall into two groups. Those things we should have done, but didn't realize it at the time, but upon reflection, realize it was something good that we should have done. The second category are those who know they should do something, but they simply refuse to do so. Both are sins that need to be repented of and confessed.

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## James Chapter 5

### **1 Come now, you rich,**

This is the same imperative phrase that began the previous section (4:13):

*Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; Jas. 4:13*

*Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Jas 5:1-2*

In the same way James took to task those who think they have control over the future, he now expresses strong condemnation and disbelief toward those who the wealthy. But which wealthy is under consideration. Is he even speaking to Christians now, or is he warning Christians that these people should not be envied or looked upon as he described. If we consider all that James has said about money up to this point, we might have a better idea.

In the first chapter, he is clearly speaking to Christians about their wealth and warning them that they are to be humbled in their knowledge that wealth confers no honor or prestige. We must never forget God's warning through Jeremiah. "*Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; 24 But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me.*" ,Jer 9:23-24

*Let the **lowly brother glory in his exaltation**, 10 but **the rich in his humiliation**, because **as a flower of the field he will pass away**. 11 For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So **the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits**. Jas. 1:9-11*

In the second chapter James returned to those who have wealth, but this time leaves their spiritual condition unknown. Are these visitors Christians or unbelievers? We don't know. But what he does is remind every Christian that their own attitude toward the wealthy is a very important measure of our own trust in God and view of wealth.

*My brethren, **do not hold the faith** of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, **with partiality**. 2 For if there should come into your assembly **a man with gold rings, in fine apparel**, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, 3 and **you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place,"** and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," 4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Jas. 2:1-4*

*Listen, my beloved brethren: **Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs** of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. **Do not the rich oppress you** and drag you into the courts? 7 **Do they not blaspheme that noble name** by which you are called? Jas. 2:5-7*

So what is James doing here? It is obvious that this is not a general condemnation of those who are rich because they have wealth, we have to be careful to keep his words in their context. From all that is written in the NT on the subject of wealth, the following general conclusions should be drawn before we consider who James is speaking to and what he is warning against.

### **1. Wealth is not sinful in itself.**

Wealth is not different than intelligence or strength. It is just a condition that some people have and others do not. It is what these things can do to our heart because of the "*pride of life*" (1Jn. 2:16) that any of these things can become dangerous. If we are "*rich in this present age*," then we need to be humble and we need to see that wealth as we do all other gifts as an further reason to be using it for the good of the brethren.

*Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 1Tim. 6:17*

## **2. The desire to be rich is always sinful.**

Anyone who desires to be rich and has set that as a goal is seeking for something that can lead them away from the faith and lead to a terrible outcome.

*A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, and does not consider that poverty will come upon him. Pr. 28:22*

*Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Pr. 23:4*

*But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 1Tim. 6:9-11*

*And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Lk. 12:15*

## **3. The possession of wealth is very dangerous.**

While the majority of mankind considers wealth to be a great blessing from God, God reveals it in a very different light. It has great potential to lead away from the faith and to damage and destroy the one who possesses it.

*Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): 8 Remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches-- feed me with the food allotted to me; 9 Lest I be full and deny You, and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God. Pr. 30:7-9*

*Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 "And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Mt. 19:23-24*

*and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. Mk. 4:19*

## **4. Jesus commands His disciples to keep away from wealth, instead to use it to further the kingdom as they gain it.**

Use what they have in the proper way and always be more concerned about spiritual treasure we will take away with us after this life ends.

*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Mt. 6:19-21*

*"And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. 10 He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? 13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Lk. 16:9-13*

The general teaching in the Scriptures stresses that wealth is exceedingly dangerous. That wealth brings temptations that others do not have, that wealth brings obligations and duties that others do not have, and that wealth is transient and temporary and does not bring happiness. The overall idea seems to be that wealth is not really a commodity that is all that great. It brings out selfishness because the only thing that keeps one from having everything they want is their own self-control. There are wealthy people who can fight these temptations and rise to the occasion of their greater opportunities, but evidently, the one's James is describing here are not among them.

James speaks to the "rich." Before dismissing ourselves as not under consideration here, we need to get a good understanding of this term:

*“plousios... rich; a. prop. wealthy, abounding in material resources... b. metaph. and univ. abounding, abundantly supplied... of the thing in which one abounds...” (Thayer, p. 519; 4145)*

This is obviously a relative term. Abounding in material resources is generally determined by the one who possesses it and those who observe this possession. Those with less might view those with more as rich though they themselves may not consider themselves rich. It seems from the context of the above Scriptures that wealth begins when all the material needs are met and then there is enough excess to purchase nicer things than most other people have. When the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter are met, and we begin to be able to consider nicer food, clothing and shelter, we are leaving the realm of bare necessities and moving into the realm of wealth. This is illustrated in our own society by our word poverty. Poverty in America is very different from poverty in Mexico. Those who are in true poverty in Mexico would view our poverty stricken people as having wealth. So we have to seriously reflect on the definition of the term and the condition of our life before dismissing this as something that could not apply to us. In terms of material possessions, and having what money could buy, most in America and certainly most of us here tonight are wealthier than the people he is writing to.

We have access to:

- \* foods not even the wealthiest could have had then.
- \* medical care that none of them could have.
- \* travel (car, airplanes) that none of them could have.
- \* appliances in the home that make our lives so much easier than they could have.
- \* communication(phone, TV access to what is going on all over the world) that none of them could have.

We have more today than Solomon could have dreamed of having when God gave him wealth. Be very careful in not thinking that we are among the rich. We truly are in many ways. But whether what follows applies to us depends on if we are doing the kinds of things he is condemning. While the description more clearly represents those who are not Christians, it is very possible that they could include a few disciples of Jesus whose wealth has brought them to this destination.

### **weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.**

James commands these specific wealthy people to look ahead to the terrible misery that will come upon them and weep and howl over it. Both terms emphasize a grief that cannot be held back but is coming out of the mouth with loud wails and cries. The first is “weep:”

*“klaio ... to weep or wail, with emphasis upon the noise accompanying the weeping - ‘to weep, to wail, to lament, weeping, crying.’ ‘he went out and wept bitterly’ Matt 26:75; ‘be sorrowful, grieve, and weep’ James 4:9. (Lou & Nida NT:2799)*

*“klaio ... is used of “any loud expression of grief,” especially in mourning for the dead, Matt 2:18; Mark 5:38,39; 16:10; Luke 7:13; 8:52 (twice); John 11:31,33 (twice); 20:11 (twice), 13,15; 39; otherwise, e. g., in exhortations, Luke 23:28; Rom 12:15; James 4:9; (Vine’s Expository Dictionary , NT:2799)*

The second term *“howl:* follows the same idea of a grief that create loud cries of anguish and sorrow.

*“ololuzo... an onomatopoeic verb... to howl, wail, lament...” (Thayer, 443; 3649)*

The word group *alalazo, elelizo, ololuzo ...* probably belongs to the cultural world preceding the Greek. As terms of a past and foreign world they serve in the Gk. period to denote alien and extraordinary expressions of joy, applause, or sorrow in which man transcends himself. a)lala/zw

These are strong terms for the loss of something precious. This is not something a wealthy person who is laying up a foundation for the time to come would be commanded to do. Abraham was very wealthy, yet it was not the wealth that was the problem but what the wealth can do. The reason these cries are so anguished is that they have lost the most precious thing they possess. The loss of their soul.

*Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take*

up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Matt 16:24-27

James speaks of “*miserias*” that will be coming upon these people.

“*talaiporia*... (*talaiporos*, q. v.), *hardship, trouble, calamity, misery*...” (Thayer, 613-614; 5004)

“*talaiporia* *hardship resulting in wretchedness - ‘hardship, wretchedness.’ ‘they leave destruction and wretchedness in their way’ or ‘... wherever they go’ Rom 3:16. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon 5004)*

The rich have some hard miserable times to look forward to in the future. There is calamity and trouble “to come in the future.”

“*eperchomai*... 1. *to come to, arrive*... b. *...to come on, be at hand, be future*... 2. *to come upon, overtake, one*... a. *of calamities*... b. *of the Holy Spirit*... c. *of an enemy attacking one*...” (Thayer, 230; 1904)

All of these things make it very doubtful that James is speaking of Christians, he may actually be drawing from the rich man and Lazarus here:

19 “*There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. 20 “But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, 21 “desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 “So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 “And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Lk. 16:19-23*

## **2 Your riches have are corrupted (rotted- NASB)**

A different term, with basically the same meaning:

“*ploutos*,... *riches, wealth*; a. *prop. and absol. abundance of external possessions*... b. *univ. fullness, abundance, plenitude* ...” (Thayer, p. 519; 4149)

Instead of speaking of wealth as it enriches and affects the person who holds it, he speaks of it from a spiritual perspective. What could have been done but wasn’t has led to a corruption of the wealth itself. This is what happens to the possessions themselves because of the manner in which the owner used them. Such misused possessions are “corrupted:”

“*sepo*... *to make corrupt*; in the Bible also *to destroy*... *Pass. to become corrupt or rotten*... *to have become i.e. to be corrupted*...” (Thayer, 574; 4595)

Like food that is left too long to eat, or even the bodies of those who are dead after they are buried, wealth can go through the same process. Though wealth has the potential for good, by misusing them or gaining them in an improper manner their value is lost and it looks corrupted.

## **and your garments have become moth-eaten.**

While the garments might look good to the one who is wearing them and even to those who seem them wearing it, to God and in reality, they look moth eaten because of the manner in which they were gained.

## **3 Your gold and your silver are corroded (have rusted; -NASB)**

As the description continue, James continues to focus on things they have used their wealth to purchase and possess. Even their gold and silver has a bad appearance to God and those whom God has revealed it. Not only is their clothing moth eaten, but their gold and silver had become corroded:

“*katiao*... *to rust over*...*cover with rust*...” (Thayer, 340; 2728)

“*katiao* ... an intensive form of *iao*, “to poison” (akin to A, No. 2), strengthened by *kata*, “down,” “to rust over,” and in the passive voice, “to become rusted over,” occurs in James 5:3...” (Vine’s Expository

Dictionary NT:2728)

“ios ... “poison,” denotes “rust” in James 5:3. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:2447

While the term could be used to describe poison and its results, here it is describing the oxidation that gradually many other metals. In the eyes of God, either because of how it was gained, or how it was being used, it was in a terrible state. A state described as “*kept to our own hurt*,” or as Jesus described it in the sermon on the mount, as something that actually brings a loss of value.

*There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun: riches kept for their owner to his hurt. Eccl. 5:13*

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 “but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. Mt. 6:19-20*

James declares that this has already happened to them. They might go look in the closet to see if it was physical, and breath a sigh of relief when it was not so. But obviously James is not speaking of physical corrosion and destruction, but spiritual. Their riches had become a millstone around their neck. The real problem with this wealth and its corrosion are the spiritual consequences that are coming.

### **and their rust (*corrosion*) will be a witness against you**

Just as Jesus speaks of selling here and having treasure in heaven, James now speaks of keeping it here and the rust and corrosion of misuse will be waiting for them on the judgment day. This is a strong indictment and shows the wisdom and love of Jesus in telling the rich young ruler to sell what he had and give it to the poor so he would have treasure in heaven. Better to have treasure waiting in heaven for us than the rust and corrosion of misuse.

This term was used above with “*kata*” to intensify it.

“ios ... denotes “something active” as (a) “rust,” as acting on metals, affecting their nature, James 5:3; (b) “poison,” as of asps, acting destructively on living tissues, figuratively of the evil use of the lips as the organs of speech, Rom 3:13; so of the tongue, James 3:8. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:2447)

Though it is here translated rust and may only be an addition to what was said above, it could also be translated with the much more sinister “*poison*.” This is a dreadful rust. A poisonous rust! A rust that will be a witness against us on the last day.

“*marturion*... witness, ... *testimony*... “(Thayer, NT:3142)

This presents a terrible picture. Not only will people be able to testify against us on the judgement day. But also the things we did or did not do will also cry out against or for us. In this case the misused wealth, left to rust out of selfishness when it could have been used will now become an exhibit in the trial, but it will be able to speak for itself. Yet this rust/poison will not only testify against us:

### **and will eat (*consume*) your flesh like fire.**

There are serpents, whose venom burns like fire and this is probably the idea that James is drawing from. This testimony will eat and burn the flesh like fire. This is to be a very unpleasant experience, and calculated to warn Christians against going in that direction.

### **You have heaped up treasure in the last days.**

#### **(It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! -NASB)**

Of all the time periods when this is a foolish thing to do, it is in the last days. This term refers to the period of time that began with the Messiah’s kingdom and will end with the return of the Lord.

*But this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 17 ‘And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; Acts 2:16-17*

It is call the “last days” because there is nothing after it. No more epochs, no more dispensations, these are the last days of the earth, after this time, earth will be removed and a new order established. Since there is nothing coming after the last days except the second coming of Chrstit and the day of judgment this is a fooli8sh thing to do. There is no use for it in the life to come and it is the life to come that we are to be concerned with.

*“thesaurizo... to gather and lay up, to heap up, store up: to accumulate riches ...to keep in store, store up, reserve metaph. so to live from day to day as to increase either the bitterness or the happiness of one’s consequent lot...”* (Thayer, 290; 2343)

Though the term “treasure” is a perfect translation, there are two types of things man can treasure up for himself. While those in the world might see this as something precious and sensible, a close look at its use in the New Testament reveals that there are actually two things we can treasure up. What they had stored and treasured up was not what they thought.

*But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Rom. 2:5*

*But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 2Pet. 3:7*

#### **4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, which has been withheld by you,**

The term “behold” was often used in the Scriptures for a sight that was especially important to see. It comes from the same root word that is often translated “*knowledge*.”

*“ide... so far as it retains the force of an imperative it is illustrated under eido I. 1 e. and 3. But in most places in the N.T. it stands out of construction like an interjection, even when many are addressed... see! Behold! Lo! ...”* (Thayer, 296; 2396)

This is one clear and obvious reason why this wealth was going to have all these characteristics and also the reason why we would have to conclude that he is not speaking to godly Christians, but either to the world or to very ungodly men. They have cheated their laborers. Not paid them the full amount due for the work they have done. This is a powerful passage on the consequences of sins we do not take care of. When we cheat someone, and not give them what is due, it will cry out to God.

**cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.**

**the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.**

The reapers(who likely needed the money more than the rich one who possessed for such simple matters as food clothing and shelter), would then go hungry or worse and would cry out to the Lord of Sabaoth. This was a common term used in the Old Testament and was translated in the phrase “*The Lord, God of Hosts*” or “*Lord of Hosts*.” The KJV and two passages in the New Testament leave it untranslated as the simple Hebrew word.

*“sabaoth... (Hebr... an army)... [A.V. Lord of Sabaoth], i.e. lord of the armies sc. of Israel, as those who under the leadership and protection of Jehovah maintain his cause in war... But for the other view , acc. to which the heavenly “hosts” are referred to see Hackett... On the diverse interpretations of the word...”* (Thayer, 565; 4519)

*sabaoth* is the transliteration of a Hebrew word which denotes “hosts” or “armies,” Rom 9:29; James 5:4. While the word “hosts” probably had special reference to angels, the title “the LORD of hosts” became used to designate Him as the One who is supreme over all the innumerable hosts of spiritual agencies, or of what are described as “the armies of heaven.” Eventually it was used as equivalent to “the LORD all-sovereign.” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:4519)

*sabaoth* (a Greek transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning ‘armies’ and used with *kurios* a ‘Lord,’ 12.9, as a title for God) pertaining to one who has overwhelming power - ‘Almighty, All Powerful, One who is powerful over all.’ (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:4519)

This was a well known term for Israel (used hundreds of times) and would have reverberated in their minds. These reapers have cried out to their God, the Great Jehovah of Hosts. Their cry has reached His ears, and he will act in their behalf.

## **5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure (*lived luxuriously*) and luxury; (*wanton pleasure*)**

Once again, these are problems that arise because of misuse of wealth and are not inferred or implied of all who are wealthy, but they do with that territory and must be carefully guarded against. This is something that only wealthy people can do, since everyone else must work hard to live.

*truphao...* to live a life of luxury, usually associated with intemperate feasting and drinking - 'to revel, to carouse, to live a life of luxury.' 'you lived here on earth with intemperance and indulgence' James 5:5. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domain. Copyright © 1988 United Bible Societies, New York. Used by permission.)

*truphao...* (*truphe* q. v.) to live delicately, live luxuriously, be given to a soft and luxurious life..." (Thayer, 631; 5171)

When there are no limits it is difficult for many to set them. Although a life of luxury can mean different things to different cultures, but it is not hard to identify. It consists of free time and no monetary constraints. Some become so busy working at pleasure they have no time for anything else. Each day is spent, but nothing is accomplished.

*Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, And your princes feast in the morning! 17 Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles, And your princes feast at the proper time — For strength and not for drunkenness! 18 Because of laziness the building decays, And through idleness of hands the house leaks. Eccl. 10:16-18*

This is a danger of all cultures that have too much free time. We see it today in all the entertainment and play time.

*Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50 And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit. Ezek 16:49-50*

The second term is easier to identify because it has a clear moral and evil component.

*spatalao...* (*spatale* riotous living, luxury); to live luxuriously, lead a voluptuous life, [give one's self to pleasure]..." (Thayer, 583; 4684)

"It will follow, if these distinctions have been rightly drawn, that the *spatalas* might properly be laid to the charge of the Prodigal, scattering his substance in riotous living Luke 15:13); the *truphan* to the Rich Man faring sumptuously every day (Luke 16:19); (Trench's Synonyms of the New Testament)

This is more the Las Vegas, fast track, beautiful people, lifestyles of the rich and famous. One who like the man Jesus portrays just can't seem to figure out what to do with all that money.

*And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." 16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. 17 "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?" 18 "And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' 21 "So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Lk. 12:15-21*

These two terms stress that their wealth can lead us far from the life Christ demands of us. These still called themselves disciples, but it doesn't appear that Jesus would own them as such. Their life was far from that the Lord demanded. They were not denying themselves or carrying their cross. They were using their wealth to live the life of ease and luxury, and it had led them into sin.

We in America need to give serious thought to this passage. Many can fit here who do not even consider it possible. We have such luxury and ease taken for granted even in our "poor," that the

lines can get blurred.

### **you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.**

Animals who know no better will eat whatever the farmer places before them. They do not have enough sense to know that the extra food being given to them is to prepare them for slaughter. If they had sense, they would not eat and thus prolong their lives. These individuals were doing the same thing with their wealth. The difference though was they ought to have known better. They should have looked at the Scriptures and realized that their conduct was actually doing the same thing to them before the Lord on the day of judgement as an animal does when it eats all it can before the day of slaughter.

### **6 You have condemned, you have murdered (put to death) the just; (righteous)**

His final condemnation of the rich centers once again, as he did in chapter two, on their relationship to the poor and righteous. The power that wealth confers always brings a sense of pride and the feeling that those who possess it are better than others. This often leads to the misuse of the poor. As Jezebel saw it, it was better for Naboth to be falsely accused and stoned than for her husband to be unhappy about not getting that vineyard. God often condemned those who were wealthy for such an attitude:

*Thus says the Lord, "For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because they sell the righteous for money And the needy for a pair of sandals. 7 "These who pant after the very dust of the earth on the head of the helpless Also turn aside the way of the humble. Am. 2:6-7*

When David heard the parable from Nathan, he considered the wealthy man as deserving to die for mistreating the poor. Yet self-centered people do not consider the needs of others in the quest for their own desires as he had done exactly the same thing to Uriah. Those in Jesus day felt it was more expedient for Jesus to die than for them to lose their position. Any of these things illustrated the terrible anger that our loving and righteous God feels toward those who do such things. No one has the right to trample on others to get what they want.

### **he does not resist you.**

Yet in spite of this terrible injustice, the just often have no recourse. The courts are against them, public opinion is against them. In such cases, only two choices are available. They can take vengeance or they can submit. God has dealt with both of these things.

First he has forbidden the path to repaying evil for evil, or taking personal vengeance.

*Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Rom 12:17-21*

So this is the mark of the just and righteous. They do not resist those who are evil because they are commanded not to.

*"But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 "And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. 41 "And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. Mt. 5:39-42*

The command not to resist is given several times in the Scriptures. The attitude that leads to resistance is anathema to God.

*antitasso, anti, "against," tasso, "to arrange," originally a military term, "to range in battle against," and frequently so found in the papyri, is used in the middle voice signifying "to set oneself against, resist," (a) of men, Acts 18:6, "opposed themselves"; elsewhere "to resist," of resisting human potentates, Rom 13:2; (b) of God, James 4:6; 5:6, negatively, of leaving persistent evildoers to pursue their self-determined course, with eventual retribution; 1 Peter 5:5. (Vine's Expository Dictionary, NT:498)*

*antitassomai*... to oppose someone, involving not only a psychological attitude but also a corresponding behavior - 'to oppose, to be hostile toward, to show hostility.' 'when they opposed him and said evil things about him' Acts 18:6. It may be that in some languages one can best render *antitassomai* in Acts 18:6 as 'to speak against,' though in some languages opposition is often expressed idiomatically as 'to show a sour face toward,' 'to have a mean heart toward,' or 'to turn one's back on.' (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT 498).

When such unfairness occurs between men, God's true children must respond without resistance. There must not be any physical or outward signs of it. We must not have a sour face or a mean heart. Once we have exhausted every lawful means to right a wrong, we must not allow bitterness and anger to lead us away from these things.

This clearly leads into the next passage as James leaves the wealthy and their condemnation and returns to these just ones and the attitudes they need.

## **7 Be patient, therefore, brethren,**

James now returns to the subject that he used to start his book. By using "therefore" (*oun... a conj. indicating that something follows from another necessarily*), James ties this patience to the trials of being unjustly treated. Even Solomon weighed in on this as one of the terrible consequences after sin entered into "life under the sun"

*Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, But they have no comforter — On the side of their oppressors there is power, But they have no comforter. 2 Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead, More than the living who are still alive. 3 Yet, better than both is he who has never existed, Who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun. Eccl. 4:1-3*

*If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province, do not marvel at the matter; for high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them. Eccl. 5:8*

*Surely oppression destroys a wise man's reason, And a bribe debases the heart. Eccl. 7:7*

It is truly a sore travail to be cheated and oppressed. When we are cheated by another, it leaves a terrible sense of loss and betrayal. As Solomon noted, multitudes have lived and died under oppressive rulers. Without God, there is no comforter and the only release is death.

For the righteous, God is our comforter. He is also our counselor. He knows the very best way to get through oppression and He used James here to give us His inspired counsel. His guidance on this matter is very simple. We need to develop two types of patience. He has already fully described the first one in the first chapter. He introduced the "patience of endurance." That allows trials to toughen and strengthen our resolve.

*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (hupomone) . 4 But let patience (hupomone) have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. James 1:2-5*

Like the runner who uses long runs to create endurance the Christian allows his trials to do this. This means he learns not to dread these trials as they come upon us but recognizing their value he welcomes them, not because he wants to have them, but because they cannot be avoided, they can be used as a positive thing. It is the classic when you are handed sour lemons you make lemonade with it.

This is a different word and also a little more complicated. Consider some of the things that are said.

*makrothumia* ... a state of emotional calm in the face of provocation or misfortune and without complaint or irritation - 'patience.' 'but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherited the promises' Heb 6:12; 'fellow believers, take the prophets as an example of suffering and patience' or '... patience in the face of suffering' James 5:10. In a number of languages 'patience' is expressed idiomatically, for example, 'to remain seated in one's heart' or 'to keep one's heart from jumping' or 'to have a waiting heart.' (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:3115)

When *makrothumia* occurs first in Menand., it is not without a certain element of “resignation” or forced “acceptance.” For men, as distinct from the blessedness of the gods who know no suffering, the only option is *makrothumia*, the patience which must be resigned: ... In Strabo *makrothumia* has the sense of desperate patience which in the supreme emergency of siege leaves no stone unturned to try to stave off the inevitable end: ... in a good sense for the patience and endurance of the physician in treating severe chronic illnesses with only doubtful hopes of a cure. Similarly in Plut. it is used of the steadfastness of the general or soldier in putting up with hardships. i.e., “endurance” until a goal is reached. The verb *makrothumein* is found in the same sense when those engaged in the battle of life are compared to swimmers in the sea who seek safety on the shore: (Kittel, TDWNT 3115)

The best way to grasp the difference between these two types of patience is by understanding that God the first is never attributed to God, while the second is used often. Paul’s words on “*agape*” make this clear.

*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1Cor. 13:4-7*

This patience “*suffers long*” because it is a fundamental part of “*agape - love*.” Since “*God is love*,” it is part of God’s character because it acts in the best interests and puts the needs of others above whatever emotions might be under consideration at that moment. For example, when the ark was being prepared, God’s heart was grieved and angered at their rebellion, yet for the sake of Noah and His own future plans, he continued to “*allow His rain to fall and His sun to rise on both the just and unjust*.”

*who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. 1Pet. 3:20-21*

*What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, Rom. 9:22-24*

This is the heart of this type of patience. We are looking for the long term best interests of God and our fellow man and not concentrating on what we are enduring or feeling. Jesus tried to get this across to us in the sermon on the mount.

*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. Mt. 5:44-48*

This is also what Peter was stressing as he spoke of God’s longsuffering over the evils of the world is actually designed to bring about the salvation of as many as possible.

*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 2Pet. 3:9*

We recognize that in our own life as we look at what we did to God before our conversion that could have resulted in our death and deserved damnation, but instead because of God’s longsuffering ended up being our salvation. When we can learn this about God and begin to imitate Him

*and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation — as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 2Pet. 3:15-16*

This is also what Paul was describing as he considered his own life.

*This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.*

1Tim. 1:15-16

So this is a patience that God revealed to us through own His dealings with the oppressions. While He doesn't need "*humomeno*," because He doesn't have to endure these oppressions like we do, He reveals the longsuffering of *makrothemo/makrothumia* so we can see the dynamics of the emotions that lead us to see the power of "*hupomeno*" under the context of agape love.

Our love for the man, Paul, completely overcomes the terrible nature of the man he was before conversion and revealed the power of redemption to save a man's soul. If we can in some small way be a part of that by manifesting our own longsuffering to those who are mistreating us to a much lesser degree than they are mistreating God.

Thus there are always two ways to look at any event. There is the positive way stemming from salvation, and there is the negative way stemming from the mistreatment itself. When we find ourselves seeing only the negative, we must turn on our longsuffering and patience. This will cause us to persevere patiently and bravely through all the adversities of life. It will help us endure misfortunes and troubles as we recognize their temporary nature. It also causes one to be patient in bearing offenses and injuries. Consequently the patient man is insulated from the every day ups and downs. The greater the patience the greater the insulation. But for how long are we expected to have this patience? To what degree is it to insulate and protect us and keep us faithful to God and submissive to His commands.

**until the coming of the Lord.**

The term "until" marks that limit. This is a longsuffering that will allow God's longsuffering to work and only when He sees a reason to bring it to a close can we do the same.

"eos... a particle marking a limit, and I as a *conjunction* signifying 1. the temporal terminus ad quem, *till, until* II by a usage chiefly later it gets the force of an *adverb*, ... 1. used of a temporal terminus ad quem, *until(unto)*..." (Thayer, 268-269; 2193)

The limit we are to look for is the coming of the Lord. This is the term that is often used to describe the second coming of Christ.

"*parousia*... 1. *presence*... 2. the presence of one coming, hence *the coming, arrival, advent*,... In the N.T. esp of *the advent*, i. e. the future, visible, *return* from heaven of Jesus, the Messiah, to raise the dead, hold the last judgement, and set up formally and gloriously the kingdom of God..." (Thayer, 490; 3952)

It is the official term by which the Lord's second coming was designated. Our patience must last until the Lord returns from heaven. There is nothing that can happen in this life that should exhaust this patience. There is no excuse for the hands that hang down and the weak knees.

*11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Heb. 12:11-13*

We must gain patience. It is a critical attribute for the child of God to make it to heaven.

**Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil,**

This is a powerful example of exactly what James is trying to get across with this term. All that the farmer does in bringing his crops to fruition is illustrative of what God is doing and what we are also to learn how to do. The term "*behold*" was a command (imperative) used many times by Jesus and His apostles to point out something we all know, but have never looked at in this light before.

"*idou*... a demonstrative particle... found in the N. T. esp in the Gospels of Matthew and of Luke, used very often in imitation of the Hebr. ... and giving a peculiar vivacity to the style by bidding the reader or hearer to attend to what is said: *behold! see! lo!* ... The simple *idou* is the exclamation of one pointing out something..." (Thayer, p. 297; 2400)

*ide* and *idou* ... are imperative moods, active and middle voices, respectively, of *eidon*, "to see," calling

attention to what may be seen or heard or mentally apprehended in any way. These are regularly rendered “behold.” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:2400)

For our own ability to really understand what the Holy Spirit is revealing here, the farmer is a vivid illustration. The farmer sows his seed, and then he waits. He cannot harvest, come what may, until the crops have matured and are prepared for the harvest. It doesn’t matter what happens in between, good or bad, the harvest day is what he is waiting for. This is the closest illustration that can be given to help us understand God’s own longsuffering over His harvest.

“*ekdechomai*... 1. *to receive, accept...* 2. *to look for, expect, wait for, await...*” (Thayer, p. 193)

*ekdechomai* ... to continue to remain in a state until an expected event - ‘to remain until, to wait until.’ ... ‘waiting until his enemies are put under his feet’ Heb 10:13. ‘when the patience of God continued in the days of Noah’ 1 Peter 3:20. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:1551)

Just as the farmer expectantly waits for and looks for it to come, knowing of all the obstacles and set backs that could occur in between, he still willingly undertakes the task. He cannot rush the day, and he can do nothing about circumstances and events prior to it’s arrival. The farmer has to learn this patience. The reason is clear, it is tied with the “*precious*” fruit.

“*timios*... a. *properly held as of great price, i.e. precious...* b. *metaphorically held in honor, esteemed, especially dear...*” (Thayer, p. 624; 5093)

Everything is endured and the price is paid in order to reach that day. The harvest of the field is the reason for everything. They plow in hope, the sow and weed in this same hope. It is not until the end that all the blessings and benefits are realized. There are often many pitfalls and unforeseen events that occur in between, but in the end all of that is forgotten because of the harvest. This is how all lives will also unfold. We too are looking for the harvest and must deal with such things just as the farmer and our God has done.

### **being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.**

This sums up the focus of this patience. Both the farmer and the Christian must learn to insulate their heart from the feelings that can often come upon them when facing setbacks. The surges of doubt and fear and concern must be held at arms lengths while they watch all the factors come together for a good harvest. They must wait until the early (spring) and latter (mid summer) rains. Nothing can be decided “until” (same term as that used above for the Christian) they have “received” both. This term is defined:

“*lambano*,... *to take, i.e. 1. To take with the hand, lay hold of...* II *to receive(what is given) to gain, get, obtain...*” (Thayer, p. 370-371; 2983).

### **8 You too be patient;**

Christians need to be as patient as the farmer and God. There are as many or more factors that will enter into our own sojourn in life. There will be trials and tribulations, persecutions, temptations, sorrows, ups and downs. Life will hit from every side. Satan will be hurling darts and trials. There will be so many things, and from time to time the only thing that will help will be the insulating value of patience and the hope that patience will pay off with a wonderful and great reward. We keep the strong emotions of each and every day at bay as we look forward to the glory that will be revealed.

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Rom. 8:18*

### **strengthen your hearts,**

Since, like the farmer, we have so little control over all the fixed things that can occur in this world, We have to make a decision to strengthen and toughen our hearts. We don’t know what will happen tomorrow, but we need be certain that no matter what it is our heart is stable and fixed.

“*sterizo*... a. *to make stable, place firmly, set fast, fix, ...* b. *to strengthen, make firm; ... to render constant, confirm, one’s mind...*” (Thayer, p. 588; 4741)

By stabilizing and strengthening our hearts, we set them fast and refuse to be moved. This is the

exact opposite of the double minded man described in the first chapter:

*But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Jas. 1:6-8*

Do not be double-minded. Do not doubt. Do not be unstable. “*My heart is fixed O God.*”

### **for the coming of the Lord is at hand.**

James then gave the reason (“*hoti* – the substance or contents, the reason why anything is said to be or to be done.” Our hearts should be stable and fixed through all the ups and downs of life based on the same perseverance of the farmer and based on the much stronger outcome. The farmer doesn’t really know if he will even get a harvest. Each year is shrouded in mystery because no one can predict the future. But for the Christian, the illustration gives way to a much brighter and firmer reality. Because it is impossible to lie, and because God promised and swore with an oath, nothing of any of his words will ever fall short. Because of this, the coming of Jesus Christ is always “*at hand.*”

*“eggizo... 1. trans. to bring near, to join one thing to another... 2. intrans. to draw or come near, to approach... in Sept. used esp. of the priests entering the temple to offer sacrifices or to perform other ministrations there... to worship God... to turn one’s thoughts to God, to become acquainted with him... (Thayer, 164; 1448)*

This is the same term used in James 4:8 draw near to God and he will draw near to you. The nearness of Jesus’ coming has no reference to time. It is always only a heartbeat away from each of us. It is a fixed time that draws ever nearer with the passing of the years.

*“whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. Acts 3:21*

It has to do more with our expectation and attitude. Since we know it is coming and we have no doubts at all about it, we can establish our hearts in faith. We know our work is not in vain and we are those men Jesus described as waiting to open whenever He might come morning, noon or night.

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1Cor. 15:58*

*Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; 36 and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Lk. 12:35-37*

We all know that no one knows the day or the hour, but that is not what matters. Whether he comes in our life time or not is immaterial, he is at hand because this day can’t approach us like a thief because we are always prepared.

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 1Th. 5:1-7

Because we are eagerly anticipating it and looking forward to its approach, it is always in the forefront of our minds. If it is not, we are not the servants Jesus asked us to be.

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought

you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, 2Pet. 3:10-12

## 9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another,

“*stenazo*... to groan (of an inward, unexpressed feeling of sorrow), is translated “with grief” in Heb . 13:17(marg. “groaning”). It is rendered “sighed” in Mark 7:34; “groan,” in Rom 8:23; II Cor. 5:2, 4; “murmur,” in Jas. 5:90...” Vine Vol 2 p 178-179)

“*stenazo*... to groan, *sign*... to sigh inwardly... to give vent to querulous or censorious feelings... James 5:9...” Harper’s analytical concordance.

... “to sign,” “to groan”... sighing at child-birth... in mortal conflict... for the dead,... for personal suffering... In particular sighing expresses deep distress of spirit. ... in the New Testament. Sighing takes place by reason of a condition of oppression under which man suffers and from which he longs to be free because it is not in accord with his nature, expectations, or hopes... James. 5:9 charges Christians to so order their mutual relations that they have no cause for sighing against one another. The reference is to inner sighing not to open complaints... (Kittel Vol 7 p 600-603)

What begins as a groan of unexpressed sorrow can easily turn into words of complaint and bitterness. While leave out the meaning of signing and groaning, that is the root meaning of the term and must be taken into account. While only Kittel affirms, “*the reference is to inner sighing not to open complaints*,” the truth is that while we would want to stop it at the point of sighing, the other is clearly where it goes if it is not stopped there. James was strongly warning against the feelings of dissatisfaction that leads us to sigh and complain. We must forbear and never allow it to reach that point. This is the true mark of Christian patience. We should be doing this for “one another.” This term is defined:

“*allelon*... one another; reciprocally, mutually...” (Thayer, p. 28; 240)

First of all we are not to feel these feelings and if they are felt toward us we are not to respond in kind. They should always stop with us.

*Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Rom .12:17-18*

We are to be working with God and not against Him. His longsuffering and desire for all to be saved is also our longsuffering. We do not want to be one who hindered God’s longsuffering by our impatience or selfishness.

## Lest you be condemned (that you yourselves may not be judged; NASB)

“*Lest*” is used to remind us that James had a very specific purpose in speaking of these things. This sighing is only an extension of judging. First we judge, then we sign and then we complain and grumble.

“*hina*... II a final conjunction... denoting purpose and end: *to the intent that; to the end that, in order that*;... it is used 1. prop of the purpose or end;...” (Thayer, p. 302-304; 2443)

It we continue to do this, we will be “*condemned*” or “*judged guilty*” .

“*krino*... 5. to judge; a. to pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong... Pass. to be judged, i.e. summoned to trial that one’s case may be examined and judgement passed upon it,... b. to pronounce judgment; to subject to censure;...” (Thayer, p. 361-362; 2919)

From here on out, every time we sigh because our brother has done something to us we consider to be foolish, wrong, or unjust, we need to stop ourselves right then and remember these words. We need to turn the other cheek, and rather be defrauded. If we go even a little bit further than stopping it at that moment we risk God’s condemnation. This is not *agape* - love and it is not longsuffering.

## behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

Again James repeats the “IDOU” BEHOLD! LOOK! Just like Jesus return is “at hand” so also is the “Judge” The return of the Lord and the day of judgement are nearly synonymous. James used a

powerful figure. He is standing just outside the door. Right in the doorway, ready to begin the trial. This is how we ought to live each day of our life.

### **10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord,**

James now broadens out his discussion of the value of longsuffering with the “*examples*” of the prophets. The prophets found in the OT Scriptures are a great example of the quality of patience each Christian ought to be striving for. The first prophet we can consider is Abel who was killed because Cain’s works were evil and his were righteous.

*that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51 from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary: yea, I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation. Lk. 11:50-51*

*not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous. 1Jn. 3:12-13*

The prophets that followed were Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, some of the judges, some of the kings, then the pre-literary prophets of Nathan, Elijah and Elisha and the prophets whose books we still possess, Isaiah through Malachi. The term “*prophet*” is given it’s definition by the Holy Spirit.

*And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Pet. 1:19-21*

So man summarizes it in a definition:

“*prophetes...* (prophemi, to speak forth, speak out; hence prop. “one who speaks forth”...)... Sept. for ... (which comes from the same root as ... “to divulge” “make known,” “announce”... therefore prop. i. q. *interpreter*, Ex. 7:1, cf. 4:16; hence *an interpreter or spokesman for God; one through whom God speaks;...*” (Thayer, p. 554; 4396)

It is an amazing paradox that the very definition of prophet is one who speaks not of his own will, but as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. They could not have preached it more clearly, accurately and powerfully. They were doing exactly what the Holy Spirit wanted them to do as we do too when we are led by Him.

### **who spoke in the name of the Lord,**

As Peter revealed, nothing they spoke came from their own minds and hearts. They spoke in the name of the Lord only. Yet they suffered even though they were doing the will of the Lord. This is exactly the point that James is seeking to help us understand. We are not the only ones who have been mistreated and had difficult times as a result of doing God’s will. They saw the terrible things happening in their day and they spoke out about it. God gave them the words, but they had to choose to speak them. But speak them they did. From Abel to Zachariah they told the people what God wanted them to hear. This brought severe persecution and death to them. But they chose to speak in His name rather than be silent (and disobedient to the name). The “name” of the Lord is a powerful phrase referring to authority and might.

“*onoma...* the *name* by which a person or a thing is called, and distinguished from others; 1. univ.: of prop. names... 2. By a usage chiefly Hebraistic the *name* is used for everything which the name covers, everything the thought or feeling of which is roused in the mind by mentioning, hearing, remembering, the name, i.e. for *one’s rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellences, deeds, etc.* ...” (Thayer, p. 447-448; 3686)

In this passage, it is everything the name “*Lord*” stands for and everything the thought or feeling roused in the mind by mentioning this name brings.

“*kurios...* having power or authority... *he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has the power of deciding; master, lord; used a... of the possessor and disposer of a thing, the owner...* in the state, *the sovereign, prince, chief...* b. is a title of honor, expressive of respect and reverence with which servants salute their master... c. this title is given a. to GOD, the ruler of the universe... B to the

MESSIAH; ... to JESUS as the Messiah, since by his death he acquired a special ownership of mankind, and after his resurrection was exalted to a partnership in the divine administration..." (Thayer, p. 365-366; 2962)

Speaking in the name of the Lord is speaking the name that brings out feelings of being a servant to the one who has power to decide. Speaking by the authority and dominion of the Lord. These prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and what they said came directly from Him, but the decision to open their mouth at all was theirs. The choice to speak out brought great suffering to many of them. They are therefore great examples.

### **as an example of suffering and patience.**

This is not the normal word for example. It was an exclusive word used to describe a pattern, figure or copy.

*hypodeigma*, ... a. a sign suggestive of anything, delineation of a thing, representation, figure, copy: joined with *skia* Heb. 8:5; with a genitive of the thing represented, Heb 9:23. b. an example: for imitation, John 13:15; with the genitive of the thing to be imitated, Jas 5:10 (Thayer's Greek Lexicon, NT:5262)

This term is only used six times in the New Testament. It was used by Jesus after He washed the disciples feet and left it as an example and of Israel as a warning against being like those who fell in the wilderness. But its most important use is that of how the tabernacle was a **copy** of the things in the heaven.

*For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 5 who serve **the copy** and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." Heb. 8:4-6*

*Therefore it was necessary that **the copies** of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. Heb. 9:23-24*

All who knew the Old Testament Scriptures would relate to this concept as it's root was used several times in the Septuagint as the command to Moses.

*According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it. Ex. 25:9*

*And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain. Ex. 25:40*

These Christians should make the same use of the prophets as Moses was to do with the tabernacle he saw on Mount Sinai. As we study the events that led to the prophets suffering, we learn exactly how we should handle it.

The prophets were not treated well as they went about doing the will of God. Even in Israel, which was supposed to be made up of servants of God who knew God's will, they were abused, mistreated and persecuted. Jesus and Stephen made it clear that almost all the prophets had been treated shamefully. In spite of doing God's will, no one in their day really appreciated them.

*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Mt. 5:11-12*

*Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, Acts 7:52-53*

While God was pleased with their work, what they received from men for bringing the great blessing of knowing God's will was "suffering."

*kakopatheia* from *kakos*, "evil," and *pascho*, "to suffer" is rendered "suffering" in James 5:10, (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:2552)

This is the only place in the NT this term is used. It captures both suffering and evil, because most

of the suffering that came to the prophets came as a result of the evil deeds of the wicked who did not want to hear what they were preaching. What these men had done that brought such persecution and shedding of blood was to speak in the name of the Lord.

*“makrothumia,... [c.f. makrothumeo] 1. patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance,...2. patience, forbearance, long-suffering, slowness in avenging wrongs... the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong. ... opposed to ... wrath or revenge...” (Thayer, p. 387; 3115)*

*“makrothumeo... to be of a long spirit, not to lose heart; hence 1. to persevere patiently and bravely... in enduring misfortunes and troubles... 2. to be patient in bearing the offenses and injuries of others; to be mild and slow in avenging; to be long-suffering, slow to anger, slow to punish...” (Thayer, p. 387; 3116)*

*makrothumia... a state of emotional calm in the face of provocation or misfortune and without complaint or irritation - 'patience.' 'but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherited the promises' Heb 6:12; ... take the prophets as an example of suffering and patience' or '... patience in the face of suffering' James 5:10. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:3115)*

This term described the attitude that the OT prophets had while enduring their afflictions and tribulations. They were steadfast and they persevered, they were longsuffering and forbearing. They did not become bitter, frustrated angry people. They did not grow despondent or quit. They developed a longsuffering attitude and remained faithful. This is why they are set forth here as a pattern for us to imitate.

The clearest picture of the suffering of the prophets is that of Jeremiah. Although at his call, God promised to make him a fortified city, he was not truly prepared for the terrible onslaught that came upon him. God warned him that they would fight against him.

*For behold, I have made you this day A fortified city and an iron pillar, And bronze walls against the whole land — Against the kings of Judah, Against its princes, Against its priests, And against the people of the land. 19 They will fight against you, But they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you,” says the Lord, “to deliver you.” Jer. 1:17-19*

Later, he described himself as a docile lamb led to the slaughter. Everyone cursed him and he soon had incurable pain.

*Now the LORD gave me knowledge of it, and I know it; for You showed me their doings. 19 But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, “Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more.” Jer 11:18-19*

*Woe is me, my mother, That you have borne me, A man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent for interest, Nor have men lent to me for interest. Every one of them curses me. Jer. 15:10*

*Why is my pain perpetual And my wound incurable, Which refuses to be healed? Will You surely be to me like an unreliable stream, As waters that fail? Jer. 15:18*

Because of the evil times God had called Jeremiah to work in, he would not take a wife or have children.

*The word of the Lord also came to me, saying, 2 “You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place.” 3 For thus says the Lord concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bore them and their fathers who begot them in this land: 4 “They shall die gruesome deaths; they shall not be lamented nor shall they be buried, but they shall be like refuse on the face of the earth. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, and their corpses shall be meat for the birds of heaven and for the beasts of the earth.” Jer. 16:1-4*

Much of the terrible sorrow of his life came because the wicked people hated him because of his message which had come right from the mouth of the LORD.

Then they said, **“Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come and let us attack him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.”** Jer.18:18

Jeremiah laments that everyone mocked him and watched for him to fall, he even considered no longer preaching, but the word was like a fire within him.

**O Lord, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; Everyone mocks me. 8** For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, “Violence and plunder! “Because the word of the Lord was made to me A reproach and a derision daily. 9 Then I said, “I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name.”But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not. 10 **For I heard many mocking:”Fear on every side!” “Report,” they say, “and we will report it! “All my acquaintances watched for my stumbling, saying, “Perhaps he can be induced; Then we will prevail against him, And we will take our revenge on him.”** Jer.20:7-10

Our last glimpse of Jeremiah and his suffering reveals that he cursed the day of his birth.

**Cursed be the day in which I was born! Let the day not be blessed in which my mother bore me! 15 Let the man be cursed Who brought news to my father, saying, “A male child has been born to you!” Making him very glad.** Jer.20:14-15

## **11 Behold, we count those blessed who endured.**

This is the seventh and final use of the term *idou* in the book of James. Like English, it brings the attention of “*the reader or hearer to attend to what is said: behold! see! lo!*” *It is the exclamation of one pointing out something*

It is the term we would use when something special has just been discovered and we want to share it with others. LOOK! SEE! This is a fact that everyone understands and James wants to draw attention to it. As we read the short summation of their lives and faithfulness to God, we call them blessed.

This is the interesting thing about sacrifices and trials. While we are enduring them they are difficult, but when we look back on them they were the blessed moments in our lives when we had the opportunity to truly show our faith, commitment and endurance. We truly do see them as blessed. So all we need to do is apply this to us at the present moment. If we want to be seen as blessed when this life is over then we have to use the prophets as our own template and work, sacrifice and suffer with longsuffering just as they did.

The endurance that James now re-introduces is the same “*patience*” that he opened the book with. There are some slight differences in longsuffering and endurance. The main one being that endurance is the ability to keep doing what we are commanded or have purposed to do, long after we no longer enjoy or want to do it. We have the ability to remain and abide under that trial or sorrow regardless of the cost. Longsuffering on the other hand has more the idea of someone who can keep the strong passions (*thumos*), far enough away that we do not feel the need to allow them to see the light of day. We feel them and then remove them before we verbalize or act on them. So we have someone who can endure and also set aside the reasons that might otherwise lead us to quit.

The quality of patience, endurance, and long-suffering is an admirable quality which must be mastered by those who are true children of God before they can get more than a few rungs up the ladder of the upward call of God. Without such patience and endurance, most people cannot even carry their own problems without becoming incapacitated with them. Patience insulates the heart from such things. It gives one the ability to take on more and more frustration and agony, not only in their own lives, but in the lives of others, and continue to do the will of the Lord. If we want to be able to bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ we must gain the same patience

the prophets had.

### **You have heard of the endurance of Job**

James final point on the great value of endurance (patience) centers on another man we call blessed even though his three friends spent their time seeking to convince Job he was cursed of God. Job was severely tried. The vanity of life under the sun (guided by Satan himself) threw everything at him that it creates extreme suffering and sorrow all at once. In one day he suffered financial loss and bereavement. As the days passed, he lost his reputation, his standing in the community, his health, and the spiritual loyalty of his wife to God. Finally his “*friends*” show up, but their friendship was very shallow as they have no sympathy for him, but instead spend their days accusing him falsely of things he had never done and also assessing motives and emotions they could not possibly know. They did not listen to Job’s defenses of himself. Through the many weary days that Job endured all this he kept his patience and endurance. One day at a time and one moment at a time, he endured and waited. He refused to “*curse God and die.*”

### **and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings,**

The wonderful thing about Job is that we can look at all the terrible things that happened to him. Meditate on the long slow agonizing hours that turned to days, and the days that turned to weeks, and understanding the end of the story, realize what a wonderful thing it was that Job had done. Job went through agony, but we now see the end intended by the Lord for it all, and it helps greatly. It changes the whole story when we know the end of it. The term “see” is defined:

“*eido... lat. video... The tenses coming from eido and retained by usage form two families, of which one signifies to see, the other to know... 1. to see 1. to perceive (with the eyes)... 2. lat. video, to perceive by any of the senses... 3. univ to perceive, notice, discern, discover... 4. to see, i.e. to turn the eyes, the mind, the attention to anything; a. to pay attention, observe... b. ... to see about something i.e. to ascertain what must be done about it... c. to inspect, examine... d. to look at, behold... 5. to experience, any state of condition... 6. to see i.e. have an interview with, to visit...*” (Thayer, p. 172-174; 1492)

Because God had these events written down, and then kept them perfectly recorded ever since, we now know what God had in mind for Job. We can see it because we have the book. We perceive and discover what Job could not know until it was over. We know the “*end*,” or the rest of the story that makes it all wonderful. But the reason he is now revealing this is because this can be the “*end*” of our story also, if we endure and show longsuffering.

“*telos... 1. end, i.e. a. termination, the limit at which a thing ceases to be... b. the end i.e. the last in any succession or series... c. that by which a thing is finished, its close, issue... d... the end to which all things relate, the aim, purpose* | Tim. 1:5...” (Thayer, p. 619-620; 5056)

The end to which all things related in Job’s situation, the aim and purpose that God had in mind is made known to the readers at the very beginning of the book, though Job did not learn this until after it was over, or perhaps he was never told. We know it was a test of man’s heart. Will a man serve God when all reason to serve God but the service itself is taken away. In the current state of man’s rebellion, will any man with no real reason except his faith, give God glory and submission without any hope of a reward? Job showed that they answer to this question was “Yes!” He gave God glory through his faith. He proved God right.

### **that the Lord is full of compassion and {is} merciful.**

The reasons for each of the prophets and even for Job’s sufferings were different from those we might have to face. But the end result will always be the same. The Lord always has only one true goal for our lives and that is what this life will produce for us, come what may, if we endure as they did. He then gives the reason, “*hoti* - reason why anything is said to be or to be done.” That reason is that God was “*very compassionate.*”

“*polu-splanchna... (polus, and splanchnon Q. v.), full of pity, very kind...*” (Thayer, p. 530; 4184)

*polu-splanchnos* denotes “very pitiful” or “full of pity” (*polus*, “much,” *splanchnon*, “the heart”; in the plural, “the affections”), occurs in James 5:11, (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:4184)

“*splanchna*,... bowels, intestines(the heart, lungs, liver etc.... b. in the Grk. poets fr. Aescchyl. down the bowels were regarded as the seat of the more violent passions, such as anger and love; but by the Hebrews as the seat of the tenderer affections, esp. kindness, benevolence, compassion....hence i. q. our heart [tender mercies, affections, etc...])” (Thayer p 584-585)

This is a superlative, taking compassion, sympathy and empathy to it’s highest levels. The Psalmist did this in a slightly different way, but leading to the same conclusion.

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. 9 He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. 13 Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. Ps 103:8-13

God’s great compassion is higher than the heavens above the earth, as far as the east from the west and like a father toward his own children. He has compassion that is so great that we can’t even comprehend it, but we see it in the lives of the prophets.

God gave Job back everything he lost. God did not leave him to die in the horrible situation he was in. Even after Job sinned and made some rash statements, God still had great compassion upon him. He loved Job, and was proud of what he was able to accomplish. God was also full of pity toward him.

“*oiktirmos*,... ..(the viscera, which were thought to be the seat of compassion...), compassion, pity, mercy:...bowels in which compassion resides, a heart of compassion ...in the Scriptures mostly plural...emotions, longings, manifestations of pity,” (Thayer p 442; NT:3629)

“*oiktirmos*,... If *eleos* denotes the emotion of compassion or sympathy, *oikos* is in the first instance “grief” or “lamentation,” esp. “lamentation” at the misfortune or death of a man. then often “sympathetic lamentation,” “sympathy,” “pity.” ... the rarer *oiktirmos* is used for the emotion of sympathy itself. *oiktirein* thus means “to be sympathetic” in the sense of grief or sorrow. but also in that of the sympathy which is ready to help. *Oiktirein* can thus have the same meaning as *eleein*...” (Kittel, TDWNT NT:3629)

God feels great sympathy and pity when He sees His servants in the terrible circumstances they often find themselves in. Time and chance, persecution, discouragement and disillusionment. God sees His children (even his only begotten Son) go through all this. He feels pity, mercy and compassion toward them. But it is always in the best interests of someone to leave them there. If that were not the case, God would not allow it.

## **12 But above all, my brethren,**

James now begins a series of closing exhortations. The first one is taken nearly verbatim from the Sermon on the Mount:

“*Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.” 34 “But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; 35 “nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 “Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 “But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No.” For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. Mt. 5:33-37*

Why he chose to place this here probably had something to do with the problems confronting his readers in that day. If this was still a problem among the Jews, then it was still a temptation to those Christians who have “*come out from among them.*” The “*above all*” makes this a high priority:

“*pro*... marker of primary importance - ‘more important than, of greatest importance, above.’ ‘more important than all else, my fellow believers, do not use an oath’ James 5:12; ‘more important than everything else, earnestly love one another’ 1 Peter 4:8. (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon NT:4253)

This is a pre-eminent command. Therefore we must give it great consideration and submission.

## **do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath.**

Among those who always tell the truth, there is very little temptation to “swear.” But to those who do not always tell the truth, an oath and swearing become a secondary way to gain credibility.

*omnuo* (Matt 23:20; 26:74; Heb 6:16; James 5:12; and *omnumi*, Mark 14:71 ... to swear; to affirm, promise, threaten, with an oath: absolutely, followed by direct discourse, Mt 26:74; Mark 14:71; Heb 7:21; (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, NT:3660)

Although this has not taken deep root in our own culture it had in the Jewish world of Jesus’ day. They used an oath to gain a little more assurance that they were telling the truth. Yet those who stoop to use oaths, mostly will not be bound by it anyway. God disapproves of all oaths that do not use His name. He does not approve of swearing by heaven, or by the earth. Or any other oath. The term “other” is very important to our understanding of what is being forbidden here. It is defined:

“*allos... another, other*; a. absol... b. as an adj. ... c. with the art. ... Syn *allos, heteros* ... *allos* generally denotes simply distinction of individuals, *heteros* involves the secondary idea of difference of kind...” (Thayer, p. 29; 243)

*allos* [243] *heteros* [2087] ... *allos* ... is the numerically distinct; thus Christ spoke we are told ‘another’ parable, and still ‘another,’ but each succeeding one being of the same character as those which He had spoken before (Matt 13:23,24,31,33), ... But *heteros* ... superadds the notion of qualitative difference.. ... There are not a few passages in the N.T. whose right interpretation, or at any rate their full understanding, will depend on an accurate seizing of the distinction between these words. Thus Christ promises to his disciples that He will send, not *heteron* but *allon, parakleton* (John 14:16), ‘another’ Comforter therefore, similar to Himself. ... Thus St. Paul says, ‘I see another law’ [*heteron*], a law quite different from the law of the spirit of life, even a law of sin and death, ‘working in my members’ (Rom 7:23). After Joseph’s death ‘another [*heteros*] king arose’ in Egypt Acts 7:18; cf. Ex 1:8), one, it is generally supposed, of quite another dynasty, at all events of quite another spirit, from his who had invited the children of Israel into Egypt, and so hospitably entertained them there. ... We may bring this distinction practically to bear on the interpretation of the N. T. There is only one way in which the fine distinction between *eteron* and *allo*, and the point which St. Paul makes as he sets the one over against the other at Gal 1:6,7, can be reproduced for the English reader. ‘I marvel,’ says the Apostle, ‘that ye are so soon removed from them that called you into the grace of Christ unto another (*eteron*) Gospel, which is not another’ (*allo*). Dean Alford for the first ‘other’ has substituted ‘different’; for indeed that is what St. Paul intends to express, namely, his wonder that they should have so soon accepted a Gospel different in character and kind from that which they had already received, which therefore had no right to be called another Gospel, to assume this name, being in fact no Gospel at all; since there could not be two Gospels, varying the one from the other. (Trench’s Synonyms of the NT: 243)

This term describes all the oaths of the same type as this. Oaths of a different kind are not necessarily under consideration here. I bring out this point because we have both Jesus and Paul taking an oath with no qualm. But it was a different [*heteros*] type of oath. It was administered by civil authority in the case of Jesus and is in the name of God. Which even the OT sanctioned. Paul’s was an affirmation of his own heart, and not in the same league at all with these.

*You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. Deut 6:13-14*

*You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name. Deut 10:20-21*

## **But let your “Yes,” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,”**

For the child of God, in everyday dealings with man, this is the standard. When you say yes you mean yes. Your word is true and people need no more.

## **lest you fall into judgment.**

Any more than this will cause a fall into “judgment.”

*krisis* ... (a) denotes “the process of investigation, the act of distinguishing and separating” ... hence

“a judging, a passing of judgment upon a person or thing”; it has a variety of meanings, such as judicial authority, John 5:22,27; justice, Acts 8:33; James 2:13; a tribunal, Matt 5:21-22; a trial, John 5:24; 2 Peter 2:4; a judgment, 2 Peter 2:11; ... (b) sometimes it has the meaning “condemnation,” ...” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:2920)

Jesus made it clear that every word, even the idle ones, we will give an account of. Among these words are those that can bring condemnation.

*But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Mt. 12:36-37*

We must always be sure to remember that every yes must mean yes and every no must mean no. If it doesn’t then we will give an account and could fall into condemnation.

## **You have Heard... But I say to You... 4: Swearing**

**Introduction:** Of all the issues Jesus dealt with in this sermon, our own generation has not gone far in this sin. His words actually sound foreign to most of us, since few have ever been involved in swearing. The real struggle for most Christians is whether this passage forbids an oath they might be asked to give in a court of law. So before we can make proper applications to His words we will need to assess the temptations from our own world and then compare them to His. He said:

*“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ 34 But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; 35 nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. Mt. 5:33-37*

**This is not an issue that has affected us. We don’t read these words in our entertainment. They are not in books, television or movies, and we don’t hear worldly or ungodly people swearing in this way.** Few if any have ever been tempted to swear an oath, and certainly not in the specific manner Jesus identified: Heaven, earth, Jerusalem, or by our own head. So when we read these words we must take an extra step to understand the issue.

**Yet Israel in the time of Jesus had gone much further than this.** They had created an elaborate system where some oaths would be binding in a court of law, and others could be used even when they knew it was a lie without fear of prosecution.

*“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’ ... 18 And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.’ Mt. 23:16-22*

**One can only imagine the dishonesty and lack of integrity practiced in that day. First, their word meant so little that they had resorted to these oaths. Second, the oaths themselves were also worthless because they had found a way to justify certain oaths that need not be kept.** This is a level of dishonesty and fraud that is foreign to us today.

**Since our youth, we have had three levels of commitment that we use every day to give assurance to others.** First, and nearly universally, we simply tell someone, we will do something and then we do it. This is exactly what Jesus concluded! *Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’* This is how God and all His children have always dealt with truth. Remember, *“it is impossible for God to lie.”* Every word He speaks is absolute. It is carefully considered and examined before it is spoken and once it leaves His mouth, it is fixed and established. Only Satan and his offspring would say something with no intention of actually doing what was said.

**The second level of commitment we make when we want to give additional assurance is a promise.** We often tell our children “*I promise,*” when speaking about a future event that we want them to know we definitely keep. Promises are generally reserved for special events or circumstances where we want the recipient to savor the hope with no doubt. So every commitment we make must be carefully considered before being made for it proclaims our true parentage.

**The third level of commitment we make is reserved for our business and financial transactions, when we sign our name.** We sign credit card receipts and checks as a means of both affirming and promising that we will pay. It also serves as a verification to our bank or credit card company that we were the one who actually took on the obligation. We also use this form of verification when making a large purchase, like a car or home to sign all the words of the contract. This creates a legal obligation that we are expected to fulfill.

**After carefully examining all Jesus’ words, it is evident that these three methods are only three means to: “let our ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and our ‘No,’ be ‘No.’”** We are not swearing by anything higher than ourselves, so we are not in violation of His words. If we always keep our word and promises and always honor our signatures with absolute integrity, then this is enough. No one really thinks of asking for more.

**What then was the true purpose of an oath?** The first oath ever noted in the Scripture was between Abimelech and Abraham and was requested by Abimelech. He wanted absolute assurance that neither Abraham or his posterity would ever harm him. Abimelech recognized the need to have a witness who would never die or change and one who could enforce a penalty on anyone who violated this oath, no matter how far into the future it might be.

**The second oath was given by God to Abraham and His descendants (Gen 22:16-18). It was an extraordinary set of circumstances and God wanted it solemnly attested so no one would ever doubt in the future.** First, God had given His word and then further strengthened it with a promise. Finally, God swore by His own name to make absolutely certain that all the future offspring of Abraham no matter how many millennia into the future would have immutable proof that this could never change. The two immutable things are the promise and the oath. Because it is impossible for God to lie, both of these are absolute and unbreakable.

*For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. Heb. 6:13-20*

**The true purpose of any oath centers on “men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.”** This is the exact point Jesus made! There is no need for an oath with a disciple. When a true disciple says “yes” or “no” he understands that all are always living in the presence of God and that such statements are as binding as an oath because it was spoken with the same consciousness of the greater power witnessing the words and knowing we will give an account to Him later makes all oaths superfluous.

**This is also the point of James when he quotes Jesus, “But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No,’ lest you fall into judgment.”** (James 5:12). Jesus demanded that His disciples assess the integrity of their words and the honor of their reputation. He demanded that their given word was so sacred that once given there was no need for an oath. When ones ‘yes’ is ‘yes’ and a ‘no’ means ‘no,’ there is thought or need for an oath. Each disciple should have this reputation. Anything more than this has its source in Satan and not in God.

**Conclusion:** Our neighbor has the right to expect truth from a servant of God. Any abuse of truth, veracity, integrity or honesty would be a terrible blemish on one's character. Just as it is impossible for God to lie it ought to be impossible for His children to lie. We should never need to resort to swearing, since it would mean our words alone cannot be trusted.

### **What about a Court of Law?**

The question surrounding the court of law has been debated by true disciples. Jesus never expressly forbid oaths in the name of God. It would require the Law to cease for Him to do so:

*10 You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name... 20 You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name. 21 He is your praise, and He is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen. (Deut. 6:13; 10:20-21).*

So just how far did Jesus expect his words "*But I say to you, do not swear at all:*" to be taken? Is He just forbidding the false and useless swearing of the Jews? Or is he removing something that was both commanded and practiced extensively during the Patriarchal and Mosaic ages? God swore in His own name both to Abraham and David and to the Messiah. If Jesus forbid it such swearing here, it is difficult to understand why He allowed Himself to be placed under oath in civil court.

*And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" 63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" 64 Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Mt. 26:62-64)*

It is also difficult to understand why Paul used God as His witness (a form of swearing):

*For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son (Rom. 1:9)*

*Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. (2Cor. 1:23)*

*For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:8)*

Some believe that the words of Jesus should be taken literally: "*Swear not at all!*" Others are convinced that Jesus was only speaking of individuals in their daily life as He did in the next passage. An eye for an eye was for civil government, not for individuals. So oaths are not for individuals, but they are still intact for civil government. For individuals, "yes" and "no" are enough. These are all the facts we have and godly disciples have drawn both conclusions. There is no clear and absolute answer so each must live with their own conscience.

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## **James 5:14-15**

### **13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.**

There are several words for suffering, but this one is only used a few times in the New Testament. It is a compound term made up of suffering (*patheo*) and evil (*kakos*).

*"kakopatheo... to suffer(endure evils(hardship, troubles); to be afflicted... used frequently of the hardships of military life..." (Thayer, 320; 2553)*

*kakopatheo from kakos, "evil," pathos, "suffering," signifies "to suffer hardship." (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:2553)*

Paul used it twice in his final letter, once to describe his own circumstances and then to warn Timothy and all evangelists that preaching the word will bring suffering.

Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, 9 for which I **suffer trouble** as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. 2Tim. 2:8-10

But you be watchful in all things, **endure afflictions**, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 2Tim. 4:5

While this term can be used of all the trials and troubles that come upon us because we are Christians, It doesn't have to be limited to that. Any hardship or trouble that comes upon us is seen as an evil that we must suffer through. When we are bereaved, persecuted, dealing with financial setbacks, or failing health, God wants us to pray for him. While the Holy Spirit could have chosen the indicative mode to simply offer this as an option, He used the imperative to make it a command. This is a command from God that we must fulfill. For most Christians, it is the natural expression of our faith in God and comes naturally. But if we are not yet doing it, then James enjoins this upon us and after what he said in the previous chapter, we need to give this especial prominence.

*Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. James 4:17*

We know it is good and we know it is a command, so if we don't do it, then we are not manifesting the proper faith and the proper response. Suffering is dangerous. It is a part of the rocky ground that Jesus described as well as the cause of some of the "fretting" and "anxious" thought that we are warned so strongly against. Instead of allowing this suffering to fester in our mind, we are commanded to bring it to God and leave it in His capable and loving hands.

*casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. 1Pet. 5:5*

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Phil. 4:6-7*

*You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You. 4 Trust in the Lord forever, Isa. 26:3-4*

We must learn through this command to pray how to cast anxiety on him and let our requests be known, so that we can experience the peace of God that surpasses all understanding and also to cast them upon Him and allow Him to help us bear the burdens.

### **Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.**

The Spirit also has a command for us when all is at peace and we are feeling happy.

*euthumeo*, signifies, in the active voice, "to put in good spirits, to make cheerful" (*eu*, "well," *thumos*, "mind or passion"); or, intransitively, "to be cheerful," (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:2114)

So this is the opposite side of the spectrum. On the one side is suffering evil and afflictions and on the other are those who are in good spirits and feeling happy, cheerful, and glad. We need to be careful that we do not carry this concept too far. Paul used it just before the shipwreck to tell them they no longer needed to be anxious, but to become cheerful.

*And now I urge you to **take heart**, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, 24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.' 25 Therefore **take heart**, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. 26 However, we must run aground on a certain island." Acts 27:22-26*

The idea seems to be in this context that the moment the anxiety is under control and we again feel confident that God is with us and will bless us, we can become "cheerful" and "take heart" again. This appears to be the case with Paul and Barnabas after they were thrown into prison.

*But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Acts 16:25-26*

Each individual will have to choose the moment when the suffering of hardship is relieved enough

that we can have the good spirits and cheerfulness where the prayers turn to song. Clearly, Paul and Silas were able to do it even while they were in prison. Others might have to wait until they are released, but the key to the passage is the command:

Let them “sing.”

*“psallo... (fr psao, to rub, wipe; to handle, touch...) a. to pluck off, pull out... b. to cause to vibrate by touching, to twang... to touch or strike the chord, to twang the strings of a musical instrument so that they gently vibrate... to play on a stringed instrument, to play the harp,... to sing to the music of the harp; in the N. T. to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song,... “ (Thayer, p. 675; 6667)*

The NKJV adds sing “*psalms*,” the other translations have let them sing “*praise*.” Literally, it could just be translated, “*let them sing*,” leaving the content of the song up to the individual. Yet the context would lead these to be uplifting songs of praise and adoration to God, His Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

When we feel happy and in good spirits, we are hear commanded that the heart should naturally go to God who made it all possible. Hence when happy or unhappy, the first thing one should do is bring it to the Lord either in praise or in prayer.

Thus God wants us to share our sorrows and our joys with Him and make Him a vital and integral part of our life whether we are happy or sad.

### **Suffering or Cheerful**

Are we among those who see James exhortation/command as an important part of our daily life? How many of us use prayer as our first line of defense after we are mistreated or are feeling anguish, sorrow or bitterness over something?

Is it easy for us to pray when we are suffering? If this is not our first and natural response to all suffering then can we truly say we “*trust in the Lord with all our heart and are not leaning upon our own understanding (Pr 3:5)*”? How many times does God need to ask us to do something for us to see how important it is for us to do it? You know that **once** is the right answer! Yet God has again and again asked us to bring our sorrows and troubles to him.

*casting all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you. 1Pet. 5:7*

*In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. Phil. 4:6-7*

The chorus of *Did You Think to Pray*(#62) addresses this:

*O how praying rests the weary! Prayer will change the night to day; So when life seems dark and dreary, Don't forget to pray.*

Do we forget? Prayer should be our first line of defense when we feel stress, sorrow, bitterness, or any negative emotions caused by suffering. Such prayers help open our eyes to ‘*count it all joy when you fall into various trials*’, (Jas 1:2-5) They help us see we are not alone and not being singled out. We can see ‘*that the same sufferings are accomplished in our brethren who are in the world*’ (1 Pet 5:9).

We sing in “What a Friend we have in Jesus #69” ‘*O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer.*’ Do we really believe these words? Do we always act upon them?

Amazingly enough, the other portion of the verse seems to be even less in our minds though it ought to be such an enjoyable and natural thing! Who among us does not enjoy sharing happiness with others? If something good comes to us we look forward to sharing it with our spouse and friends. The woman who lost her coin and the man who lost his sheep both ‘*call together friends*

and neighbors, saying, rejoice with me' (Lk. 15:6, 9) after they found it. Why did this do it?

Because it is just natural to have a feast, a party or some form of celebration over our good fortune. We often celebrate a birth, a wedding, birthdays, anniversaries.

How many of us invite God into these celebrations? How would we do that if we wanted it? One of the ways is through prayer. God has asked us to 'pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward.' 1Th 5:17-18 After good news that lifts our soul into joy and happiness, God is invited into the celebration by our giving of thanks through prayer.

What of James' command: *Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise?* What exactly does this verse mean? It appears to mean that whenever our heart is lifted up with some joy or gladness creating contentment and happiness that our heart should then fill with song as well as with prayer. Singing praise to God ought to be one of the most natural responses to any good thing that happens to us. Have we read the Psalms enough to see that this is a very common theme in them? The startling difference in this passage is that this is something we do alone! We are not speaking one to another, but in this case it is the one who is cheerful who is to do the singing at the time of his cheerfulness.

When was the last time our happy mood not only led to a spring in the step and a smile on the face, but a song of praise to God in our heart and on our lips? How often do we sing songs of praise when we are alone? How often when we are singing in the shower is it a song of praise to God? When we sing while driving is it ever a song of praise? What is a fair assessment of the amount of time we spend singing other songs and the time we spend singing praise to God?

Perhaps the most important question is have we ever done it at all? Is this a command we are seeking to fulfill or have we completely ignored it? Wouldn't it be sad if all the wonderful moments in our life were squandered with not a single word of praise to God in song? There are so many happy moments and days we wake up just glad to be alive! James bids us take that moment and bring God in by praising him in song. Will we do it?

#### 14 Is anyone among you sick?

As one moves from commentary to commentary and considers all the wisdom of men on this difficult passage, it becomes clear that Paul was not the only one Peter could have been referring to when he said:

*in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. 2Pet. 3:16*

These words are hard to be understood for a variety of reasons. First, because of the ambiguity of the word "sick" which gives two possible ways the interpret these words. The second is the issue of spiritual gifts and whether they have any bearing on our understanding of the passage. If the passage is speaking of spiritual gifts, then a third consideration is whether or not this was only a temporary command for the church of the first century, or whether the elders of the congregation would continue to have this ability even after the death of the apostles and the means of having the power of spiritual gifts was taken from the earth with the death of the last apostle.

These three issues have led to a lot of wresting and twisting, because they truly are "hard to be understood." There are five distinct positions that have been taken on this passage with many variant as one after another takes a slightly different position. As we look at them, we will find that the three issues discussed above make each explanation have some issues that can't be resolved easily.

1. **Extreme Unction/Anointing of the Sick.** One of the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic church, states that those who are sick can call upon the priest or bishop. Those who are seriously sick can call upon these two offices to come and administer the oil. When they are near death, it can also become the last rites to prepare for death.

2. **Present day miracles.** This position teaches that elders in every church can be called upon at any moment to perform a miraculous healing for those who are sick.
3. **The sickness is physical and the healing is miraculous** but it all ended with the close or miracles in the first century. Thus it is much like the teachings of I Corinthians 13-15 dealing with how to use spiritual gifts while they are here, but in the midst of this teaching clearly expressing that these gifts would end.
4. **The sickness is physical and the healing is not miraculous.** It is the prayer of a Christian for a Christian which is promised to be answered in the same means that wisdom is answered.
5. **The sickness is spiritual, the healing is spiritual and should still be practiced by Christians today.** As noted above, the term translated sick can also be translated “weak,” and one of the positions teaches that since it is a spiritual sickness,

Many preachers and Christians have taken view number 3, as the most logical and scriptural way to interpret the passage, but it is not without problems and difficulties. The primary issue with this view is the fact that miracles were not used in this way anywhere else in the writings of the apostles and prophets.

- 1 Mk 16:20 and Acts 14:3, along with many other passages, teach plainly that miracles were used to primarily to confirm the word. If this passage is taken as miraculous it is a departure from this rule. It would be the only place where spiritual gifts were used for the physical comfort of the saints.
- 2 When Timothy was sick, Paul told him to use a little wine (the common medicine of the day for that illness). Why didn't Paul tell him to do what James commands here? If physical illnesses were cured miraculously by elders in the church, why didn't Paul tell him to call on the elders of the church and receive the healing that James promised here? We know there were elders at Ephesus. If this was the common means, why didn't Paul use or suggest it?
- 3 Not all elders had spiritual gifts. Congregations where no apostles had visited had no gifts (Acts 8:14-18). How were Christians in a congregation without elders or without the gifts to take the passage?
- 4 God is clear throughout the Scriptures that physical blessings are given through time and chance and as long as we live “*under the sun,*” everything comes alike to all. What Christians receive when they enter Christ through baptism is “*every spiritual blessing in Christ.*” Physical healing on the assured level that James places it here clearly violates these principles. That doesn't mean it can't be the case, but only that it creates additional problems if we conclude these are miraculous gifts.
- 5 I Cor 12:4-11 teaches plainly that Christian's only receive one gift at the direction and discretion of the Holy Spirit.

*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given the **word of wisdom** through the Spirit, to another the **word of knowledge** through the same Spirit, 9 to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another **gifts of healings** by the same Spirit, 10 to another the **working of miracles**, to another **prophecy**, to another **discerning of spirits**, to another **different kinds of tongues**, to another the **interpretation of tongues**. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, **distributing to each one individually as He wills.***  
1 Cor 12:7-11

The gift of healing was a single gift, along side of prophesy (preaching by inspiration), tongues (preaching in foreign languages), and interpretation of tongues . If the elders had the gift of healing, they would not have the gift of prophecy, word of wisdom, or word of knowledge which would be of greater value considering their work. In an age where the word was not yet written, these would be more important to the elders.

None of the above points are unassailable. Nor do all of them together make an ironclad case against it. But it does give one reason to reflect upon its validity.

#### 4. **The sickness is physical and the healing is not miraculous.**

In this interpretation, those who have a physical illness, are commanded to call upon the elders who will offer a prayer to God in their behalf and God will hear that prayer as He answers the prayer of all righteous men.

This interpretation also has merit and is worthy of consideration. Christians can pray for their physical welfare, and should praise and thank God for their health, and for the provisions of the necessities of life (Phil. 4:6-7; Mt. 6:12; 6:25-27, 33). Since God promises He will care for our

needs, surely we have the right to ask Him and thank Him when we receive them. Hezekiah is a good example of this. 2Kings 20:1-6 records his prayer after Isaiah told him he would soon die. God answered his prayer with an additional 15 years of life. We are authorized and have the right to request and petition God that He heal us when we are sick, or to guide the surgeon's hand when we are undergoing an operation. We have the right as children of God to ask anything of Him, with the understanding that if it is His will, He will do it.

The difficulty here is James statement that the prayer of faith **shall** save him that is sick, and the Lord **shall** raise him up. Both these verbs are in the indicative mode. In Greek this means they are stated as fact. James statement leaves no room for failure. Who is willing to take the position that every prayer by the elders for a sick Christian will result in their being healed. In addition, James promised that God would forgive him of all his sins as well. How can a prayer for a physically ill person result in the forgiveness of sin? God only promised that on the basis of repentance. Consequently, this view also has a few thorny questions is not without problems.

### **5. The sickness is spiritual, the healing is spiritual and should still be practiced by Christians today.**

The third possible interpretation of this passage is that the illness is spiritual in nature, and that the prayers of the elders are simply the intercessions of righteous men in behalf of a weak Christian. As in the introduction, the Greek word translated “*sick*” can be translated either with “*sickness*” or “*weakness*.”

“*astheneo... to be weak, feeble; univ. to be without strength, powerless... to be weak in faith*” (Thayer, 80; 770)

The words *asthenes astheneia*, *astheneo* appear a total of 80 times in the NT, of which 40 occurrences are in Paul alone. ... The word group signifies weakness or powerlessness of various kinds. a) The reference is often to a comprehensive understanding of weakness as that which is derived directly from the earthly-bodily existence of mankind and has consequences in various realms. This understanding is present esp. in the texts in which the terms *sarx* (“flesh”) or *soma* (“body”) appear in connection with *asthen-* Paul contrasts the earthly body ... v. 44), whose characteristic features are “perishability,” “dishonor,” and “weakness,” to the future resurrection body, which is filled with the Spirit and which he characterizes as a body in “imperishability,” “glory,” and “power.” ... c) The characteristic and fundamental weakness of mankind has various effects. Sickness is one of its manifestations. The word group appears in this sense almost 40 times in the NT usually in an absolute construction... e) Alongside these natural forms of *astheneia* there is in Paul an ethical-religious weakness. When Paul emphasizes in Rom 5:6 that Christ died for the ungodly (cf. v. 8) at the right time, “while we were yet helpless,” he recognizes weakness (overcome through the death of Christ) as the condition of unredeemed humanity, which is separated from God. (Exegetical Dictionary of the NT: 772)

Thus is is clear that this term is used just as often of spiritual weakness as it is of physical sickness. A careful examination of the passages reveals clearer that the translators would be justified to translate it either way:

**14 Is anyone among you SICK?**

**14 Is anyone among you WEAK?**

<u>Matt 10:8</u>	“Heal the <b>SICK</b> , cleanse the lepers,
<u>Matt 25:36</u>	I was <b>SICK</b> and you visited Me;
<u>Mark 6:56</u>	laid the <b>SICK</b> in the marketplaces,
<u>Luke 4:40</u>	any were <b>SICK</b> with various diseases
<u>Luke 7:10</u>	the servant well who had been <b>SICK</b> .
<u>Luke 9:2</u>	to heal the <b>SICK</b> .
<u>John 4:46</u>	certain nobleman son was <b>SICK</b>
<u>John 5:3</u>	great multitude of <b>SICK</b> people,
<u>John 5:7</u>	The <b>SICK</b> man answered Him,
<u>John 6:2</u>	Those who were <b>DISEASED</b> .
<u>John 11:1</u>	Now a certain man was <b>SICK</b> ,
<u>John 11:2</u>	whose brother Lazarus was <b>SICK</b> .
<u>John 11:3</u>	“Lord, he whom You love is <b>SICK</b> .”
<u>John 11:6</u>	So, when He heard that he was <b>SICK</b> ,
<u>Acts 9:37</u>	she became <b>SICK</b> and died.
<u>Acts 19:12</u>	brought from his body to the <b>SICK</b> ,
<u>Phil 2:26</u>	because you had heard he was <b>SICK</b> .
<u>Phil 2:27</u>	indeed he was <b>SICK</b> almost unto death;
<u>2 Tim 4:20</u>	Trophimus I have left in Miletus <b>SICK</b> .
<u>James 5:14</u>	Is anyone among you <b>SICK</b> ?

<u>Acts 20:35</u>	that you must support the <b>WEAK</b> .
<u>Romans 4:19</u>	And not being <b>WEAK</b> in faith,
<u>Romans 8:3</u>	the law could not do in that it was <b>WEAK</b>
<u>Romans 14:2</u>	he who is <b>WEAK</b> eats only vegetables.
<u>Rom 14:2</u>	or is offended or is made <b>WEAK</b> .
<u>1Cor 8:9</u>	stumblingblock to those who are <b>WEAK</b> .
<u>1Cor 8:11</u>	because of your knowledge shall the <b>WEAK</b> brother perish,
<u>1Cor 8:12</u>	and wound their <b>WEAK</b> conscience,
<u>1Cor 9:22</u>	to the <b>WEAK</b> I became as <b>WEAK</b> , that I might win the <b>WEAK</b> .
<u>1Cor 11:30</u>	many are <b>WEAK</b> and sick among you, and many sleep.
<u>2Cor 10:10</u>	but his bodily presence is <b>WEAK</b> ,
<u>2Cor 11:21</u>	I say that we were too <b>WEAK</b> for that!
<u>2 Cor 11:29</u>	Who is <b>WEAK</b> , and I am not <b>weak</b> ?
<u>2 Cor 12:10</u>	when I am <b>WEAK</b> , then I am strong.
<u>2 Cor 13:3</u>	who is not <b>WEAK</b> toward you, but mighty in you.
<u>2 Cor 13:4</u>	For we also are <b>WEAK</b> in Him,
<u>2 Cor 13:9</u>	when we are <b>WEAK</b> and you are strong.

After looking at all the different contexts where the word James was used, there are obvious reasons why they had to use weakness instead of sickness because the context of many of these passages will not allow it to be translated with physical sickness. While in the the gospels it is translated with sickness and illness, in the epistles, it is most often translated weakness.

	Total use	Physical	spiritual
Gospels	16	16	0
Acts	3	2	1
Epistles	22	4	18
Total	41	22	19

With these facts in our minds, it is easy to see that there is no compelling reason to translate it sickness here. There is just as much evidence for *weakness* as there is for *sickness*. The only reason one would translate on over the other is based entirely on the context. The word can mean either.

So what does the context demand here? Chapter Five began with a discussion of the terrible consequences of misused wealth. Then moved the great need for God’s people to be patient. An admonition not to grumble and sigh against one another, then not to swear, finally to pray if suffering, and sing if cheerful.

Either alternative is possible. James is either telling those of us who are

- spiritually weak and struggling with convictions that they can come to the elders for help.
- physically ill and wanting God’s blessing that they can call upon the elders for help. .

The context, the teaching of the NT on the role of the eldership, and the word itself favor the former. I have become convinced after studying the above that a spiritual weakness fits the context much better than physical illness.

Hence, those who find themselves in a condition of spiritual weakness and desire to be helped

should call upon the elders who will offer their prayers in his behalf. His repentance and desire for help manifested by calling the elders and their intercession on his behalf makes it certain he would be helped and also explains why James says he would also have his sins forgiven.

### **Let him call for the elders of the church.**

*“proskaleo... to call to; in the N. T. found only in the Mid. to call to one’s self; to bid to come to one’s self...” (Thayer, 546-547; 4341)*

The office of elders among the Jews were already present when Moses came to the children of Israel.

*“Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, “The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, “I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt; Ex. 3:16”*

This office continued throughout the OT dispensation. There were elders with Moses and Joshua, during the time of the judges, during the time of the united and divided kingdom, after the captivity and during the life of Christ.

In the New Testament church they are first mentioned as already being a part of the church as early as the famine in Jerusalem in Acts 11:30. They are seen to be a fundamental part of every church as soon as there are qualified men when Paul appointed them in every church.

*Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. 30 This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Acts 11:29-30*

*So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Acts 14:23-24*

They are also known by the names bishop (overseer) and shepherd (pastor). Their qualifications are given by the Holy Spirit in 1Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 give their qualifications and Acts 20:28 and 1 Pet 5:1-4 give their work. They were the leaders and shepherds of the NT church. It would be logical to call for them under such circumstances.

### **and let them pray over him,**

The elders when they arrive they are to pray. This is a general term for prayer:

*“proseuchomai... to offer prayers, to pray, (everywhere of prayers to God...) ... “ (Thayer, p. 545-546; 4336)*

*“proseuchomai, proseuche ... 1. “to pray,” “to pray to,” “to ask,” “prayer,” “petitionary prayer.” We best understand the term by differentiating it from the synonymous *deomai, deesis*. the distinction is the *deisthai* almost always means real asking whereas *proseuchesthai* is preferred if the fact of prayer is to be denoted with no narrower indication of its content...” (Kittel, TDTNT, Vol. 2 p. 807-808)*

This includes all forms of prayer: Intercessions, Petitions, and Thanksgiving. These elders are to pray “over” him. This preposition has many meanings depending on the context. One may picture the elders standing over the one who is in need of their prayers.

*“epi... upon the surface of... after verbs of abiding, remaining, standing, going, coming, etc; of doing anything... C. with the ACCUSATIVE... I of place; 1. properly; a. of the place above, over which, our *up, on, on to...* after verbs signifying motion and continuance... c. it is used of persons *over* whom anything is done, that thereby some benefit may accrue to them,...” (Thayer, 231-236; 1909).*

### **anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.**

The anointing with oil is a difficult part of this Scripture no matter which interpretation one takes. It is one of the few places in the Scriptures where an Old Testament ceremonial ordinance is carried forward, or the established custom of the medicinal use of oil is used to illustrate what the prayer will accomplish. It is evident from the next passage, as well as all other passages of Scripture that it is not the oil, but the prayer of faith that saves. Anointing with oil has a long history in the Jewish religion.

- \* Jacob poured oil on the rock he had used as a pillow when he had his dream of the ladder into heaven (Gen 28:18),
- \* at the same spot many years later God changed his name to Israel and he again poured oil on a rock (Gen 35:14).
- \* It was used in the tabernacle to anoint the priests and the unleavened bread.
- \* It was used to sanctify, it is used of the blessings of the Lord, it is used medicinally, it is used symbolically.
- \* It was used by the Jews of Jesus day as a sign of hospitality (Lk. 7:46).  
*You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.*
- \* It was used by the 12 when they went out on the limited commission to miraculously heal the sick. (Mk. 6:13).  
*And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.*
- \* It was used by the good Samaritan to bind up the wounds of the injured man. (Lk. 10:34).  
*So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*

It's purpose here is difficult to determine. Perhaps it was still seen as medicinal. Perhaps there was some significance that they understood and we do not. Perhaps it is like the holy kiss that we are told to greet one another and we have changed to a handshake. Which use it takes here is difficult to determine. Yet in the next clause, it is not the oil, but the prayer of faith that saves the sick.

### 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick,

Note that it is the “*prayer of faith*” that will save. James has changed the word for prayer from the one given in verse 14. “*Let them pray.*”

*euche*, fem. noun from *eúchomai* (2172), to wish, pray, vow. Prayer, wish. In James 5:15, it is translated “prayer” because, in verse fourteen, the comp. verb *proseúchomai* (4336), to pray, is used. If, however, prayer was meant by the *euche* (v. 15), the more common word *proseuche* (4335) would have been used. The basic meaning of the word *euche* is wish or vow. When it is addressed to God, it becomes *proseuche*, from *prós* (4314), toward, and *euche*, wish. When we pray to God, we wish that He would intervene to permit something in our lives that we feel is proper and right. For the Christian, every prayer ought to be the result of his faith in God through Christ. (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:2171).

This term is only used three times in the NT and the other two are translated “vow.”

*So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a **vow**. Acts 18:18*

*Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a **vow**. Acts 21:23*

This too creates a little bit of an enigma since it is never used for prayer, except here. Is this a prayer that is similar to a vow in that something is offered in exchange? We would love to ask James, but since that is not possible, we can only do our best to comply. But however this prayer is worded, it will “save.” This is the common word for salvation from sin in the New Testament.

*“sozo... to save, to keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction (opp. to apollumi)... a. univ., tina ... one (from injury or peril); to save a suffering one (from perishing) e. g. one suffering from disease to make well, heal, restore to health: to preserve one who is in danger of destruction, to save(i.e.to rescue)... to save in the technical biblical sense; — negatively, to deliver from the penalties of the Messianic judgment, Joel 2:32 (3:5) ; to save from the evils which obstruct the reception of the Messianic deliverance...” (Thayer, p. 610-611; 4982)*

It is used NT:4982

*Sozo* occurs fifty-four times in the Gospels ... Of the instances where *sozo* is used, fourteen relate to deliverance from disease or demon possession... in twenty instances, the inference is to the rescue of physical life from some impending peril or instant death ... the remaining

twenty times, the reference is to spiritual salvation..." (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:4982)

In the epistles, once again these numbers turn around that the vast majority refer to spiritual salvation. So we face the same dilemma here as we did with the term weakness/sickness.

Also, this is stated as a fact. It was interesting how those who took this passage to refer to physical illness in the NT church had difficulties here. It is not always true that such a prayer will save someone who is physically sick. Therefore "*if it is the Lord's will*" is injected here. He may not want to save this person. So the prayer is prefaced with something that tells the person who is sick that there is some doubt as to the outcome depending upon the will of the Lord. The only way this can be literal and always true is if it is a miraculous physical healing, or a spiritual healing.

This prayer of faith, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit will save the sick/weak. The term sick here is defined:

Another term for sick is used in verse 15.

*"kamno... 1. to grow weary, be weary... 2. to be sick..."* (Thayer, 2576; 2577)

*"kamno ... primarily signified "to work"; then, as the effect of continued labor, "to be weary"; it is used in Heb 12:3, of becoming "weary" (see also No. 1), RV, "wax not weary"; in James 5:15, of sickness; (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:2577)*

*For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become **weary** and discouraged in your souls. Heb. 12:3*

Again, only the context of the passage gives the reason for translating "sick" over "become weary." There is no other reason than this.

### **and the Lord will raise him up.**

The term "raise up" is used of Christ's resurrection, of our rising up out of sleep and a few times of rising up out of a sickness.

*"egeiro... used intransitively and employed as a formula for arousing; properly, rise, i.e. up! come!... to arouse, cause to rise; 1. ... to arouse from sleep, to awake... 2. to arouse from the sleep of death, to recall the dead to life..." 3. in later usage generally to cause to rise, raise, from a seat, bed, etc. ... a. of one sitting... b. of one reclining... c. of one lying, ... d. of one "down" with disease, lying sick..."* (Thayer, p. 165; 1453)

This term is also used literally and symbolically. It refers to bringing the dead back to life spiritually and physically. It also refers to raising the sick out of their illness.

*Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." Eph. 5:14*

*buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. Col. 2:12-13*

*So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them. Mt. 8:15*

*then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." 7 And he arose and departed to his house. Mt. 9:6-7*

### **And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.**

This is the verse that led me to give greater weight to the probability that this is a spiritual weakness, like the one Paul described of the Corinthians who were not taking the Lord's Supper properly. Just because one who is sick calls for the elders to pray for him that he might regain his physical health does not necessarily infer that he would be repentant of his sins. But if a man is spiritually weak and weary and recognizing the danger and he has called for the elders to confess it, he would clearly have his sins forgiven. Because that would be a clear fruit of repentance. The term "committed" is the general word for doing something that produces or makes something.

“*poieo*... I. *to make* ... 1. ... a. with the names of the things made, *to produce, construct, form, fashion, etc.* ... *to create produce*:...” (Thayer, p. 524-527; 4160)

This is an interesting term to use in conjunction with sin. Since it refers to the making or creating of a product. The product here is sin, and by calling for the elders that sins are forgiven.

“*aphiemi*... *to send from (apo) one's self*; 1. *to send away*; a. *bid go away or depart*... b. *to send forth, yield up, emit*... c. *to let go, let alone, let be*; AA *to disregard*:... BB *to leave, not to discuss now*, a topic, used of teachers, writers, speakers, etc.: Heb 6:1... D *to let go, give up, a debt*, by not demanding it... i.e. *to remit, forgive*...” (Thayer, Joseph Henry, op. cit., p. 88-89; 863).

So the student is left to draw his own conclusions. The translators have given us:

*14 Is anyone among you SICK? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the SICK, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*

It could just as easily and Scripturally have been translated:

*14 Is anyone among you WEAK? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the WEARY, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*

If one takes the first, then the best interpretation would be that of spiritual gifts. If it is the second, it is the perpetual gift to churches with elders. If it is the first with physical illness, then one must qualify the “shall save” and “the Lord will raise him up,” to be tied only to his repentance.

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## 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another,

The term “*therefore*” is often used when one is winding down one subject and moving on to another, yet still wanting to tie these new thoughts to the previous one.

“*oun*... a conj. indicating that something follows from another necessarily; ... Hence it is used in drawing a conclusion and in connecting sentences together logically, *then, therefore, accordingly, consequently, these things being so*... a. in exhortations (to show what ought now to be done by reason of what has been said), i. q. *wherefore*,...” (Thayer, p. 463-464; 3767)

Hence, just as the one who is spiritual weak or physically ill would call upon the elders of the church for their prayers, so also, those who have committed sin are exhorted to confess sins one to another in order to receive their prayers. Once again, James uses the imperative mode to give this as a command. We are here commanded to “*confess*” our sins to one another. While in English we only have one word for confess, the Greeks had two. The first is a general term for speaking the same thing as another. It is most often used in the New Testament of confessing Christ as Lord, or for confessing sins.

*homologeō* lit., “to speak the same thing” (*homos*, “same,” *legō*, “to speak”), “to assent, accord, agree with,” denotes, (a) “to confess, declare, admit,” (b) “to confess by way of admitting oneself guilty of what one is accused of, the result of inward conviction,” 1 John 1:9; (c) “to declare openly by way of speaking out freely, such confession being the effect of deep conviction of facts,” Matt. 7:23; 10:32 Rom. 10:9-10 (“confession is made”); 1 Tim. 6:12 (d) “to confess by way of celebrating with praise,” Heb. 13:15; (e) “to promise,” Matt. 14:7.

The second term is more intensive because the preposition *ek* - out is added, and conveys more of a public or outward confession. It can still refer to confessing Christ or confessing sins.

*exomologeō* “out,” intensive, and *homologeō* above. and accordingly stronger than *homologeō*. “to confess forth,” i. e., “freely, openly,” is used (a) “of a public acknowledgment or confession of sins,” Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5; Acts 19:18; Jas. 5:16; (b) “to profess or acknowledge openly,” Matt. 11:25 Phil. 2:11 (Vine; 1843)

“*exomologeō*... (*ex* either *forth from the heart, freely, or publicly, openly*... act. and depon. mid. *To*

*confess, to profess. 1. to confess... 2. to profess i. e. to acknowledge openly and joyfully ...*" (Thayer, 224; 1843)

When James adds the reflexive or reciprocal pronoun "*to one another,*" he makes it clear that this is not one specific group like the elders, but simply to one another.

*"allelon... one another; reciprocally, mutually..."* (Thayer, p. 28; 240)

This is a passage we have no difficulty understanding, but some difficulty in applying. Since we are to do it reciprocally or mutually, I confess my sins to you and you confess your sins to me. It is a simple matter to understand that we should confess our sins one to another, but which sins and under which circumstances become a little more complicated.

It is obvious that when a brother comes to show us our fault, we are to confess that sin to him, but what sins is he to confess back to us? Again, it is obvious that the Corinthian fornicator is to confess his sins to the church, but what sins are the church to confess to him?

If there has been an argument in which both sides have sinned, then it would be very easy to apply this passage to one another, but when it goes beyond that it becomes much more difficult.

As a general rule, sins should be confessed to the degree that they have been committed.

1. Private sins committed only in the presence of God can be confessed to God alone.
2. Sins committed in the presence of one or two Christians can be confessed to God and them.
3. Public sins that are well known must be confessed before the congregation in order for the terrible consequences of that sin to the reputation of the church and the Lord's people can be cleansed and brought out.

Generally we have interpreted this verse primarily to sins that are known to others and ought to be made known to our brethren. This is an obvious case where the damage to reputation has already been done. When the sins are private, they can remain private, or the brother or sister can choose to confess them to their brethren for help.

It is obvious if we have lied about someone or destroyed someone's reputation we should confess that sin. But what if they are just angry thoughts we have about them? Should I confess my jealousy, anger or frustration about you to you? These are the difficult questions that must be at least considered before we can properly understand this command.

Confession to God and to one another is a powerful tool for cleansing sin. (1Jn. 1:9 and [Acts 8:22](#)).

Confessing weaknesses to those who are stronger than ourselves and seeking their prayers is clearly part of what is being commanded here. Yet it can't be denied that there are some sins that are deeply personal and may affect our relationship with others, that must be carefully considered and all consequences weighed before they are confessed one to another.

This is not being explored so we can hide our sins. If we commit a public sin that others know, but could hurt someone else, that type of sin should be confessed. But for those sins that are in the thoughts and intents of the heart it might be best for those sins to be confessed to God and worked out in our own lives.

When the weak confess their weaknesses and sins to the strong, great good can arise as we now have someone we have shared our problems with and who we now know is praying for us. But when the strong confess their sins and weaknesses to the weak, it can create as many problems as it solves.

I believe the general rule is to confess and make it right to the extent that we made it wrong. If the brother or sister saw the sin, they deserve to hear the confession.

**and pray for one another,**

This is not the common word for prayer. It is used less than 10 times in the NT and of those times, it is as often translated "*wish*" as pray.

“*euchomai*... 1. to pray to God... 2. to wish...” (Thayer, 264; 2172)

“*euchomai* “to pray (to God),” is used with this meaning in 2Cor 13:7; v. 9, RV, “pray” (KJV, “wish”); Jas 5:16; 3John 2, RV, “pray” (KJV, wish). Even when the RV and KJV translate by “I would,” Acts 26:29, or “wished for,” Acts 27:29 (RV, marg., “prayed”), or “could wish,” Rom 9:3 (RV, marg., “could pray”), the indication is that “prayer” is involved. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:2172)

Because it is a general term for prayer, it includes our petitions, and intercessions for “*one another*” which once again is the reciprocal or reflexive pronoun. Praying for all the saints is one of the important acts of love that God’s people will shoulder willingly.

*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints — 19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, Eph. 6:17-20*

### so that you may be healed.

The term “that” is a conjunction that generally connects a previous thought to the next by emphasizing the design of the previous thought to bring about the end of the succeeding thought.

“*hopos* ... I. as an Adverb; as, in what manner, how; once so in the N. T. ... II A Conjunction, ... *that* ... 1. It denotes the purpose or end, in order that; with the design or to the end that; that; ... 2. As in the Grk. writ. also ... *hopos* with the subjunctive is used after verbs of praying, entreating, asking, exhorting, to denote what one wishes to be done...” (Thayer, p. 450; 3704)

Hence the purpose and end of both the confession of sins one to another and prayer for one another is to bring healing.

“*iaomai*... “to heal,” is used (a) of physical treatment 22 times; in Matt 15:28, KJV, “made whole,” RV, “healed”; so in Acts 9:34; (b) figuratively, of spiritual “healing,” Matt 13:15; John 12:40; Acts 28:27; Heb 12:13; 1 Peter 2:24; possibly, James 5:16 includes both (a) and (b)...” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:2390)

As the definition reveals this can refer to either a physical or spiritual healing, depending on the context. Since there are many different interpretations of this verse in James, Vine states it could be one or the other. Yet, it seems clear that since this is based on confession of sins, the spiritual healing is to be preferred.

### The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

While the NKJ uses the term “effective” to modify the manner in which we pray, the other translations use both the words of power to the to what the prayer can accomplish.

*The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.* (NKJV)  
*The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.* (NIV)  
*The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working.* (ASV)  
*The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective* (NIV)  
*The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working* (ESV)

When we look at the Greek terms, and order of the words themselves, we see why the later translations all chose to have both the words of power apply to the prayer and not to manner of the one praying.

πολύ	ισχύει	δέησις	δικαίου	ἐνεργουμέ
very much	is strengthening	a supplication	of a righteous	being effective

The Greek word order is:

*Very much is powerful, a prayer of a righteous person, being effective.*

The basic idea being set forth here is that prayer when uttered by a righteous man is very powerful. Whether it is the quality of the prayer (fervent, effective) or the power that the prayer holds because of God’s answer itself, is the issue between the two different translations.

*“energeo, energeia, energema, energes ... is found in the sense of “activity” or “energy”... It derives from energos (which itself derives from en ergo einai) and denotes intr. “to be at work,” “to act or start to act,” and trans. “to set at work”, to effect.”...” (Kittel Vol 2 p 652-654)*

*“energeo”, ...1. intrans. to be operative, be at work, put forth power: ... to work for one, aid one,...2. to effect... 3. Mid., ... to display one’s activity, show one’s self operative...” (Thayer, p. 215 1754).*

*energeo ... to be engaged in some activity or function, with possible focus upon the energy or force involved - ‘to function, to work, to be at work, practice.’ (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, NT:1754)*

The term “energeo” is the root word of energy. It refers to something that is operative, at work, putting forth power. It is something that always interacts with and affects something else. In this case the prayer of a righteous man is something that is operative, at work and putting forth power. It works much like electricity or gasoline in a motor.

Note how the term is used:

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also **effectively works** in you who believe. 1Th. 2:13

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the **power that works** in us, Eph. 3:20-21

The term translated “fervent” in the NKJV and powerful/availing in the others is defined:

*“ischuo,...to be strong, i.e. 1. to be strong in body, to be robust, to be in sound health:... 2. to have power... i. e. a. to have a power evinced in extraordinary deeds, i. e. to exert, wield, power... to have strength to overcome... b. to be of force to avail... c. to be serviceable... d. to be able, can.” (Thayer, p. 309; 2480).*

Since it can mean power and strength in both ways, the question centers on whether it is the man praying who is strong or if the the prayer itself has the power. Is it a powerful prayer uttered fervently, or is it a powerful prayer because God answers it? I suspect the NKJV took their position based on what James said about Elijah’s prayer being earnest.

*Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed **earnestly** that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. Jas. 5:17-18*

Although James did say this about Elijah, it is not the same word as the one used here and there is no real reason to use it as the basis of our interpretation. With the general meaning of the term in the NT, it tips the scales toward the truth that it is the prayer of a righteous man that energizes and takes on a power of it’s own, not the manner in which the man “prays:”

*“deesis,... 1. need, indigence,... 2. a seeking, asking, entreating, entreaty... in the N. T. requests addressed by men to God...” (Thayer, p. 126; NT: 1162).*

At the center of this word for prayer is a deep need that creates the prayer. This is a supplication, an asking of something from God that one doesn’t have. In the context, the need of forgiveness and healing are one example of this type of need. Elijah in the next verse is another type of need (a drought and rain). There is a certain amount of fervency in the word itself as it is a cry for help from someone who is destitute of something they desperately need.

James also prefaces the value and power of this prayer by the righteousness of the one praying. The character of the person praying has a great bearing on the power of the prayer. Prior to the prayer, if it is to have any power and energy it must come from the heart of someone God has already made righteous by his faith and God’s forgiveness.

*“dikaios ... observant of he dike, righteous, observing divine and human laws; one who is such as he ought to be;... 1. in a wide sense, upright, righteous, virtuous, keeping the commands of God... a. univ. ... used of O. T. characters noted for piety and probity... b. the negative idea predominating: innocent, faultless, guiltless... c. preeminently, of him whose way of thinking, feelings, and acting is wholly conformed to the will of God, ... d. contextually, approved of God, acceptable to God...” (Thayer, p 148-149; 1342)*

If the one praying is not seeking to be right with God, then his prayer will not do all that James says. If he is righteous, then it will do it all. Consider what was said of Daniel's prayer.

*At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision: Dan. 9:23*

The final term in the verse is "much:"

*"polus,... much used a. Of multitude, number, many numerous, great... abundant, plenteous... b. with nouns denoting an action an emotion, a state, which can be said to have as it were measure, weight, force, intensity, size, continuance, or repetition, much l. q. great, strong, intense, large... c. of time much, long... d. Neut. sing. Polu, much, substantively, l. q. many things... much, adverbially, of the mode and degree of an action..." (Thayer, p. 529; 4183)*

*polus* occurs 359 times in the NT (418 times with comparative *pleion* and superlative *pleistos*) ... As an adj. it modifies a subst. (sg. or pl., with or without art.) in the numerical sense of **much**, **many** (Matt 7:22; Luke 7:47), also with **measurements** (Matt 14:24), **temporally** (Luke 8:29; Acts 24:10), and **fig.** (Acts 26:24). *polus* can then also mean **great** (1 Peter 1:3), intensively something like **loud** (Matt 2:18), **deep** (Acts 21:40, of a state of quiet), **late** (Mark 6:35), and similar ideas (Exegetical Dictionary of the NT:4183)

The term breathes plenitude, multitude, abundance. When it is applied to power, it strengthens it to a much greater level. It is "much" power that is much more than enough. The supplication of a righteous man has much much more than enough power strength and energy in itself to do what is necessary. James now gives an example to illustrate and show us this power.

### **17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours,**

While Elijah is a legend to many of God's people because of what God had him do, how well he did it, and how he was taken to heaven in a whirlwind and came to speak with Jesus at His transfiguration, it is not his greatness that James seeks to emphasize. He wants us to understand that Elijah was simply a man and as a man he had a "nature" just like ours.

*"homoiopathes... suffering the like with another, of like feelings or affections..." (Thayer, p. 445; 3663)*

*"homoiopathes... being affected in the same way as another, subject to the same incidents, of like infirmities, obnoxious to the same frailties and evils, Acts 14:15; James 5:17*

Elijah was a man and had the same nature as all other men. He had the same strengths that are common to man, and he had the same weaknesses that are common to man. The word is only used one other time in the New Testament by Paul.

*and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, Acts 14:15*

Paul and Barnabas were just men. The power did not come from them because they were greater than other men. It was a power outside of them, coming directly from God. There was nothing special or great about Elijah except that he had been made righteous by God through his faith and was being used by God in that age. We are no different from him in any way.

The better we understand that Elijah was a man just like us with the same strengths and weaknesses that we all have, the more powerful the passage becomes. His prayers were not special because he was a greater man than any one else who has ever lived. His prayers were not heard because he was special in any way. This is what makes his example so powerful for us today. He was just like us and yet consider carefully what his prayer did. Our prayers can do the same thing.

### **and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain;**

Elijah as a man with the same weaknesses and problems that are common to all men, but with a faith that mere mortal man can attain to offered a prayer to God. What made the prayer special was that he was a righteous man (in the only way that anyone could be righteous under the Old Law,

by the grace of God who forgave sin because of his faith).

The phrase he “*prayed earnestly*” is literally, “*he prayed with a prayer.*” This is a Hebrew idiom that infers earnestness and fervency. It is like our “roll up your sleeves” or “work like a dog.” You can take those idioms apart and define every word, but it won’t help make it easier to understand.

Jesus spoke in a similar way. He literally said, “*with desire I have desired,*” but the translators needed to change the idiom to something we could understand so they translated it “*with fervent desire I have desired*” instead of “*with desire I have desired.*”

*15 Then He said to them, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; Lk. 22:15*

Elijah truly prayed and prayed and prayed that it wouldn’t rain. It was a fervent prayer based on its frequency and desire. It was a prayer of faith, based on Scripture and possibly direct revelation.

*“When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their sin because You afflict them, 36 “then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance. 1 Kings 8:35-36*

Solomon got this from the law of Moses:

*23 “And your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron. 24 “The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. Deut. 28:23-24*

The righteous who lived under the first covenant knew that the blessings and the curses of God were based on the conduct of Israel. The threat of no rain was one of these curses and Elijah prayed for it. Under the rule of Ahab and Jezebel they had carried Israel far into apostasy. It is very probable that Elijah hoped that this clear sign would lead the people to repentance. Elijah prayed that God would fulfill His curse. With this information at his disposal, James tells us that he prayed with a prayer(fervently) that God would do it. Before appearing to Ahab, God revealed to him that his prayer would be answered:

*And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.” 1 Kings 17:1*

It is interesting that James would choose this event. It is clear that God had told him that it would not rain except at his word. This was not something Elijah could say without direct revelation. Yet Many of the things we pray for God has already revealed that He will answer, so the events are not that different at all.

**and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.**

What is equally clear is that this prayer was also costing Elijah. He was no longer able to stay in Israel. First he goes to the brook and then when it dried up, he was told to go to Zarephath in Sidon and this drought cost him 3 ½ years of his life. Yet day be day, he prayed that it would not rain just as God had revealed.

**18 And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit.**

Then, again at God’s word, Elijah is sent to Ahab with news that rain is soon to come. It was time for Elijah to stop praying for rain.

*And it came to pass after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, “Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth. 2 So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; 1 Kings 18:1*

God told Elijah that He had made the decision that it was time to end the drought. He then commanded Elijah to go to Ahab and inform him of that fact. The supplemental information given by James tells us that God gave Elijah the right to pray for and receive the rain. This is a wonderful example of praying for something that we know is the will of God. Elijah knew God wanted to give

rain. He also knew it was up to him to pray for it. We have many commands like this and James had just dealt with it.

*Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Jas. 4:2-3*

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1Jn. 1:9-10*

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Phil. 4:6-7*

*Give us this day our daily bread. Mt. 6:11*

Each of these are direct revelations from God that he will give these things, but we still have to ask. That is exactly what James said about Elijah. He knew exactly what God was going to do, but he still needed to ask.

*Then Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain." 42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, 43 and said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked, and said, "There is nothing." And seven times he said, "Go again." 44 Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, "There is a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea!" So he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, "Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you." 45 Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. 46 Then the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. 1Kings 18:41-46*

Truly the supplications of a righteous man availed much in this case. As men and women with a nature like his, we can also avail much. But we still need the same faith he had to do it.

### **19 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth**

This is the final point of this letter. The Holy Spirit wanted this to be the final thought. It offered consolation to the one who was guilty of sin and to the one who went out to find him. This is very similar to the parables Jesus gave in Luke about the sheep, coin, and prodigal son (Lk 15). God wants each of us to be deeply concerned both on a personal level and always on guard for others. No one is above this possibility. Through inattention, severe trials, or some worldly temptation like the one that snagged David and Solomon. We are watching ourselves as well as watching for others. The Holy Spirit likens this to one who "wanders" from the truth.

*"plane... a wandering, a straying about, whereby one, led astray from the right way, roams hither and thither... In the N. T. metaph. mental straying, i.e. error, wrong opinion relative to morals or religion... error which shows itself in action, a wrong mode of acting... the wrong manner of life which one follows... error, i.q. that which leads into error, deceit, fraud..." (Thayer, p. 515; 4106)*

Jesus spoke of the rocks (tribulations) and thorns (lusts) along with wolves in sheep's clothing. Any of these things can cause us to veer from the path.

*13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Mt. 7:12-15*

When one wanders from truth, there is only one thing to wander into. Error and deceit are the only thing left when truth is removed. When one leaves the gospel, the only place to go is into the dark realm of deceit and error.

*Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Jn. 8:31-32*

*Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 2Jn. 9-10*

Although Jesus words are the only means by which we can abide and know in the truth, many of the things Jesus demands are as difficult as cutting off the foot or hand or plucking out an eye. Sometimes we veer from the path and end in the darkness.

*18 But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. 19 The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble. Pr. 4:18-19*

The manner that leads to this wandering is the slow straying that leads them more and more deeply into darkness until it is too dark for them to see.

### **and someone should bring him back,**

Bringing people back is the true purpose of all church discipline. Jesus certainly knew it was:

*“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Mt. 18:15-17*

The entire theme of this is to gain the brother. Yet at the end, it is to protect and save the church.

*6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, ...13 Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.” 1 Cor. 5:6-7, 13*

The beauty is that they can be turned back. Either through love, through doctrinal truth, or through some other means, people can be shown the folly of their error and return from it. The term “turn back” is defined:

*“epistrepho... 1. transitively, a. to turn to... b. to cause to return, to bring back... 2. intrans. ... a. to turn, to turn one’s self... b. to turn one’s self about, turn back...” (Thayer, 244; 1994)*

It is a perfect way to describe repentance which is the changing of the mind resulting in a change of the life. God wants all of us to be directly involved in this. Discipline is never to be for punishment, it is designed to get us or others to turn around.

### **20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way**

God wants all of us to be aware and have this knowledge. First that it can happen, people can wander from the truth and yet, though they have wandered away, the brethren still have the opportunity to bring them back. This was the major controversy God had with the shepherd under the Old Covenant.

*And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 2 “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. 4 The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. 6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.” Ezek. 34:1-6*

God wants us all to know, understand, perceive and have knowledge of these truths. He wants us to have a knowledge grounded in personal experience. He wants us to understand Him and His doctrine to the point where this is a given and there are no doubts in it. When a sinner is turned from the error of his way, certain things are always going to happen. Just like the sun always rises in the east, when a sinner returns from his way something is going to happen. James repeats many of the words from the previous verse. “Turns back” and “turning back” are the same, and “wander” and “wandering” are the same. The only difference here is a clearer defining of the “way” the sinner has “wandered” into.

“*hodos... a way; 1. properly a. a travelled way, road:... 2. Metaphorically a. according to the familiar figure of speech, especially frequent in Hebrew... and not unknown to the Greeks by which an action is spoken of as a proceeding, ...hodos denotes a course of conduct, a way (i.e. manner) of thinking, feeling, deciding...*” (Thayer, p. 437-438)

This was the way of destruction they had initially left when they entered the way of truth. The sinner must be turned out of this way. If he can be turned out of this way then we should know that this is what will occur.

### **will save his soul from death,**

James used save a soul earlier in 1:21. The implanted word is able to “save your souls.” So also is getting a sinner to repent and leave the wickedness of sin.

“*sozo... to save, to keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction(opp. to apollumi)... a. univ., tina ... one (from injury or peril); to save a suffering one (from perishing) e. g. one suffering from disease to make well, heal, restore to health: to preserve one who is in danger of destruction, to save(i.e.to rescue)... b. to save in the technical biblical sense; negatively, to deliver from the penalties of the Messianic judgment,... to save from the evils which obstruct the reception of the Messianic deliverance...*” (Thayer, p. 610-611; 4982)

“*psyche... 1. breath... i.e. a. the breath of life; the vital force which animates the body and shows itself in breathing... b. life... 2. the soul... a. the seat of the feelings, desires, affections, aversions(our soul, heart, etc...)\_ b. the (human) soul in so far as it is so constituted that by the right use of the aids offered it by God it can attain its highest end and secure eternal blessedness, the soul regarded as a moral being designed for everlasting life... c. the soul as an essence which differs from the body and is not dissolved by death...*” (Thayer, p. 677; 5590)

The death of a soul is the gravest of all deaths. It is called the second death in the Scriptures. It is eternal, permanent, and agonizing. It is pictured by the the Lord as the Gehenna of fire. A horrible event like being in fire, and worms never dying and darkness. The things man fears and hates are used to illustrate the death of the soul. All this will be avoided if we can get one who has erred from the truth to come back to the path of righteousness.

### **and will cover a multitude of sins.**

This verse has caused some controversy, yet it is not that difficult to understand. This is not the sins of the one who finds this fallen brother, but the sins of the fallen away brother. They will be “covered.”

“*kalupto... to cover, cover up; trip. to hide, veil, i.e. to hinder the knowledge of a thing... .. not to regard or impute them, i.e. to pardon them... to procure pardon of them from God, Jas 5:20...*” (Thayer, 323; 2572)

This is exactly what Nathan did for David at God’s command.

*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit. Ps 32:1-2*

For others as well.

*Lord, You have been favorable to Your land; You have brought back the captivity of Jacob. 2 You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin. 3 You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger. 4 Restore us, O God of our salvation, And cause Your anger toward us to cease. Ps. 85:1-4*

The multitude of sins are those that have remained unrepented of and thus still on our soul. These must be turned from to be removed.

*Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. 28 Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. Ezek 18:27-29*