

Outline of the Book of James

Introduction:

Martin Luther (1483 to 1546) was a German monk and religious reformer. Luther was known for challenging the authority of the Roman Catholic Church by holding that the Bible alone stood as man's source of guidance in spiritual matters. Luther believed that all baptized believers were recognized as priests rather than a select few in the Catholic Church. Luther believed that salvation was a free gift of God that would be realized only when the believer repented of sins and exercised faith in Jesus. Luther looked to Romans 3:28 as his proof text which states, "*We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.*" The problem with Luther's conclusion was that it conflicted with the writings of James. James said, "*Even so, faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself*" (James 2:17). Luther concluded thereby that the book of James was a "straw epistle" that really did not belong in the canon of God's word. Unfortunately, Luther's ideas and teachings have been accepted by many the world over. A thorough study of James will yield the fruits of understanding and wisdom in relationship to man's responsibility to be obedient to all God's commands. James brings the Christian to a divine approach to life that will help one through the most difficult and trying of times.

Author of Book of James

The author of James is obviously "James" (see James 1:1); however, we have the duty of identifying who James is. There were many James in the Bible. We read of James the son of Zebedee as being one of the earliest apostles chosen by Jesus (see Mk. 1:19) and the brother of John (Matt. 4:21). It was this James whose mother had asked Jesus if her two sons may occupy a prominent place in the kingdom of God (Matt. 20:20). This James was beheaded by Herod around the year 42-44 AD (see Acts 12:1-5) (i.e., likely well before the writing of a letter to those of the dispersion).

We also read about James the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:2-4) and James the brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:54-58; Gal. 1:18-19). James the Lord's brother appears to be one of the elders in the church in Jerusalem and a pillar in the church (see Acts 15:13ff; Gal. 2:9). Most seem to agree that it must have been this James; i.e., the brother of Jesus, elder and pillar in the church of Jerusalem that wrote this epistle.

Date

Dating James is very difficult. We know that the dispersion of Christians throughout the world occurred approximately 44 AD (see Acts 8:1ff). Clearly the destruction of Jerusalem had not yet occurred (i.e., 70 AD). A broad range of the writing would thereby be 44 to 70 AD.

To whom was this epistle written?

James 1:1 addresses the "*twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion.*" The apostle Peter also addressed his first epistle to specific brethren of the "*dispersion*" (see I Pet. 1:1). The word "*dispersion*" (*diaspora*) = "a scattering, as of seed; dispersion; in NT the dispersed portion of the Jews, specially termed the dispersion (cf. Jn. 7:35; James 1:1; I Pet. 1:1)" (Moulton 95). Peter is clearly speaking of Christians in general (i.e., the elect of God / see I Pet. 1:1). The Greek *diaspora* is also found at John 7:35 in relation to Jesus leaving the Jews and going to the Gentiles to preach. James' use of the Greek *diaspora* seems to refer to Christians in general who have been figuratively scattered as seed throughout the world.

Why is James written?

Christians were being dispersed throughout the world (away from their homelands). They were being exposed to intense trials (James 1:1ff; I Pet. 1:6), they were falling in sin through weakness of the flesh (James

1:13-15, 21), and they were guilty of preferential treatment toward the wealthy in their assembly (James 2:6-7, 9). Furthermore there were brethren that were teaching a faith only doctrine (James 2:14 – 3:12). James tells us that some Christians were fighting with each other (4:1ff), filled with pride (4:6), gossips (4:11-12), and some had left God completely out of their life plans (James 4:13-17). James reveals the fact that many Christians had put their faith in the things of this world (James 5:1ff). This epistle is a wake up call to the faithful of God. They needed to change their sinful ways.

James sets out to Reorient the Christians to their Hope and Objective

Christians need to be reminded about Bible truths that they had previously learned. The apostle Peter said, *“Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the truth, which is with you”* (II Pet. 1:12). James’ audience needed to be refocused on the subjects of humility and patience. James’ sharp exposure of the people’s sins was intended to move them to shame that they may humble themselves before the eyes of God (James 4:6-10). The apparent intense persecutions that the disciples were undergoing were contributing to the brethren giving up their faith for sinful practices. James reminds the Christians that they are to patiently await the coming of Jesus (see James 5:7-8). Humility in the face of exposed sin and patience in the face of intense persecution was the only way one would see the end of their faith; i.e., a crown of life (James 1:12). The beauty of the book of James is that the author gives his readers a game plan to follow that they may overcome the trials of persecution, hardships, and sin. The Christian’s approach to life was to be with wisdom (James 3:13), humility (James 4:6), and patience (James 1:3; 5:7-11). Said approach is deemed the *“perfect”* approach to life (see James 1:4; 4:15-17 – see also Phil. 3:15). If any lacked this wisdom and approach to life James instructs them to pray for it (James 1:5). Secondly, when Christians found themselves unable to endure their pain any longer they were encouraged to look to the examples of the prophets and Job (James 5:10-11). The *“crown of life”* (James 1:12), *“salvation”* (James 1:21), *“justification”* (James 2:25), God’s *“grace”* (James 4:6), *“exaltation”* (James 4:10), the Lord’s *“mercy and pity”* (James 5:11), and spiritual *“death”* (James 5:20) are all at stake. Now is the time to pray, confess, and be forgiven of sins committed (James 5:15-20).

Outline of the book of James

Chapter 1

- I. **Transforming the mind from sorrow to joy in relation to Suffering (James 1:1-12):**
 - A. *“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion, greeting”* (1:1).
 1. We have already discussed the identity of both James and the *“twelve tribes of the dispersion”* in the introduction. Though *“twelve tribes”* is used to indicate Jews at passages such as Acts 26:7 we find it also used figuratively to indicate all Christians (see Rom. 2:28-29; 4:11-12; Gal. 3:28-29). It seems that James is addressing Christians in General much like Peter did at I Peter 1:1.
 2. James, the author of this book, was a *“servant”* of God and Jesus. The word *“servant”* (*doulos*) = “enslaved, devoted servant or minister” (Moulton 106). James was a devoted servant of Jesus Christ. Christ’s commands were his pleasure to perform. James belonged to Christ just as all Christians do. The child of God is one who is purchased by the blood of Christ (see Acts 20:28; Rev. 1:5). Said purchase is referred to as being redeemed (see Eph. 1:7).
 - B. *“Count is all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations* (trials)” (1:2).
 1. To *“count”* (*hegeomai*) simply means to consider. That which James recommends Christians consider joyful is the falling into *“manifold trials.”*
 2. *“Manifold”* (*poikilos*) = “of various colors, variegated, diverse, manifold” (Moulton 333). A *“trial”* (*peirasmos*) = “a putting to the proof, trial, calamity, affliction” (Moulton 314 – 315). There are diverse trials, calamity, and afflictions that man may face in this life. We may face sorrow over the death of a loved one. We may face persecution at the hands of sinful men

because of our faith. We may experience sickness, disease, and financial difficulties. An interesting point, in relation to suffering, is that God does not discriminate when it comes to suffering (see Eccl. 9:2-3). Why do men suffer? God simply allows these things to take place and in some unknown way (i.e., his providence) He has His “*hand*” in our affairs (see Eccl. 9:1). God is watching how each man, whether good or evil, handles the period of suffering. God is “*proving*” us; i.e., putting us to the test (see next verse [James 1:3] and I Pet. 1:6ff). The Lord simply wants to know who is willing to follow Him and who is not (more said on this at the next verse) (see study # 1; Hardships of Life).

3. The **joy** in such a time of trial is not in the hardship itself but rather in knowing that come what may in this life I have a home with God in the after a while. Those who look to satisfaction in this world will never cope with stress, anguish, and trials in general because all their hope is in this life. When the very thing that they have put all their hope into disintegrates so does their will to continue. The Christian; however, is one who fears God and looks to an eternal life with God in heaven one day. If the Christian were to lose all his earthly possessions or his health in this world he would proclaim, as did Job, “*Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah*” (Job 1:21). A transformation of thinking must take place in man’s mind. Man must move past worldly thinking and focus on spirituality (Rom. 12:1-2). When such a transformation takes place in the mind the Christian is sanctified from the world (see study # 2; A Transformation of Man’s Mind).
- C. “*knowing that the **proving** of your **faith** works **patience**. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing*” (1:3-4).
1. I joyously accept trials, calamity in life, tragic news, hardships, financial difficulties, disease, and sickness not because these things make me happy or I enjoy pain but because I understand that there is a better place in heaven. My mind has been transformed from seeking profit in this world to seeking profit in eternity with God. Thereby the more I suffer here on this earth the more I desire heaven (see II Cor. 4:16-18).
 2. James says that our “*faith*” is being “*proved*” (*dokimion*) = “that by means of which anything is tried, proof, criterion, test; trial, the act of trying or putting to proof” (Moulton 105).
 - a. The Apostle Peter said, “*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which comes upon you to **prove** you, as though a strange thing happened unto you...*” (I Pet. 4:12). Many today say, “why me...” when we ought to be saying blessed be the name of God who is my help and shield in the time of trouble. All Christians have an “*appointment*” with trials at the hands of others and life (cf. I Thess. 3:3). Paul tells us that suffering is “*granted*” to the Christian (Phil. 1:29). Peter appears to be fixed on this subject in his epistle (cf. I Pet. 2:20; 3:14ff; 4:12-19). Strange to the fleshly mind is the idea of rejoicing in such trials of life. Peter explains that said trials in life (i.e., hardships, sickness, persecution, and emotional heartaches) are to be compared to placing metal, such as gold, into the refining furnace of fire that it might be purified (see I Pet. 1:7). Pure gold is indeed a prize. How much greater a Christian who has been purified by the fiery trials of life (see James 1:2ff). Moses explains that when these trials come upon us that **God is proving or testing us by watching our reaction**. Will we remain faithful? Will we seek out God’s help? Will we seek to solve life’s issues without the aid of God? How are we going to respond in these situations? Remember, God is watching (see Deut. 8:1-5, 15ff). God also proved Abraham that He might see whether Abraham “*fears God*” (see Gen. 22:1, 12).
 - b. The more one suffers the greater their desire for heaven. The more one suffers the greater their “*patience*” (*hupomone*) = “*endurance, patient frame of mind, perseverance, endurance in adherence to an object*” (Moulton 418). While God is watching our reactions to the test we are developing endurance. The longer I live the more trials I face and the more trials I face the greater my desire for heaven. The more real heaven is to me the greater my endurance of the trial. The effect is likened unto a distance runner who proclaims, “no pain no gain.” The more pain a runner goes through in training the better equipped he is for success in his race. The Christian is no different (see I Cor. 9:24-26). The more my trials,

the greater my endurance, and the better equipped I am to maintain the rigorous pace set by God (i.e., perfection). Job said, "*But he knows the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*" (Job 23:10).

3. The theology is clear. Trials refine a person to be more and more perfect. James tells us that we become more patience (i.e., resistance to pressure). Through our trials in life we become more and more dependant upon God's merciful promise of heaven. Come what may in this life I know that I have a heavenly home if I will continue in faith. Such a life is guarded by the power of God! The refined and purified Christian will be found faithful at the revelation of Jesus Christ (i.e., when he comes again to bring his saints home to glory / cf. I Thess. 4:13ff).
 4. Finally, note that these difficulties of life produce an enduring spirit within that makes heaven more likable. This is the idea of being "*perfect and entire lacking in nothing*." The word "*perfect*" (*teleios*) = "having reached its end, finished, complete... of persons, absolute, complete, accomplished, perfect in his or its kind" (LS 797). "Fully accomplished in Christian enlightenment" (Moulton 400). The mindset of perfection is what Paul admonished his audience to obtain at Philippians 3:13-15. The disposition that says, "heaven means everything to me and I'm going to do all within my power to obtain this goal," is the mind of perfection (i.e., the complete, accomplished, and perfect way of life) (see study # 2). Heaven should be the goal of all right thinking individuals. Herein is man's only true profit in this life and the life to come (Eccl. 12:1, 13-14).
- D. "*But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and upbraids not; and it shall be given him*" (1:5).
1. "*Wisdom*" (*Sophia*) = "Christian enlightenment" (Moulton 371). James is saying that if the clear teaching of calamity and adversity in life produces endurance does not register in your mind then you ought to **pray** to God for enlightenment (understanding) (see study # 4; Things we can Pray For). Two things are of interest here. First, there may be things in God's word that do not make sense to us. Secondly, we are told to pray for enlightenment in these areas. If my desire is to understand God's word I certainly will (see study # 3; Can We Know Truth?).
 2. Notice two attributes of God:
 - a. God "*gives to all liberally*." The apparent will of God is that man would have the mind of perfection. Said mind looks to heaven for profit rather than this earth. Those who undergo the transformation of thinking from worldly to spiritual have all God's help (see Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:17-24). He will give to the man who seeks His help liberal assistance. God will providentially allow things to occur in a man's life to favor his enlightenment. How, when, and where this event occurs God only knows (see Eccl. 8:17-9:1) (see study # 5; Providence).
 - b. Secondly, God "*upbraids (oneidizo) not*." To "*upbraid*" = "to reprove sharply, to insult with opprobrious language" (Moulton 289). No prayer in the realm of personal betterment will be viewed as ignorant by God. The Lord desires to hear our request for wisdom and He stands ready to help us. He wants to see and hear our efforts. Those who truly love God will do all within their power to obtain this wisdom (see study # 6; God's Desire for Man).
- E. "*But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubts is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord;*" (1:6-7).
1. Let us keep the context before us. James has commanded the Christian to face many facets of trials with a spirit of joy knowing that they will produce a perfect mind that desires nothing more than to please God and make it to heaven. Those who find this difficult to grasp are told to pray to God so that they might gain understanding.
 2. James now states that such a prayer for understanding cannot be done with a doubting spirit. Here is one who prays to God for understanding yet doubts whether it is obtainable. The various trials of life do not produce their desired effect of endurance because the doubting mind cannot see their purpose. Failure occurs with this person because their minds have not been perfected (see Matt. 7:24-27). Such an individual focuses more on the calamity than eternity.
- F. "*A doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways*" (1:8).

1. The word “*doubleminded*” (*dipsuchos*) = “inconstant, fickle” (Moulton 103).
 2. Here is an individual who goes through trials of life, like every other human being, but he is not committed to letting them have their perfect work in his life. Like the sea that surges on to the beach and recedes so is this man in relationship to trials. One day he seems to be getting profit from the trials and the next day he is not. He is trying to have one foot in the world and one with God at the same time.
 3. The idea seems to be **commitment** here. The man not committed to gaining endurance through the trials finds himself wavering with a fickle spirit. He is “*unstable*” in that his faith is on an off again. God does not commend such an approach to life (see study # 6).
- G. “*But let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate:*” (1:9)
1. There is a contrast between the “*brother of low degree*” and the “*doubleminded and unstable*” man. The term “*low degree*” (*tapeinos*) = “low in situation; of condition, humble, poor, mean, depressed... met. Of the mind, humble, lowly, modest...” (Moulton 397).
 2. The brother of a “*low degree*” is apparently one who is financially poor and undergoing manifold trials and allowing them to have their perfect work (i.e., endurance). The point is that he is going through pain at this time and is encouraged to “*glory in his high estate.*” The idea of “*glory*” (*kauchaomai*) = “to glory, boast... to boast of a person or thing, to undertake a laudatory testimony to...” (Moulton 226). Here is the only form of boasting one may participate in on earth. I may boast of my “*high estate*” (see the Apostle Paul’s boastful statement at II Corinthians 11:16ff). The Christian’s “*high estate*” (*hupsos*) = “exaltation, dignity, eminence (a position of great distinction or superiority... a person of high station or great achievements)” (Moulton 421). The Greek *hupsos* is in the dative case which indicates that it is the indirect object of the verb (i.e., the only verb of the verse is “*glory*”) (Friberg 692). The mentioned verb (*kauchaomai*) is present tense indicating ongoing action. The verb is also noted to be in the deponent voice (i.e., “denoting a verb of active meaning but passive form”; i.e., “a verb form or voice used to indicate that the grammatical subject is the object of the action or the effect of the verb” [AHD 383 / 908]).
 3. The thought appears to be that the man who is currently brought low by trials yet has maintained his perfect mind (he is gaining endurance) ought to feel a sense of great accomplishment in these trials. He knows (currently) and glories (currently) of his “*high estate.*” He is a Christian who places his hope in Christ Jesus and the eternal glorification that shall belong to the faithful of all time (see I Pet. 5:4-6) (see study # 7; The Glorified Saint). The mind is bent on heaven and the whole of life’s trials brings one to a greater realization of its existence.
- H. “*and the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away*” (1:10).
1. While the brother “*of low degree*” was to glory in his high estate the “*rich*” are commanded to glory in “*that he is made low.*” Here are two different people in different stations of life (one poor and the other rich). These two people; however, are undergoing the same occurrences; i.e., manifold trials (see Eccl. 9:2).
 2. While the brother of low degree finds glory in that his hope will one day be realized by obtaining a high estate in heaven the rich brother already has a high estate here on this earth. What shall the rich brother glory in? James said let him glory in that he is “*made low.*” Though money may get a man out of many troubles in life it cannot get him out of all calamities. Adversity comes in manifold forms (James 1:2). Here is one who undergoes calamity, while wealthy by the world’s standards, and is commanded to glory in this even that has brought his life low. These specific individuals with their trials are named that man may know that whatever station man may find themselves at in this life we must keep ourselves focused upon eternity. Jesus said, “*A man’s life consists not in the abundance of things which he possesses*” (Lk. 12:15). There is much more to life!
 3. Life is short. James writes, “*Because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.*” Our lives are quickly passing and we will surely not be able to bring any riches with us when we die. Knowing this let it never bother us to loose our riches.

- I. *“For the sun arises with the scorching wind, and withers the grass; and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perishes: so also shall the rich man fade away in his goings”* (1:11).
1. To further illustrate the short nature of life James contemplates the grass of the field that is blasted by the sun and scorching wind. Grass grows upon the earth, it produces a beautiful flower, and then is scorched to death. Likewise man lives on the earth, obtains certain successes, and then dies. This illustration is used in other parts of the Bible to exemplify the short nature of man’s life (see Job 14:1-2; Ps. 103:15-16).
 2. Interestingly, Isaiah uses this exact illustration to note the contrast between man’s life and God’s eternal word (see Isa. 4:6-8). The point is that everyone ought to contemplate eternity.
- J. *“Blessed is the man that endures temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him”* (1:12).
1. The idea of being *“blessed”* (*makarios*) = “happiness, those with good fortune” (LS 484). This word is used in the beatitudes at Matthew 5:3-10. Happiness due to the good fortune of a high estate in heaven is under consideration. This happiness belongs to one type of person and that is the man or woman who *“endures temptation.”* There are some interesting comparisons here. The word *“endures”* comes from the same word as *“patience”* at James 1:3. The word *“temptation”* is the exact word used at James 1:2 and better translated trial, calamity, or adversity. Here is one who has endured the hardships of this short life with joy because they recognized that an eternal existence was shortly to come.
 2. The glorified saint is one who has been *“approved”* (*dokimos*) is closely associated with being *“proved”* (James 1:3). The difference in the two verses is time. The man of James 1:3 is undergoing trials the man of James 1:12 has successfully completed his short life and proved himself to endure the trials of life that he may obtain *“the crown of life.”* This is why Solomon wrote, *“the day of one’s death is better than the day of birth”* (Eccl. 7:1). Here is one who has completed the adversities of life... the fight is over... and, as the Apostle Paul said, *“I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing”* (II Tim. 4:7-8).
 - a. The *“crown of life”* is clearly revealed at Revelation 2:10 to be something obtained after death. John writes, *“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.”* The identity of an eternal heavenly reward is further brought out by Paul’s statements at II Timothy 4:6-8 as stated above.
 - b. Verse 12 concludes this discussion. Man lives a life of calamity. The more adversity he faces the greater his endurance should be. Trials are like training. The mind that is bent on heaven grows more and more determined to attain the goal; i.e., a *“crown of life.”* The man or woman who obtains this crown of glory in heaven is indeed *“blessed.”* Such a one has gained the ultimate victory and will obtain greater glory than the world could ever offer (see I Pet. 5:4-6). Now is not the time for glory... now is the time for training and endurance. The race continues as we speak (see study # 8; Life is like a long distance Race). The finish line is near and soon. Will you be blessed or cursed into eternity?

II. **Spiritual Life and Death (1:13-18):**

- A. *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no man:”* (1:13).
1. To be *“tempted”* (*peirazo*) = “to tempt (“to entice someone to commit an unwise or immoral act” [AHD 1252])” (Moulton 314). Note that this word has the same Greek root as the word *“temptation* (or trial)” at James 1:2. There, we defined the Greek (*peirasmos*) as “a putting to the proof, trial, calamity, and affliction” (Moulton 314 – 315). While God has His hand in man’s trials (again, see Eccl. 9:1-2) He has no part of enticing a man or woman to commit an unwise or immoral act (i.e., sin). Temptation to sin belongs to Satan and he is known as the *“tempter”* (see Matt. 4:3; I Thess. 3:5).

2. Man can in no way blame their sin on God (see study # 9; Calvinism / Total Hereditary Depravity). James tells us that God cannot be enticed to sin and neither does he try to entice people to sin. God's will is that man remains clean from sin.
- B. *"but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed"* (1:14).
1. How does sin work? A man is tempted (i.e., enticed to commit an immoral act [i.e., sin]) when he allows his lust to draw his heart away from God's divine laws. The word "*lust*" (*epithumia*) = "to set one's heart upon a thing, lust after, long for, covet, desire... eagerness for it" (LS 292)... "irregular or violent desire, cupidity (excessive desire)... impure desire" (Moulton 156) (see study # 10; Temptation). Men lust after a variety of unlawful things such as fornication, riches, and glory among men. Men also lust after false doctrines that justify their sinful state.
 2. When man veers from the standard of truth he sins (see I Jn. 3:4). The apostle John said, "*These things have I written unto you concerning them that would lead you astray*" (I Jn. 2:26). John recorded divine revelation that brethren would not be drawn away by lust of sinful things. The Apostle Peter wrote, "*beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness*" (II Pet. 3:17) (see study # 11; Calvinism / Impossibility of Apostasy). Again, Paul warned the Ephesians elders saying, "*and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them*" (Acts 20:29-30). Paul said that there are some who "*hold a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: ... For of these are they that creep into houses, and take captive silly women laden with sins, led away by divers lusts*" (II Tim. 3:5-6). Various doctrines and unlawful fleshly appetites may draw a man away from cleanliness.
 3. The man (or woman) with little self control is easily enticed to sin by some form of their weakness. Satan tempts man by placing an attractive lure before the eyes of the child of God. When the Christian seizes the lure, through lust, he has been led astray. Man is responsible for controlling his appetites and using them in lawful ways (see II Pet. 1:6).
 - a. Consider Eve's temptation. When Satan lied to Eve telling her that the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would not kill her it then appealed to her. The Word of God states, "*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat"* (Gen. 3:6). I find it interesting that the eyes played a role in the woman's sin. She saw with her eyes and thereby desired the unlawful thing. When man depends upon one's own sight for authority we find the greatest trouble with God (see study # 12; Bible Authority). The apostle John said, "*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world"* (I Jn. 2:16). Moses warned Israel to not involve themselves in areas where they did not **see with their eyes** God's authorized will (see Deut. 4:15-16; 29:2-3, 17; 30:15, 19). Paul, by divine and authoritative inspiration said, "*The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you"* (Phil. 4:9).
 - b. Consider also Achan: God had commanded that Israel not partake of that which was "*devoted*" (see Josh. 6:18; 7:1). A "*devoted*" (Heb. *herem*) thing was "cursed, banned, forbidden, things that should be utterly destroyed... forbidden for common use" (ISBE v. 1, pp. 940). Israel was to develop an attitude of abhorrence and be utterly disgusted at those things God considered an abomination (see Deut. 7:26). Though Achan was warned about the devoted thing, he said, "*when I saw among the spoil a goodly Babylonish mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it"* (Josh. 7:21). The sight of worldly valuables enticed Achan to set aside the law of God and fulfill his covetous desires. Lust occurs in a man's life when he allows the cares of this world to erase conviction (see study # 10).
- C. *"Then the lust, when it hath conceived, bears sin: and the sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death"* (1:15).

1. Here is a graphic depiction of the working of sin in man's life. The 'impure desire' lodges deep within the heart of man to the point that it will not be contained and thereby explodes in an act of unlawful sin.
 2. The picture is one of a woman being impregnated and bearing forth a child (the thought of sin moves to the act of sin). Sin is enjoyed by the lustful man because it fulfills that inner strong 'impure desire.' The man's impure desire grows like a child out of a mother's womb. Soon, the man is not satisfied with the small doses of fulfilled lusts. More and more is desired as the sin child grows to maturity. When the sin child is full grown, within a man's heart, it brings forth spiritual death. Here is one who's conscience is seared and sin no longer carries with it shame and remorse (see I Tim. 4:2). Satan thereby brings spiritual death to man and is known as a murderer (Jn. 8:44).
- D. *"Be not deceived, my beloved brethren"* (1:16).
1. The apostle John records, *"And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him"* (Rev. 12:9). The deceptive work of Satan is to gain advantage over humanity through lust and covetousness (see II Cor. 2:11; 4:2). He is the tempter (James 1:13) and murderer (Jn. 8:44) (see study # 13; Satan's Work).
 2. The word *"deceived"* (*planao*) = "to lead astray, cause to wander... to mislead, deceive... err, mistake.... to seduce, delude" (Moulton 326). James admonishes the Christian brethren not to allow Satan to seduce, lead them astray, err, or cause them to wander from the truth. Any idea, action, words, teaching, or worship that contradicts the word of God ought to be abhorred rather than accepted, practiced, and then justified by fleshly wisdom (see Rom. 12:9).
- E. *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning"* (1:17).
1. James gives a contrast between God and Satan. Satan tempts man to sin through lust and covetousness by appealing to impure desires. He capitalizes on man's weaknesses that he may destroy their soul.
 2. Jehovah God, to the contrary, wants nothing but the best for mankind (see II Pet. 3:9). The Lord showers man with good and perfect gifts of salvation through the forgiveness of sins (see Acts 2:38; 13:38; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:7; 2:8 etc.).
 3. Though Satan and man change with every whim of desire and fleshly lust God remains the same. He is the one constant in man's life. Malachi wrote, *"For I Jehovah change not"* (Mal. 3:6).
- F. *"Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures"* (1:18).
1. Satan's devices of deceit, lust, and immoral desire bring forth spiritual death in a man's life. The work of God, on the other hand, brings forth life (see Eph. 2:1ff). When truth lodges deep within the heart of man a spiritual life comes forth. This spiritual life is known as *"a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."*
 2. This verse is a contrast between the process whereby a man sins and eventually dies at James 1:15. The apostle John wrote, *"But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"* (Jn. 1:12-13). A new birth takes place when one obeys the gospel. Jesus explained this new birth to Nicodemus by saying, *"Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God... verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"* (Jn. 3:3-5). This new birth results in one being a new creature (II Cor. 5:17) and alive in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:11; Eph. 2:1ff).
 3. The *"word of truth"* thereby brings life while the lying tongue of Satan brings death through sin.

III. Spiritual Works Evidence one's Faith (1:19-27):

- A. *"Ye know this, my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God"* (1:19-20).

1. James is confident that the “*beloved brethren*” addressed are knowledgeable of the fact that God does not tempt man to sin. The apostle Peter made a similar statement to his audience saying, “*Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the truth which is with you*” (II Pet. 1:12). This is what much of gospel preaching is all about. Preaching to members of the church serves as a reminder of the things the people already know.
 2. Christians are to be quick about some things and slow in other areas. We ought to be “*swift to hear.*” Those who are able to be taught are those who have the ability and patience to stop what they are doing and listen or hear (see Jn. 6:45; Eph. 4:21).
 3. Those willing to hear are those who are willing to stop talking and listen. The fool is known for the multitude of his words yet the wise man gains greater understanding by listening rather than speaking (see Eccl. 5:3; 10:12-14). A college professor once told a class, “it is better to remain silent and appear ignorant than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.” Let us learn to stop talking that we might learn.
 4. Furthermore, James explains that the Christian ought to be “*slow to wrath*” because this is not acceptable to God. Solomon wrote, “*He that is slow to anger is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalts folly*” (Prov. 14:29). Again, the wise king Solomon wrote, “*Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger rests in the bosom of fools*” (Eccl. 7:9). Anger occurs in one who has placed his hope in the things of this life. When the things of this life are taken, altered, or do not go as we would have them go then anger settles in (see study # 15; Anger).
- B.** “*Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls*” (1:21).
1. James admonishes Christians to “*put away*” sin. To “*put away*” (*apotithemi*) = “to put away from oneself, lay aside... to put aside, i.e., disregard... to avoid” (LS 109). The Christian ought to avoid and put away from oneself “*filthiness and overflowing of wickedness*” (see study # 16; Attitude Toward Sin).
 - a. “*Filthiness*” (*rhuparia*) = “dirt, filth: sordidness (morally degraded; base)” (LS 720). Sin is depicted throughout God’s word as “*uncleanness*” (Lev. 16:16, 30), “*defiled*” (Lev. 18:30), and “*impure*” (Lev. 22:21). The Lord sets the standard for behavior and when man does not meet that standard he is viewed as soiled in filth. God and His law represent cleanness and purity.
 - b. An overflow (abundance) of “*wickedness*” (*kakia*) = “moral badness, wickedness, vice” (LS 393).
 2. Rather than participating in moral filth (i.e., sin) the Christian is to “*receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.*”
 - a. Let the Christian be receptive to the instructions of truth with a spirit of “*meekness.*” To be “*meek*” (*prautes*) = “The word “*meek*” (*praus*) = “meek, gentle, kind, forgiving” (Moulton 340). “Mild, soft, gentle, meek” (LS 666). “Showing patience and humility; gentle” (AHD 782). Both Jesus (cf. Matt. 11:29) and Moses (cf. Numb. 12:3) are said to be meek. The thought seems to be that one who is meek knows his or her place. They know that they are sinners, they beg God to forgive them, they have deep sorrow over their sins, and they are thereby humbled by the human experience of sin. Such a one is thereby meek in the sense that he or she is brought low by their sin. They realize that all sin and thereby have a gentle and kind disposition toward others. Humanity has a common plight and that is that we sin. The meek have a proper disposition or spirit in this experience. Though Jesus never sinned he nonetheless understood the sin man went through (cf. Heb. 4:15).
 - b. Notice that James tells us that the word of God is “*implanted*” and thereby able to save man’s soul. To “*implant*” (*emphutos*) = “implanted, engrafted, infixed” (Moulton 136). Those with truth fixed in their minds are people of hope. Herein are the basics of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Gal. 3:2) (see study # 17; Indwelling of the Holy Spirit). Here are people who have purposed to serve God no matter what life throws their way. Heaven and hell are real to these people.

- c. Note that the “*word*” of God is able to “*save your soul*.” The Apostle Paul said that the salvation of the soul through the gospel message is the “*power of God unto salvation...*” (Rom. 1:16). When a man or woman receive truth (i.e., it is implanted into the heart) it has the power to save the soul from eternal damnation.
- C. “*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves*” (1:22).
1. James gives a direct command by inspiration of God. We are told to be “*doers of the word*.” The word of God gives commands and we are bound by Christian law and duty to perform these works else be found in sin (see I Jn. 3:4). God’s promises have always been conditioned upon man’s obedience and therefore to lack in spiritual work is to lack in spiritual promises of salvation. The life of Abraham stands as an example of a working faith (see Gen. 15:6 and Romans 4 all) (see study # 18; Obedience and spiritual Work).
 2. Those who would hear yet reject obedience have been “*deluded*.” To be “*deluded*” (*paralogizomai*) = “to misreckon, make a false reckoning; to impose upon, deceive, delude (to deceive the mind or judgment), circumvent” (Moulton 305). Many during the days of the minor prophets were deluded (mistaken in their thinking and thereby erred in judgment) into thinking that God was too loving to do the things the prophets spoke of (see Micah 3:11; 7:4; Mal. 1:6). Jesus tells us that many on the Day of Judgment will be just as perplexed (cf. Matt. 7:22) (Consider Jeremiah 2:22; 4:22; 13:22; 16:10). While hearing is the first step to becoming a faithful child of God it is not the final step (see study # 14; Self Delusion).
- D. “*For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholds himself, and goes away, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was*” (1:23-24).
1. The man that hears the word of God yet does not keep the law is likened unto a man that casually observes himself in the mirror and then walks away.
 2. There is no serious observation of self within the mirror so that once he walks away he quickly forgets what he saw. Likewise, the man who hears truth only and does not obey it is one who takes a casual glance at the Bible and walks away from it not having any of its principles established within the mind.
- E. “*But he that looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continues, being not a hearer that forgets but a doer that works, this man shall be blessed in his doing*” (1:25).
1. The man that is “*blessed in his doings*” is one who “*looks into the perfect law*” as opposed to casually hearing it and forgetting it. To “*look*” (*parakupto*) = “to stoop beside; to stoop down in order to take a view... to bestow a close and attentive look to look intently” (Moulton 304). The Greek *parakupto* is a verb of action in the present tense which indicates ongoing action (see Friberg 694). The man who takes the time to not just look at the truth but persistently stoop down and take a closer look is the man who is interested in the things of God (see study # 19; Be Interested in God). God’s “*word*” (see James 1:21) is a “*law*” (see Gal. 6:2) (see study # 18; The Nature of Truth). This law is further defined as the “*perfect law of liberty*” in that it has the power to set man free from the bondage of sin (see John 8:32). It is “*perfect*” in the sense that it is complete (i.e., Greek *teleion*). There is no need for other revelations today! Therefore all miraculous works of the Holy Spirit have ceased to exist (Mk. 16:17-20; Heb. 2:1-4; I Cor. 13:8-10; Jude 3) (see study # 21; Spiritual Gifts).
 2. Again, the “*blessed*” (*makarios*) man has “happiness, those with good fortune” (LS 484). Jesus used this word in the beatitudes at Matthew 5:3-10. Here is one that not only hears truths but “*works*” (i.e., is obedient to truth) (consider I Cor. 15:1-2). Jesus said, “*If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them*” (Jn. 13:17). The good fortune of heaven awaits the faithful doers of God’s Word.
- F. “*If any man thinks himself to be religious, while he bridles not his tongue but deceives his heart, this man’s religion is vain*” (1:26).
1. James makes a clear association with being “*doers of the word*” and “*religious*.” Religious people do what God’s word commands. To be “*religious*” (*threskos*) = “occupied with religious observances... devout, pious (having or exhibiting reverence and earnest compliance

- in the observance of religion / AHD 943)” (Moulton 196). Again, we are dealing with self delusion.
- a. James considers the man who disqualifies himself from being “*religious*” due to his hearing God’s word yet not acting in obedience.
 - b. James now considers the man with an “*unbridled (chalinagoeo) tongue*” i.e., “to guide with a bridle; to bridle, control, sway...” (Moulton 434). While the word of God acts as a bridle in the mouth of the “*religious*” (i.e., guides their every move) to others it is quickly forgotten and their direction is dictated by fleshly reasoning. Such a one just says what is on the mind and keeps on talking. Herein is the earmark of the fool (see Eccl. 5:3; 10:12-14).
2. To serve God with an unbridled tongue of foolishness is to practice “*religion in vain.*” Said man’s service to God is worthless because it does not represent the standard that God has delivered. Said man is an embarrassment to religion and does not meet its standards.
- G. “*Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world*” (1:27).
1. Interesting, this verse reminds us of Jesus’ answer to the Pharisee’s question at Matthew 22. The lawyer asks the Lord, “*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus answered, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*” (Matt. 22:34-40). To love God is to keep His commandments (see Jn. 14:15) and likewise man is commanded to exercise love toward his neighbor (i.e., spiritual, physical, and emotional support). James records the same basics of man’s “*religious*” responsibilities.
 2. The true pious man whose “*religion*” is according to the standard of God’s word (i.e., he is a doer and not a hearer only) will be found “*visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction.*” The idea of “*visiting*” (*episkeptomai*) = “to look at observantly, to inspect; to look out, to go to see, visit, to visit for the purpose of comfort and relief” (Moulton 159). Consider the Apostle John’s remarks on this subject. John said, “But whoso hath the world’s goods, and beholds his brother in need, and shuts up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth” (I Jn. 3:17-18). Again, spiritual **works** are under consideration.
 - a. The Christian ought to look to orphans and widows and see what it is that can be done for their physical, emotional, and spiritual well being.
 - b. While it is true that said visitation is a primary work of the deacon (Acts 6:1ff) it is nonetheless a love requirement for all Christians. Likewise, it is the primary objective of the preacher to teach the gospel to the lost (I Cor. 1:21; 3:6-7); however, all members are commanded to be involved in this work (Matt. 28:19-20). Again, the primary function of the elder is to shepherd the flock of God’s people on the local church level (Acts 20:28); however, all members are commanded to have their eyes out for straying brethren (see Rom. 16:17; I Thess. 5:14).
 3. Pure religion (i.e., pious service to God based upon truth) is to “*keep oneself unspotted from the world.*” To be “*unspotted*” (*aspilos*) = “spotless, unblemished, pure” (Moulton 56). This same Greek word is used at I Peter 1:19 where Peter wrote of the precious unspotted character of Jesus Christ. While the world is filled with an overflow of wickedness Christ shines unspotted and clean (i.e., without sin). Those who practice pure religion will be without sin by means of the precious blood of Christ (see Rom. 3:24ff). Not only is the Christian to lovingly consider others but we are also to consider our own obedience to God’s laws. The Hebrew Christians were heavy on loving and caring for other’s spiritual, physical, and emotional well being but short on lawful obedience and thereby they were encouraged to be more balanced (see Heb. 6:9-12).
 4. Note that the individual is under consideration in this text (see statements such as, “*every man*”, “*any one*,” “*If any man*,” and “*himself*” at James 1:19-26). Aiding the orphans and widows is not a work of the church unless these people have no others to help them and they are saints

(see I Tim. 5:3ff). There is a distinction to be made between the individual and the church (see Matt. 18:15-20) and the individual versus the church's responsibility (Matt. 25:31-46) (see study # 21; Institutionalism)-.

Chapter 2

I. The Sin of showing Partiality based on Worldly Accomplishments (2:1-13):

- A. *“My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons”* (2:1).
1. To *“hold”* (*echo*) = “to hold, possess, have, have possession of” (Moulton 180). The term *“the faith”* is simply *pistis* in the Greek meaning one's belief. Man evidences faith in God through acts of obedience (Jn. 3:36; Heb. 11:1ff). To “possess” a faith that manifests *“respect of persons”* is to err against the *“Lord of glory.”*
 2. The idea of being a *“respector of persons”* is one word in the Greek (*prosopolepsia*) and defined as “to accept or respect the person of any one, to pay regard to external appearance, condition, circumstances, etc. to show partiality” (Moulton 353). When I judge a man acceptable, honorable, and likable based upon his external accomplishments I am guilty of “holding the faith of God with respect of persons.” Rather than accepting all alike who have faith in Jesus Christ I have brought another number into God's established equation (see Gal. 3:27-28). I have sinned (James 2:9).
- B. *“For if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing; and ye have regard to him that wears the fine clothing, and say, Sit thou here in a good place; and ye say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool; do ye not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?”* (2:2-4)
1. The *“synagogue”* (*sunagoge*) = “a collecting, gathering; a Christian assembly or congregation... to convene, come together, meet” (Moulton 385). The word is very similar to *ekklesia* (i.e., church). Apparently James has a Sunday assembly to worship under consideration.
 2. To have *“regard”* (*epiblepo*) = “to look upon; to regard with partiality, favor” (Moulton 154). When Christians make *“distinctions”* among brethren based upon their worldly accumulation we make an error in judgment. Said judgments identify us as *“judges with evil thoughts.”* My thoughts have become the standard man is judged by rather than God's law.
 3. The grave error in showing preferential treatment toward the wealthy is found in Ecclesiastes 1:2-3. The things of this world are vanity in relation to man's eternal existence (i.e., worthless). While it is not sinful to have riches (see Eccl. 5:19) it is sinful to judge man on the amount of wealth he has. James' point is that being rich or poor is not the standard man should be judged by. Christians should make their judgments based upon truth and whether one is walking in truth (Jn. 7:24) (see study # 22; Judgments made by the Christian).
- C. *“Hearken, my beloved brethren; did not God choose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him?”* (2:5).
1. I find it interesting that the New Testament writers often reasoned with *“beloved brethren.”* This is highly important in relation to the attitude the one with knowledge has toward those he reasons with. It may be that sometimes preachers and elders speak with strong convicted language from the pulpit yet do not show true love and care for their audience. Such a disposition will tend to cause people to hurt and develop a sense of worthlessness. Good gospel preachers will always lovingly consider his audience (see study # 23; Preachers and Preaching).
 2. James calls upon those who would show preferential treatment to the rich to consider who will be *“heirs of the kingdom of God.”* The *“rich”* care only for the things of this world whereas the *“poor as to the world are rich in faith.”* Again, James is not saying that it is sinful to be rich but rather sinful to judge based upon one's worldly achievements. Said judgments are indicators of a man's lack of spiritual interest and knowledge (see I Tim. 6:6-10).
 3. Note that God *“choose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith.”* Those who do not have much of anything in this life can only look to God for their help. Said people do not

- experience the luxuries of this life and thereby look forward to the luxuries in heaven (i.e., God's "*promise*" of eternal salvation).
- a. Those "*chose*" of God are those who will be "*holy and without blemish before him in love*" (Eph. 1:4).
 - b. Those "*chose*" of God are those who are called, believe and sanctified in truth (II Thess. 2:13-14).
 - c. God's "*elect*" (or chosen) people are those who "*show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*" (I Pet. 2:9).
 - d. Said selection process was set in the standard of truth before the foundation of the world (see Rom. 8:29-30).
 - e. Those "*poor as to the world*" are simply those who have placed their hope in Christ and a future glorious home in heaven as opposed to hoping in the things of this life. They conclude that there is no eternal profit in the things of this world. They understand that their primary duty in this life is to "*Fear God and keep his commandments*" (Eccl. 12:13).
- D. "*But ye have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme the honorable name by which ye are called?*" (2:6-7).
1. The "*rich*" have been defined as those who look to the luxuries of this earth for inward fulfillment. James further depicts the rich as those who "*oppress you, drag you to court, and blaspheme the honorable name by which Christians are called to obedience.*"
 - a. Apparently the rich were angered at the Christian's faith and thereby brought them before courts to be tried for denying the Law of Moses (see Heb. 10:32ff).
 - b. These rich men who cared nothing for truth "*blasphemed the honorable name...*" To speak evil of God and His Word is to illustrate a spirit of indifference toward eternal existence.
 2. James seeks to cause his audience to reason with him. They had erred in their judgments by showing partiality to the rich because these people have no common faith. Such an act against a true brother in Christ is to "*dishonor the poor man.*" To "*dishonor*" (*atimazo*) = "to hold in no honor, to esteem lightly, dishonor, slight" (LS 129). The man who shared a like precious faith and hope with you has now been treated as a second class citizen of the kingdom God. Placed second not based on a common faith but upon a common interest for the things of this world. Such a judgment exposes a character flaw that had to be corrected in the minds of the Christians James is addressing.
- E. "*Howbeit if ye fulfill the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors*" (2:8-9).
1. Rather than showing partiality based upon one's worldly accomplishments the Christian ought to be "*fulfilling the royal law.*" To "*fulfill*" (*teleo*) = "accomplish, arrive at..." (LS 798). The word "*royal*" (*basilikos*) = "one possessing regal (of or pertaining to a king / AHD 1040) authority, authority, dominion, of the highest excellence" (Moulton 67) (see study # 25; The Nature of Truth). Now we see that the true Christian is to accomplish or arrive at the authoritative "*law*" of God (see study # 24; Bible Authority). God's law is viewed as regal because it governs the kingdom of God.
 2. The authoritative king; i.e., Jesus, has delivered the parameters of man's conduct by saying, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*" (see Matt. 22:34-40). The Christian will thereby accomplish this authoritative kingly decree by caring for one's spiritual, physical, and emotional well being. To exercise love (agape) i.e., care and concern for others, based upon one's wealth is to be guilty of "*respecting the person*" (judging one based upon external appearances / see James 2:1) and "*committing sin.*" Sin is defined as "*lawlessness*" (I Jn. 3:4). The perfect and royal law convicts the one showing partiality based upon worldly attainments as a transgressor.
 3. What causes one to digress from the "*royal law?*" Man digresses when drawn away from truth by our own personal lusts. The man (or woman) who lusts after the riches of this world will

thereby make distinctions among brethren based upon their worldly achievements (see James 1:14).

- F. *“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou dost not commit adultery, but killest, thou art become a transgressor of the law”* (2:10-11).
1. A man who committed the sin of showing partiality based upon one’s standing in the world may exclaim to God, “But I kept all other commandments...” Herein is a statement of reality. God is holy (Lev. 11:44), there is no darkness in him and there cannot be any darkness whatsoever in His people (I Jn. 1:5-6). Jesus said, *“Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect”* (Matt. 5:48 see also James 1:4). One sin causes one to be *“unclean* (Eph. 5:5),” *“defiled* (II Cor. 7:1; Heb. 12:15),” and *“impure”* (Titus 1:15) (see study # 26; A Call for Perfection).
 2. One violation of law in any area of life condemns the whole soul. Many today are heard to say, “Surely one sin will not keep us out of heaven...” Said thought is wicked in itself. God’s people ought not be trying to see what we can get away with but rather what He wants of us in every point in life.
- G. *“So speak ye, and so do, as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty”* (2:12).
1. One transgression against the *“royal”* (James 2:8), *“perfect”* (James 1:25), or *“law of liberty”* (James 1:25; 2:12) causes one to be a transgressor (James 2:9).
 2. Those who err in tongue or deed will be judged guilty by *“a law of liberty”* (Jn. 12:48; Rom. 2:16). The standard of truth is to govern all aspects of my life and it will reveal my unlawful deeds that I may be liberated from them.
 3. James has brought us back to original request of not being simple hearers of the law but doers (James 1:22).
- H. *“For judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glories against judgment”* (2:13).
1. The sinners under consideration have *“showed no mercy”* toward their faithful brother who was poor in that they elevated the rich over him and treated him lesser a man. Such unmerciful treatment of others will be met with the same unmerciful condemnation.
 2. Those who abide in the doctrine of Christ shall *“glory against judgment”* in that they are confident that their judgment will be a proclamation of their faith and thereby these shall be supplied an entrance into the eternal kingdom of God.
 3. James has exposed a flaw in his readers. They have judged based upon appearance rather than by God’s divine revelation. All who speak and do things that God’s laws reveal as sinful shall have no mercy on the Day of Judgment (see study # 27; The Day of Judgment).

II. Man is Justified by an Obedient Faith (2:14-20):

- A. *“What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? Can that faith save him?”* (2:14).
1. The subject of being doers of the word and not mere hearers only began at James 1:22. Those who hear the law yet do not its commands do not practice true religion. James now brings in the idea of doing with faith. Those who would say that they believe that Jesus is the Christ yet do not follow his commandments are in error as well. *“Denying the Master”* (II Pet. 2:1) and *“abiding in the doctrine of Christ”* (II Jn. 9) thereby carry with it much more meaning than a simple belief that Jesus is the Christ.
 2. James calls upon his readers to reason with him. He asks them **two questions** that he may prove that a man’s obedience (i.e. works) evidence one’s faith (see study # 28; Calvinism / Perseverance of the Saints):
 - a. First, James asks, *“what doth it profit if a man say he has faith yet has no works?”* The Greek word for *“profit”* (*ophelos*) = “furtherance, advantage, help... what good couldst thou be to us?” (LS 580, Moulton 296). James asks the question, “What advantage is there to be gained by saying that you believe in God yet do not follow His commandments?” *“Profit”* to the spiritual welfare of man is under consideration.

- b. A second question James asks is, “*Can that faith save him?*” James is challenging his do little say much audience to answer these questions about their day to day activities in this life. Herein is the primary subject under consideration in this study; i.e., the salvation of man (see James 1:4, 12, 21, 27). Will I receive the crown of life by simply believing in Jesus without obedience? This is the question at hand.
- B. “*If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit?*” (2:15-16).
1. James gives an example to prove that faith or hearing the truth alone without obedience can be of no benefit whatsoever to the eternal and spiritual wellbeing of man.
 2. The law of Christ demands that I love my neighbor (see James 2:8). Bible love is active rather than passive. My love for brethren ought to motivate me to do the things necessary to lift them out of their distress. The apostle John said, “*whoso hath the world’s goods, and beholds his brother in need, and shuts up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth*” (I Jn. 3:17-18).
 3. James has asked the question, “*What does it profit to have faith without works?*” Many will say that I believe in Jesus the Christ yet when a brother, sister, widow, or fatherless are in need we hide from our duty. Why? We don’t have the time, will, or inclination to do so. When we are need; however, everyone better pitch in or our conclusion may be that there is no love in the church.
- C. “*Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself*” (2:17).
1. There are no signs of spiritual life in the one who claims to hear and believe in Jesus yet will not put that faith into action (see study # 28). The **command** is, “*Visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world,*” and “*love thy neighbor as thyself*” (James 2:8). When I simply say to the fatherless, widows, and brethren in need “I sure hope that you obtain the needful things to warm, feed, and shelter yourself yet I do nothing to accomplish this I have exercised vain faith. Would I want someone doing this to me if I find myself in need? My desire would be that if one is able to help I sure would appreciate it.
 2. Things that are not helpful are useless in relation to man’s needs. The word of God very pointedly bears out the fact that one’s faith is evidenced by obedience to God’s will (see Jn. 3:36; Heb. 11:1ff).
- D. “*Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith*” (2:18).
1. How does one really know if true faith exists in an individual? Anyone can say, “I believe that there is a God, heaven, and hell.” How do we, or more importantly, God know that these people are telling the truth? Do some people just say things to appease others? Sure they do. How does God know whether one truly believes Him?
 2. An individual may asks this very question. How do I know that you truly believe in God? You may answer with words yet without actions there is much to prove (Heb. 11:1ff). Someone may say that they belong to God’s church yet their language and lifestyle militate against such a proclamation. God has proved man through the ages to see whether they would believe in him and keep his commandments or not (see Deut. 8:2, 16; Judges 3:4 etc.). When man does not keep God’s commands he does not believe (Jn. 3:36), love (Jn. 14:15), nor fear (Titus 3:8; I Pet. 1:17) God (see study # 29; Bible Faith).
- E. “*Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder*” (2:19).
1. James addresses the man who truly believes in Christ yet does not evidence that faith in obedience. Here is one who does not make the time to exercise love toward others. Here is one who **hears** the words of God yet does not practice them. Here is one who maintains the public confession of his faith; however, is not willing to obey all God’s commands.
 2. James reasons with such a man. The “*demons*” have faith only. They even shudder at the thought of God (see Luke 4:31-35). Demons; however, do not the works of God. The

conclusion is simple. Those who live by faith only are likened unto demons and no demon has a place with God in heaven (see Matt. 25:41).

- F. *“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren?”* (2:20).
1. James draws his conclusion. Faith apart from obedient works is dead, barren, useless. His reasoning has been twofold:
 - c. First, it stands to reason that there is no profit from one simply saying to someone, *“Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled”* yet you do nothing for this needy man to achieve this. Likewise, one who says he believes in God yet does nothing to evidence this faith is not helping his cause for heaven.
 - d. Secondly, demons believe that there is a God and even shudder over His being. Demons; however, have no place in eternity with God. What good or profit is their faith?
 2. Consider the phrase, *“O vain” (kenos) man.”* The word *“kenos”* = “empty; having no thing, empty-handed... vain, fruitless, void of effect” (Moulton 228). James identifies the man who claims faith only in Jesus as one who is ‘empty and having nothing in his hand.’ Said state of mind causes one to be *“barren”* or *“dead”* (see James 2:17, 20, 22).

III. Abraham and Rahab stand as examples of ones whose obedience evidenced their Professed Faith (2:21-26):

- A. *“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?”* (2:21).
1. James uses the example of Abraham and Rahab’s faith to further impress upon the minds of his readers the fact that faith without works (obedience) is dead and barren.
 2. To be *“justified” (dikaioo)* = “to deem righteous... to think fit” (LS 202)... “to make or render right or just... to set forth as good and just... to hold as guiltless, to accept as righteous, to justify... to be held acquitted, to be cleared” (Moulton 102). Abraham was “cleared and acquitted” of sins committed against God *“by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar.”* James’ use of Abraham’s obedience teaches us that works and salvation (i.e., man’s justification) are inseparably connected.
 - a. The account of Abraham’s willingness to obey God’s word to sacrifice his only son of promise is given at Genesis 22:1-19. The conclusion is simple. Those who do not exercise the faithful obedience of Abraham are not justified from sin and thereby do not have the hope of salvation to look forward to (see James 1:12, 21; 2:14).
 - b. The scriptures tell us that God was *“proving Abraham”* on this occasion (see Gen. 22:1). When Abraham did as God commanded the Lord said, *“Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me... and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because thou hast obeyed my voice”* (Gen. 22:12, 18). Note that James equates *“works”* to *“obedience”* in that he uses the Abraham being asked to sacrifice his son example. Abraham was **justified** (cleared and acquitted of sins) by his **obedient** acts!
 3. This truly helps us clearly identify with Paul’s statement to the Romans at 3:28. Paul said, *“We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.”* There is no contradiction to the studied disciple of Christ. Let us continue to examine this idea...
- B. *“Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scriptures was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God”* (2:22-23).
1. Abraham’s *“faith wrought with his works.”* The word *“wrought” (sunergeo)* = “to work together with, to co-operate” (Moulton 388). Abraham’s faith was working together and co-operating with works (i.e., they went hand in hand... they were an integral part of each other). This statement helps us to see that a faith without works is truly a **deformity of spirituality**. When Abraham’s faith was accompanied by obedience it was as it was suppose to be in the eyes of God; i.e., *“perfect” (teleioo)* = “complete, to be brought to the goal, to reach the end of one’s course... to be fully developed” (Moulton 401). The obedience of Abraham made his faith ‘complete.’

2. The obedient faith of Abraham *“fulfilled”* the scriptures which said, *“And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.”* This statement is made of Abraham at Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; and Gal. 3:6. While Paul states that Abraham’s justification was not of *“works”* James states that Abraham’s justification is of *“works.”* The casual student of God’s word may conclude that Paul and James contradict each other. Nothing could be further from the truth however. James and Paul teach the same principle. Let the serious Bible student understand that Paul is contrasting two laws in the book of Romans. Paul said, *“Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? Of works? Nay: but by a law of faith”* (Rom. 3:27). The law of the Old Testament and the *“Law of Faith”* is in contrast. The Old Testament Law demanded perfection (Gal. 3:10) yet could remove no sin (i.e., justify a man) and was thereby inferior and weak in comparison to the Law of Faith (see Heb. 7:18-19). If one were to be justified by perfect law keeping he certainly would not need the grace of God. Man sins; however, and this is a fact of all our lives (Rom. 3:23; I Jn. 1:8). Man’s sin does not; however; justify sinful living (Rom. 6:1). God demands our **efforts** to not sin and when we do we have an advocate namely Jesus Christ (see Matt. 13:10-15; I Jn. 2:1-4). Our efforts in obedience to the doctrine of Christ are deemed our works of obedience (see II Jn. 9).
 3. The confusion over works and faith may be best clarified by considering Moses’ statement to the disobedient Hebrews in relation to being recipients of God’s promises yet not through any obedient act of theirs (see Deut. 9:4-6). We compare this statement to the Apostle Paul’s words to the Ephesians. Paul said, *“For by grace have ye been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory”* (Eph. 2:8-9). God offers His gifts to man by promise because He loves us rather than it being due to our righteous ways. We are all sinful men and truly deserve the wages of sin (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). A grave mistake; however, is made by the “religious” world when they conclude that man is a sinner, God loves, therefore let us continue in sin. The apostle Paul said, *“Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?”* (Rom. 6:1-2). James said, *“faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself”* (James 2:17). To reconcile the confusion on the part of our denominational friends we may sum this subject up in the following way. When one loves God they will do all within their power to keep his commandments (Jn. 14:15). When one claims to “believe” in Jesus (Jn. 8:24) they will prove this faith by keeping God’s commandments (Jn. 3:36; Heb. 11:1ff). When one says that they “fear” God they will evidence this fear in their obedience (see Deut. 5:29; 6:2; Rev. 14:17 comp. to John 15:5-10). When that love, faith, and fear evidences itself in obedience such a one realizes that they do not deserve the mercy of God yet due to His love we are saved. Man’s eternal abode is dependant upon whether he or she loved, feared, and believed in God. The author of Hebrews makes the lesson of God’s conditional salvation clear by connecting the events of Exodus through Deuteronomy with man’s obligation to obey God today (see Heb. 3-4). Yes, our salvation is conditioned upon our obedience because sin continues to exist in the world. If there were no such thing as sin that we needed to worry about we would be in effect saying that there is no such thing as law. Said conclusions are faulty. Man is under law today and when that law is violated sin occurs (see Rom. 3:27; 4:15; 5:13; I Jn. 3:4).
 4. All those who keep God’s commandments and thereby evidence their faith in Jesus Christ are likened unto Abraham in that we are friends of God. Jesus said, *“Ye are my friends if ye do the things which I command you”* (Jn. 15:14).
- C. *“Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith”* (2:24).
1. James has used the obedient life of Abraham to illustrate how man is justified from sins today. Those who profess to believe in the Lord God and evidence their faith through obedience are justified like was Abraham (see obedient statements in relation to Abraham at Genesis 18:19; 22:15-18).
 2. Man is acquitted and cleared from the lawless deeds of his life when obedient to the law of God (see I Pet. 1:22).
- D. *“And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way?”* (2:25).

1. Rahab, like Abraham, was acquitted and cleared of her sins by her obedient acts (see Heb. 11:31).
 2. Rahab expressed faith in God not only in word (Josh. 2:11) but also in deed (Josh. 2:1ff).
- E. *“For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead”* (2:26).
1. This is now the third time James has made this statement in this chapter (see James 2:17, 20, 22). The human being is comprised of flesh and spirit. When the spirit leaves the fleshly body it dies (see Eccl. 12:5-7).
 2. Likewise, when faith departs from obedience there is no longer justification! The Apostle Peter said, *“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that fears him, and works righteousness, is acceptable to him”* (Acts 10:34-35). Spiritual death is thereby recognized in the life of one who does not obey the laws of God (see Eph. 2:1ff).

Chapter 3

- I. **James warns his audience of a misuse of the tongue when teaching truth seeing that some had taught that a man can be Justified by Faith Only (3:1-11):**
- A. *“Be not many of you teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment”* (3:1).
1. Many of the Jews coveted the position of teacher among the people (see Matt. 23:5-10). The apostle Paul told Timothy that there were many who *“desired to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm”* (I Tim. 1:5-8). James warns his audience about this approach to teaching; i.e., the desire to be looked up to by others. There may be specific teachers that James is referring to here. These teachers likely were teaching that faith only can save and justify a man. James is reminded of the grave responsibility laid upon the shoulders of one who would teach the laws of God. Law must be studied, interpreted correctly, and delivered truthfully for it to have its divine results; i.e., the salvation of man.
 2. Teachers will *“receive heavier (meizon) judgment.”* The Greek word *meizon* is defined as “greater” (Moulton 261)... “from the Greek *megae* which means of degree: great, strong, mighty... weighty, important... *meizon* indicates degrees of comparison; i.e., greater” (LS 491). A greater judgment will be received by the teacher of God’s laws than the non-teacher. James apparently has in mind the one who publicly teaches the laws of God. These men’s judgment will be greater in that they took upon themselves greater responsibility.
- B. *“For in many things we all stumble. If any stumbles not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also”* (3:2).
1. To *“stumble” (patio)* = “to cause to stumble; to stumble, stagger, fall; to make a false step; met. To err, offend, sin” (Moulton 355). James includes his own self when he said, *“For in many things we all stumble* (i.e., fail to meet God’s standard and thereby sin).” The word “For” (*gar*) is generally a word used as a conjunction or a word that assigns a reason for a previous statement. The reason many should not be public teachers of the law of God is that all fail and sin against the very law that is taught. Paul said, *“And reckonest thou this, O man, who judgest them that practice such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?”* (Rom. 2:3). Such men are hypocrites.
 2. James equates what one would teach (i.e., *“if any man stumbles not in word”*) with the ability to *“bridle the whole body.”* To *“bridle” (chalinagogeō)* = “to guide with a bridle; met. To bridle, control, sway” (Moulton 434). A man that does not violate God’s standard of truth in word is a man who is able to control the whole body from sin. Such a one is deemed *“perfect.”* We ran into the exact Greek word (i.e., *teleios*) at James 1:4. James said, *“and let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.”* The point James was making was that when man endures the hard trials of life he gains more of a desire to make it to heaven. The word *“perfect” (teleios)* = “having reached its end, finished, complete... of persons, absolute, complete, accomplished, perfect in his or its kind” (LS 797). “Fully accomplished in Christian enlightenment” (Moulton 400). The mindset of perfection is what Paul admonished his audience to obtain at Philippians 3:13-15. The disposition that says,

- “Heaven means everything to me and I’m going to do all within my power to obtain this goal,” is the mind of perfection (i.e., the complete, accomplished, and perfect way of life) (see study # 2). Heaven should be the goal of all right thinking individuals. Herein is man’s only true profit in this life and the life to come (Eccl. 12:1, 13-14).
3. Those who do not have such a mindset have no business teaching in the public.
- C. *“Now if we put the horses’ bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also”* (3:3).
1. James considers an individual who places a controlling bridle into the mouth of a horse to control it. When I pull to the right the horse turns right. When I pull to the left the horse obeys and goes left. When I pull back the horse stops. I am the controlling agent that the horse perfectly obeys.
 2. Likewise, God’s word is likened unto a bridle that should control man. The man that is controlled by God’s word is the perfect man (i.e., the man whose desires are to make it to heaven and illustrated in word and deed).
- D. *“Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, are yet turned about by a very small rudder, whither the impulse of the steersman wills”* (3:4).
1. Like the horse, a ship is guided by its rudder. When a man turns the wheel one way or another the ship obeys and so goes.
 2. Keeping the comparison we know that God’s word can be likened to a rudder that steers the life of man.
- E. *“So the tongue also is a little member, and boasts great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!”* (3:5).
1. James states that the *“tongue”* is likened unto a bridle in the horse’s mouth and the rudder that guides a great ship. A tongue not governed by the word of God can grow out of control like a horse that rejects the bridle and a ship whose rudder is broken. A tongue that boasts or brags of self accomplishments in the areas of teaching has not achieved its desired results of saving souls. When one speaks spiritual words in the form of public teaching we are learning what is in the man’s heart (see Matt. 12:34-37; 15:10-11). When I lay his words along side truth and discover that they do not match up I can confidently say that such a one’s heart is not right with God (see Matt. 7:15ff; I Jn. 4:1ff).
 2. James states, *“How much wood is kindled by how small a fire.”* Words that cause man to err can have far reaching results. A small fire from one match can turn into a devastating thousand acre forest fire. Even so, words of error can adversely affect the souls of thousands of people.
- F. *“And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell”* (3:6).
1. James states the fact. Man’s tongue is likened unto a damaging fire that can *“defile”* (cause our soul to be tainted by sin) our body through its unlawful use (i.e., an out of control tongue not governed by truth). Note that James makes a comparison between the tongue and the body once again (see James 3:1).
 2. When man’s body is defiled through the unlawful words of our tongue then *“sets on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell!”*
 1. The *“wheel of nature”* (Gr. *trochos genesis*) will need closer examination. James uses the Greek *trochos* which means “a runner; anything orbicular, a wheel; drift, course, with which signification the word is usually written *trochos*” (Moulton 409)... “A running, course... a race-course” (LS 822). The second word is *“nature”* (*genesis*) = “an origin, source, productive cause... a beginning... manner of birth, race, decent, production, generation... creation, created things... a race, kind, family” (LS 162). Together we have “a race course of created things.”
 2. Note the association between fire, tongue, iniquity, and being defiled. The tongue, being a fire, defiles and causes one to be in sin when it is out of control. The tongue can change a man’s entire outlook on life. While God’s desire and design for man is that he would be *“perfect”* (i.e., seeking above all other things in this world a heavenly home through

obedience) the tongue has a way of ruining that life. The tongue, identified as a fire of sin, sets on fire (i.e., destroys) “a race course of created things” (i.e., the “*wheel of nature*”).

3. The course of God’s created beings “*is set on fire by hell*” through an unlawful use of the tongue. “*Hell*” (*geenna*) = “the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, once celebrated for the horrid worship of Moloch, and afterwards polluted with every species of filth, as well as the carcasses of animals, and dead bodies of malefactors; to consume which, in order to avert the pestilence which such a mass of corruption would occasion, constant fires were kept burning; hence, hell, the fires of Tartarus, the place of punishment in Hades” (Moulton 76). The eternal flames of hell are reserved for the wicked of all ages (Rev. 20:10). Those who use their tongues to distort or pervert the law of God are equated to the future inhabitants of hell. It is clear that God does not take lightly the perversion of His holy word such as those who would claim that faith only will save.
- G. “*For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison*” (3:7-8).
1. James affirms man’s success at taming the wild beasts of the earth. Moses records the creation of man and woman and then states, “*And God blessed them: and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth*” (Gen. 2:27-28). Again, to Noah, the Lord said, “*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the heavens; with all wherewith the ground teems, and all the fishes of the sea, into your hand are they delivered*” (Gen. 9:1-2). Though all the wild beast of the earth have been subdued it is not so with the tongue. Man’s tongue is likened unto a wild out of control beast that has not been tamed.
 2. James states, “*But the tongue can no man tame, it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison.*” Interestingly, James stated that the man who does not “*stumble in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also*” (see James 3:2). Here is where Greek tenses play an important part in interpreting the scriptures. The word “*stumble*” (*ptaio*) is parsed in the present tense which indicates ongoing action (Friberg 696). The fact of the matter is that all will at one point stumble (sin) with their tongue. James defines the perfect man as he who does not go on sinning with his tongue. There is a big difference. The word “*tame*” (*damazo*) = “to subdue, tame, to restrain within proper limits” (Moulton 84). While animals continue to be tamed (present tense) the tongue is not (aorist tense / i.e., it may have been tamed at some times in the past but this is not a guarantee that it will always be tamed) (see Friberg 696). James is looking to those who give efforts, through a proper interpretation of scriptures and heart that is set on making it to heaven, in their teaching through the use of their tongues. Those who use their tongues to teach false doctrine are likened unto poisonous snakes that bite and kill.
- H. “*Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God: out of the same mouth comes forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be*” (3:9-10).
1. To “*bless*” (*eulogeo*) the Lord and Father is to “speak well of; to bless, ascribe praise and glorification” (Moulton 174). To “*curse*” (*kataraoimai*) men is to “curse, to wish evil, imprecate evil upon” (Moulton 219). James says it makes no sense to ascribe praise to God yet wish evil upon God’s created beings. To curse man is to curse God! To speak words that mislead man is to go against the Lord God Almighty.
 2. Such a man is going in two different directions and he doesn’t even seem to know it. While he praises God he curses God’s creative work of mankind. Such a use of the tongue should not be occurring among God’s created beings.
- I. “*Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet water and bitter? Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? Neither can salt water yield sweet*” (3:11-12).
1. The point James makes is that it goes against nature (i.e., God’s creative purpose and design for man) to use the tongue in a damaging way that does not consider truth nor the souls of men.

When a man uses his tongue to teach doctrines that comfort others in their sin (i.e., faith only) they are working against the very nature of God's created purpose.

2. God has created man with the innate ability to know right from wrong. The Apostle Paul said, *"for when Gentiles that have not the law do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law, are the law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them"* (Rom. 2:14-15). When a man thereby laid with another man in sexual union they went against nature and knew it (see Rom. 1:26-27). People may justify homosexuality and false teaching and thereby ease their mind from being pricked by truth yet truth remains truth.

II. James Defines the Wise Man (3:13-18):

A. *"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom"* (3:13).

1. Solomon wrote, *"Who is as the wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face to shine, and the hardness of his face is changed"* (8:1). Solomon identified a wise man as he who is bothered by sin (Eccl. 7:4, 19-20), patient in adversity (Eccl. 7:8, 14), not soon angry (Eccl. 7:9), obeys the civil authorities (Eccl. 8:2), directs his paths in the way of righteousness (Eccl. 10:2), and is able to interpret divine inspiration (Eccl. 8:1).
2. Love (Jn. 14:15), faith (Jn. 3:36; Heb. 11:1ff), and the fear of God (Rev. 14:17 comp. to John 15:5-10) are all made manifest by the obedient actions of a man. Likewise **wisdom** is made manifest in a man's words and actions. Those who are wise (i.e., bothered by sin, patient, not angry, obedient to civil authorities, walks in righteousness, and able to interpret divine revelation in a truthful manner) will manifest this wisdom in these *"works."* Everything that a man does or says makes manifest the inner heart (see Matt. 7:20) (see study # 30; By their Fruit you shall know Them).
3. This wise man is further identified as *"meek"* (*prautes*) = "meek, gentle, kind, forgiving" (Moulton 340). "Mild, soft, gentle, meek" (LS 666). "Showing patience and humility; gentle" (AHD 782). The scriptures reveal Moses to be one of the meekest men upon the earth (see Numb. 12:3). Jesus is also said to be a meek man (Matt. 11:29). Jesus tells us that the meek shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). The Christian's prescribed being seems to be summed up in the word meek. Said people know they are sinners, are humbled by the human experience, and are thereby patient with all who strive against Satan.
4. Though many in James' day desired to be wise teachers his admonition is to not let many so be and those who are must show forth their wisdom in all areas of their lives.

B. *"But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth"* (3:14).

1. To have bitter *"jealousy"* (*zelos*) = "jealousy, envy, malice" (Moulton 181). The word *"faction"* (*eritheia*) = "to serve a party, party spirit, contentious disposition" (Moulton 166). There were apparently men of James' day that desired to be teachers; however, they were not qualified due to their purpose and content of teaching. These men sought to be teachers because they were envious of other teachers and so desired their own following.
2. Here were people who sought glory among men and did not care if they lied against the truth (i.e., preached error) to obtain this following. Truth was not lodged within their heart but rather jealousy and faction. Here too we find that a jealous and factious spirit is made manifest by one's words and actions. While someone may claim that they are not jealous nor factious their actions may betray them (see study # 30). This reminds us of the current controversy over false teachers. Let us learn the lesson now. A false teacher is identified as such by his words and actions. Though he (or others who try to protect him) may deny being a false teachers we can certainly know him by his fruits he manifest in public (see study # 31; Who is a False Teacher?).

C. *"This wisdom is not a wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish"* (3:15).

1. Wisdom (i.e., those bothered by sin, patient, not quickly angered, obedient to civil authorities, interpret truth in its divine simplicity, and direct their paths in righteousness) is that which come from “*above*” (i.e., it is heavenly and the results of one having received with meekness divinely inspired truth).
 2. The jealous, factious, and vainglorious spirit is not divinely inspired but rather “*earthly, sensual, and devilish*.” Teachers who mutilate truth, exercise a spirit of jealousy, and maintain a party spirit do so not through the will of God but through their own selfish ambitions. Said approach to truth is “*earthly*” (*epigeios*) = “earthly, low, groveling (to give oneself over to base pleasures)” (Moulton 155) (see Col. 3:1-4; II Cor. 6:16-18). Said attitude is “*sensual*” (*psuchikos*) = “occupied with mere animal things, animal, sensual” (Moulton 443). Both Jude and Peter use this Greek word to describe false teachers who recklessly handle the word of God (see II Pet. 2:12; Jude 10, 19). Thirdly, James depicts teachers whose attitudes are filled with jealousy and faction as being “*devilish*” (*daimoniodes*) = “pertaining to or proceeding from demons” (Moulton 84).
- D. “*For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed*” (3:16).
1. Jealousy and the party spirit do not coincide with divinely ordained godly living. To seek out a following from man for one’s own selfish ambition is indeed to cause “*confusion and every vile deed*.”
 2. “*Confusion*” (*akatastasia*) = “instability; hence, an unsettled state; disorder, commotion, tumult, sedition” (Moulton 12). The word “*vile*” (*phaulos*) = “sorry, vile, refuse; evil, wicked” (Moulton 423).
 3. When there is confusion and vile deeds being reported within the church we may rest assured that there are jealous and factious men working behind the scenes.
- E. “*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy*” (3:17).
1. Wisdom (i.e., those whose focus is heaven and the maintaining of the purity of truth) has a peculiar character.
 2. James describes the character of wisdom with seven words:
 - a. First, heavenly wisdom is “*pure*” (*hagnos*) = “pure, chaste, modest, innocent, blameless” (Moulton 4). A man who lives a blameless life is indeed pure. If fault is found in my life by some loving brother then I need not get angry but rather study out the issue and plead with God for forgiveness that I may be blameless and pure in his sight.
 - b. Secondly, wisdom is “*peaceable*” (*eirenikos*) = “pertaining to peace; peaceable, disposed to peace and concord” (Moulton 119). While the jealous and factious seek to divide congregations for selfish desires the wise seek peace and unity through truth.
 - c. Thirdly, wisdom is “*gentle*” (*epieikes*) = “fair, reasonable; gentle, mild, patient” (Moulton 156). While the wicked teacher aggressively pursues confusion to gain a following the wise seek peace and unity through truth by exercising a spirit of patience and mildness about them. Here are men who are not so quick to draw lines and destroy others. The factious false teachers want to spread rumors about elders, talk about how ignorant the preacher is, and do all vile things possible to destroy a church. The wise; however, are mind and peaceable in their approach toward all. The wise are set on letting truth, as opposed to emotions, govern their every move.
 - d. Fourthly, the wise are “*easy to be entreated*” (*eupeithes*) = “easily persuaded, pliant (i.e., flexible, adaptable, yielding readily to influence or domination; compliant) (Moulton 175). The wise are those who do not have to have everything their way. Wise people generally give in to other’s ways of doing things because they see this as something important in their lives. The wise are those who do not see their own lives as of great importance and so let others do many things that make them feel important. The wise do not have this need (i.e., the need to feel important in this life). The wise are able to overcome these types of earthly feelings because they know that their treasures are laid up in heaven. The wise know that in due time they will be exalted (I Pet. 5:6).

- e. Fifthly, the wise are “*full of mercy and good fruits.*” While the wicked participate in a dog eat dog type of world to advance their teachings the wise are merciful (*eleos*) = “pity, mercy, compassion” (Moulton 131). The wicked walk on people and have no remorse while the wise have compassion on those who have taken a hard lump in life. The wise are able to put their self in the shoes of others and feel their pain rather than having a sense of conquering over people. Their “*good fruits*” are found in that they care for those who have needs (see I Jn. 3:17).
 - f. Sixthly, the wise are “*without variance*” (*adiakritos*) = “undistinguishing, impartial” (Moulton 6). The wise do not judge a man by the color of his skin (Gal. 3:27) nor by the clothes and wealth he may have obtained on this earth (James 2:1ff).
 - g. Seventhly, the wise are “*without hypocrisy*” (*anupokritos*) = “unfeigned, real, sincere” (Moulton 34). What you see with the wise is what you get. They have no front that they are trying to put on to impress people they simply are what they are.
- F. “*And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace*” (3:18).
1. Apparently the “*fruit of righteousness*” is a term that is associated with the gospel message. Said fruit is a consequence of a wise approach to truth and teaching it. Hearers who give heed to truth will seek out righteous (i.e., lawful) living. Peace among brethren is obtained not by jealousy and factious parties but rather through truth.
 2. This verse infers that the factious and jealous represent confusion and turmoil. When trouble arises in the church it can always be traced back to someone’s lack of Bible knowledge and attempts to gratify earthly, sensual, and devilish desires. Though the jealous and factious would never admit to such it is exactly what they are doing. Their devilish ways are made manifest by their actions much like faith, love, and fear of God are made manifest by their works.

Chapter 4

I. James identifies the problem and recommends a divinely inspired Solution (4:1-10):

- A. “*Whence come wars and whence come fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members?*” (4:1).
1. While wisdom seeks peace and unity through truth the unwise stir up confusion and vile deeds through a spirit of jealousy and faction (see James 3:16). When jealousy and faction exists within a church there is “*war and fightings*” among members of the body of Christ. Peace cannot possibly exist while factious brethren are among the flock of God’s people. The war and fightings spoken of here may be individual inner warfare that Peter speaks of in I Pet. 2:11; however, it seems that the context demands conflict with others “*among you.*” Peter adds a third part of the equation that equals problems in a church and that is pride (see James 4:6) (see study # 32; Cause and Effects of Church Problems).
 2. James asks his audience the question as to the origin of “*war and fightings.*” Christians wage war and fight against each other when selfish pleasures take the place of duty and truth.
- B. “*Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and covet, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war; ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures*” (4:2-3).
1. James reveals a real live problem among the members of the church. Some were jealous and factious (James 3:16). Their desire was to be a teacher (James 3:1). These jealous and factious members who desired to be teachers had little reverence for truth (James 3:14). Their obvious lustful desire was to have a following. To obtain the level of respect that a teacher of God’s law demanded they were willing to spiritually kill and wage war against fellow Christians.
 2. If their hearts were in the right place (i.e., wise and genuinely concerned about the souls of others) they would have **prayed for wisdom** (see James 1:5). Rather than praying for spiritual necessities these men would either abstain from praying or pray “*amiss*” (*kakos*) = “mean, ugly... in moral sense, bad, evil, wicked” (LS 394). When one’s reason for praying is to obtain things by wicked and evil means God certainly rejects their prayers (see Ps. 66:18; 109:7; Prov.

- 28:9; Isa. 1:11-15; Matt. 6:5-8; 7:7-11; Jn. 9:31). While it may seem shocking that you or I would have the gall to pray in such a fashion the scriptures give examples of people who did just that (see Luke 18:11).
3. When the Christian prays it should be done with truth as its aim and motivation (Ps. 34:15-18; Jn. 16:23-24; Acts 8:22; I Jn. 1:9, 3:3), confident that God will answer (I Jn. 4:14-15) and persistent (Lk. 11:5-13 and 18:1-8). When forgiveness and the physical and spiritual well fare of self and others is replaced with selfish pleasures God will certainly reject such a prayer (see study # 4).
- C. *“Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God”* (4:4).
1. Who and what are *“adulteresses?”* Contextually we find that those who are jealous, factious, cause confusion and war with members of the body of Christ due to their selfish pleasure seeking ways are identified as such. The word *“adulteress”* (*moichos*) = “to be spiritually adulterous, faithless, ungodly” (Moulton 272). The *“adulteress”* is one who is likened unto those in the world (i.e., those who mind the things of the flesh / Rom. 8:1ff; I Tim. 6:9).
 2. James asks these ungodly troublers of the church, *“know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?”* To have friendship with the world is to set one’s mind upon the pleasures this earth has to offer (see Col. 3:1-4). The world loves its own (i.e., those who seek its pleasures) and hates those who do not share such a quest (see I Jn. 3:13). The apostle John warns Christians not to love the world of sin and pleasures (I Jn. 2:15-17) because it is the domain of Satan (I Jn. 4:4). The world James and John speak of is not this physical universe that illustrates the handiwork of Jehovah (see Ps. 19:1) but that which is the realm of Satan. Those who seek out the pleasures of this world make themselves an *“enemy”* and at *“enmity”* with God. The word *“enmity”* (*echthra*) = “discord, feud, alienation, hostile” (Moulton 179). The book of Eccleastes teaches us that God ordains that we enjoy our life and the blessings that accompany our labors (see Eccl. 5:18-19) yet never so much as to forget our spiritual duties and goals (Eccl. 12:13-14).
 3. While the state of being hostile or feuding with God is a terrifying idea there are nonetheless members of the body of Christ who are doing just that.
- D. *“Or think ye that the scripture speaks in vain? Doth the spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying?”* (4:5).
1. The *“scriptures”* are the divinely revealed mind of God to man (see II Pet. 1:20-21). James asks his audience if they believe that the divinely inspired word of God *“speaks in vain?”* To be vain is to be useless and without value. While divine revelation condemns jealousy, faction, confusion, and self seeking pleasures of this world some would reject these warnings as though they were vain instructions (void of value and usefulness).
 2. James asks those who would draw such foolish conclusions that they need to consider *“the spirit which he made to dwell in us.”* Does this spirit *“long unto envying?”* The *“spirit that dwells in us”* is directly connected to the *“scriptures.”* James speaks to the Christians confident that they understand the doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Christians received the Holy Spirit when they obeyed the instructions of righteousness through faith (Gal. 3:2). Paul prayed a fervent prayer in Ephesians 3 in which he asked *“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...”* (Eph. 3:17). Again, the apostle Paul told the Galatians that *“Christ lives in me”* then goes on to explain the how. Christ lived and dwelled in Paul through faith (Cf. Gal. 2:20). If we would but keep the illustration of Eph. 5:18-19, as compared with Col. 3:16, it will be easy to see how the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian. Indwelling occurs by the indwelling of the word of God. When I have truth guiding me I, in effect, am directed by the Holy Spirit.
 3. The Holy Spirit, which dwells within me through truth, does not long after envying. The teachers in James’ day who longed after these positions in the minds of brethren were not being directed by the Holy Spirit of God when they used faction and confusion to attain their worldly goals. Brethren who cause confusion, jealousy and or seek factious methods of moving others are not being directed by the Holy Spirit but by their own selfish desires.

- E. *“But he gives more grace. Wherefore the scripture saith, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble”* (4:6).
1. Rather than instructing man in the ways of envying the Holy Spirit *“gives more grace.”* Grace is clearly identified as man’s redemption and forgiveness of sins at Ephesians 1:7. Grace and envy are thereby diametrically opposed to one another. God will *“resists”* (*antitassomai*) = “to post in adverse array, as an army; to set one’s self in opposition, resist” (Moulton 33) those filled with pride.
 2. Proverbs 3:34 is the scripture referred to here. **Those who are proud are those who seek out means of spiritual service that God has not authorized** (see study # 33; Pride). Said men go in directions that the Holy Spirit does not direct them in. Said course is now identified as being *“proud.”* Pride and being *“humble”* are just as opposed to each other as grace and envy. The humble man seeks to follow God’s directions and is willing to admit when he has gone astray from God’s will (see Ps. 51 all; Isa. 57:15; 66:1-2; Matt. 5:3). The proud man is unwilling to admit wrong and follows his own course in this life. Once again we find that there are character traits that are made manifest by one’s actions. A man may not say, “I am filled with pride,” or “I am humble” but they show these traits by their words and actions. Jesus said, *“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh”* (Lk. 6:45). Again, the Lord said, *“Therefore by their fruits you shall know them”* (Matt. 7:20) (see study # 31 and # 34; Character).
- F. *“Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you”* (4:7).
1. Rather than being subject to self will and pride let the man of God submit to the will of God.
 2. James calls upon Christians to *“resist”* (*anthistemi*) the devil and thereby infers that pride, envy, jealousy, faction, and confusion is of Satan. The word *“resist”* (*anthistemi*) = “to set in opposition, oppose, resist, stand out against” (Moulton 30). These terms cause us to view Satan as our true enemy (see Matt. 13:19). When the child of God resists, sets in opposition, and stands against Satan God promises that he will *“flee from you.”* The Christian is empowered with the blood of Christ and the confidence that comes with knowing of the strength of God. The apostle Paul said, *“If God is for us, who is against us?”* (Rom. 8:31).
- G. *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded”* (4:8).
1. Consider the big picture that James paints in our minds. When the Christian resists the devil he flees from us and when the Christian draws closely to God through subjection to His will then God is close to us. David had once instructed Solomon saying, *“And you, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for Jehovah searches all hearts and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever”* (I Chron. 28:9).
 2. James now gives the remedy to the Christian who has sought after worldly pleasures through jealousy, faction, and confusion. Sometimes it takes strong language to move one unto shame and repentance. James loved the brethren he addressed and thereby spoke to them in such pointed manners. James said, *“Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded.”* The time for humble approach to God for forgiveness and purity had come and was not to be delayed.
- H. *“Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness”* (4:9).
1. There are times to rejoice in the blessings of this life and enjoy them (see Eccl. 5:18-19). There are times to rejoice in our salvation (Phil. 4:4). There are times; however, that the Christian ought to be afflicted, mourn, weep, and filled with a heavy spirit of deep burdens caused by sin (Matt. 5:3-4). Times of affliction and mourning are times when the sin in our lives weigh us down with guilt and shame. Jesus said, *“Woe unto you, ye that laugh now! For ye shall mourn and weep”* (Lk. 6:25).

2. Rather than allowing our selfish ambitions to cause confusion, jealousy, and factions through pride let us submit ourselves to the will of God and fearfully mourn over our wickedness. Only those who are moved to shame through humility shall be lifted back up to glory (see Psalms 51 and Isa. 57:15).

I. *“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you”* (4:10).

1. Pride and humility were set in contrast at James 4:6. God will resist the proud man yet give grace (i.e., redemption) to the humble. The word *“humble”* (*tapeinoo*) = “to exhibit humility (lack of pride, marked by meekness or modesty in behavior, attitude, or spirit... showing deferential or submissive respect) and contrition (repentant for one’s sins or inadequacies; remorse for wrongdoing; repentance)” (Moulton 397) (see study # 35; God’s Approved Character)... “humble [rid oneself of pride and be lowly in spirit; i.e., do not think highly of self... know your place as a forgiven sinner]... to make lowly” (LS 792).
2. James defines the characteristic of being humble as being subject to God, resisting the devil, drawing nigh to God, cleansing your hands, purifying your hearts, being afflicted, mourning, weeping, and being heavy of spirit (James 4:6-10). You’ve heard of eating humble pie but how about the humble sandwich of James 4:6-10? James 4:6 mentions the concept of a humble disposition. James then defines that humility from 4:7-9 and ends at verse 10 with the word again (i.e., the humble sandwich of James 4:6-10) (see study # 37; Bible Humility).
3. Note that James said, *“and he shall exalt you.”* To be *“exalted”* (*hupsoo*) = “to raise aloft, lift up... to elevate, uplift, exalt [to raise in rank, character or status; elevate... to glorify {to give glory, honor, or high praise to; exalt / AHD 562}; praise; honor / AHD 471] (Moulton 421). While the state of humility is marked by lowliness, shame, and remorse for wrongdoing exalting is the lifting up of one. The apostle Peter made a very similar statement at I Peter 5:6 saying, *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”* Herein is an interesting thought. While in the flesh man is not to participate in prideful boasting of oneself that others may glorify them. The Christian is to rather mourn over their wickedness. Many are glorified in our society today (i.e., movie stars and sports figures who set world records). The Christian WILL receive such glory when in heaven (now is not the time to receive glory from others). Those who die in faith shall be exalted to a high rank in that they will be praised, honored, and exalted for their victory over Satan (I Jn. 4:4). Jesus said, *“And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted”* (Matt. 23:12). God will have the final say in man’s exaltation or eternal humiliation (see study # 38; The Christian’s Exaltation).

II. **Instructions and Various Admonitions (4:11-17):**

A. *“Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law: but if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. One only is the lawgiver and judge, even he who is able to save and to destroy: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbor”* (4:11-12).

1. James had dealt thoroughly with the misuse of the tongue in the area of teaching error and for the wrong reasons. He now deals with another misuse of the tongue and that is **gossip**. To *“speak against”* (*katalaleo*) = “to blab out; to speak against, calumniate (to make malicious false statements about another)” (Moulton 217)...“evil report, slander (“the utterance of defamatory statements injurious to the reputation or well-being of a person” [AHD 1148])” (LS 409). The apostle Peter warns against participating in gossip style language at I Pet. 2:1-2. Words that have as their objective the destruction of its object is judging at its worse level (cf. Proverbs 18:8; 26:22; Titus 2:3) (see study # 36; Gossip).
2. James warns against *“judging”* (*krino*) a brother. The word *“krino”* = “to assume censorial power over, to call to account” (Moulton 241). Liddell and Scott define the word as, “to separate, distinguish, to pick out... to determine to do a thing, to bring to trial, accuse... to pass sentence upon, to condemn” (450-451). Thayer says that it is an “unfair judgment of others... finding fault” (Thayer 361). James seems to be considering the man who would draw conclusions about a brother due to the malicious statements of others. Rather than allowing the perfect Law of liberty to judge a man as right or wrong we have allowed hearsay and opinions

to be our standard by which we judge (see study # 39; The Standard of Truth). To put one's self in the place of a judge when hearing defamatory remarks about another without seeking out facts is to set one's self up as God. We cannot read man's mind and neither do we have the authority to condemn men to hell. James states that there is only one lawgiver and that certainly is not me or you. Paul told the Thessalonians that when a false teacher began teaching things contrary to God's law he sets himself up as God and a law giver. Such a one is of the spirit of the sons of perdition (see II Thess. 2:1ff) (see study # 31). Brethren, when someone approaches you and tells you of the erroneous behavior of another do not be so eager to take up that morsel of garbage and eat it. Sometimes we form opinions of people because they do not share the same interest that we do. Sometimes we may be guilty of having derogatory feelings toward brethren because of our differences in hobbies and so forth. When someone comes to us and speaks evil of these brethren, if we are not careful, we may feed and be filled before considering their souls. Solomon wrote, "*The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels, And they go down into the innermost parts*" (Prov. 18:8). Let us judge a man not by the standards of personal opinion but by divine revelation (see Jn. 7:24) (see study # 40; Bible Judging).

- B. "*Come now, ye that say, Today or to-morrow we will go into this city; and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away*" (4:13-14).
1. James reveals another problem among the members of the body of Christ he is addressing. James says you have teachers teaching faith only because of a jealous and factious spirit. You have members that are fighting and arguing with one another because of pride. You have brethren who were judging one another because of gossip. Now James states that some have left out God in all their plans. Sometimes Christians make grand plans for the future yet never consider God in their lives. James sharply states, "*whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.*" We are often an optimistic people who think the very best for tomorrow yet James tells us we do not have knowledge of the events in the future. Solomon wrote, "*For who knows what is good for man in his life, all the days of his vain life which he spends as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?*" (Eccl. 6:12). Again, Solomon wrote, "*Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*" (Prov. 27:1).
 2. No one can tell the future. For all we know death may be awaiting the next day. Our lives are too short to leave out God. Our time on this earth is like a vapor that appears for a time and then quickly disappears (see also Job 7:6-10). Life is too short and eternity too long to leave God out of one's life plans.
- C. "*For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that. But now ye glory in your vauntings: all such glorying is evil. To him therefore that knows to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*" (4:15-17).
1. When Paul contemplated future events he said, "*if God will...*" (see Acts 18:18-21). James tells us that this ought to be the Christian's mindset. It is clear that plans for future events are not sinful it is the leaving of God out of those plans that is sinful. Such contemplation, on the part of the Christian, to do this or that for gain without considering God's timetable and plans is to "*glory in your vauntings*" and "*all such glorying is evil.*" Such thoughts by Christians are evil because they do not take into consideration God and eternity. When I leave God out of my life plans I am making it evident that my mind is not set on eternity but rather upon the things of this passing world (see I Jn. 2:17). The perfect mindset is the mind that is always looking toward heaven (see Phil. 3:15; James 1:2-4)
 2. James concludes saying, "*To him therefore that knows to do good and does it not to him it is sin.*" One who has heard the Law of God and obtained faith (Rom. 10:17) and the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:2) stands without excuse for teaching error, being jealous, causing a faction to arise, fighting with brethren, exercising a spirit of pride, gossiping about others, and completely leaving God out of one's future life plans. Such a one sins.
 3. Question: Does the statement, "*To him therefore that knows to do good and does it not to him it is sin*" mean that if I do not know truth on any given matter of law that my participation in it

does not equate to sin? If I do not know that one of the sins of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21 (example, drunkenness) is sinful am I excused from God's judgment? The answer to this question must consider two things. First, one must know that God's word (not man's knowledge of good and evil) will be the final standard that man is judged by (see Jn. 12:48; Col. 2:23). If man's conscience, understanding, and opinions are the standards for judgments then man's spirituality is reduced to nothing more than pluralistic religion (i.e., whatever one perceives to be truth will be truth for that individual). Secondly, let us all understand that there is but one law and one law giver (Eph. 4:1ff). If man's individual conscience of what is right and wrong will be the standard he is judged by then the word of God is truly of none effect. The Word of God is clear on the matter. Truth stands alone as man's standard (Dan. 5:27; Hos. 5:10-11; Amos 7:7-8; Matt. 7:21-24; Eph. 2:20; 4:1ff). The Bible is a book of facts. The fact is that man is under law (i.e., the law of faith [Rom. 3:27]; Law of Christ [Gal. 6:2], perfect law of liberty [James 1:25], and royal law [James 2:8]). If law did not exist there would be no such thing as sin (see Rom. 4:15; 5:13). We know that sin exists in man's life (Rom. 3:23; I Jn. 1:10) and that all sin is a violation of God's laws (I Jn. 3:4). The Word of God states that those who continue in their sin will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21) (see study # 39 and # 41 Bible Conscience).

Chapter 5

I. Admonition to the Rich (5:1-6):

- A. *"Come now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days" (5:1-3).*
1. Jesus said, *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21).* A story is told of a rich man named David, an owner of a beautiful mansion, giving a friend a tour. David directed the attention of his visitor to valuable pictures and other articles of treasure, expecting to be praised for his taste; but the moralist said, "Ah, David, these are the things that make death terrible!" (unknown source).
 2. The word *"treasure"* (*thesaurus*) = "To collect and lay up stores or wealth, treasure up" (Moulton 195). Jesus compares and contrasts two treasures. **First**, there is the treasure of the world. The treasure of the world is subject to moth, rust, and thieves. Said treasure has a fixed life and then it is gone forever. **Secondly** is the heavenly treasure. Heavenly treasure is eternal and thereby is not affected by moth, rust, or thieves. Jesus makes a penetrating statement regarding the heart of man by saying, *"where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also."* The human mind (Bible heart) is the storehouse, bank or treasury. The mind that is set on accumulating the world's goods will receive the temporal reward. The mind that is set on accumulating spiritual treasures shall have an eternal reward. The heart acceptable to God is he who mines the scriptures for wisdom (Eph. 2:1-5). The heart that truly says, *"thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors"* (Psalms 119:24) is a mind interested in eternity. Once again James is addressing one's approach to life. The Christian is to have the "perfect" mindset (Phil. 3:15; James 1:2-4; 4:15-17). The perfect mind is the mind bent on making it to heaven (see study # 42; The Perfect Mind).
 3. Question: is it sinful to have a house, car, savings account, retirement fund, etc. Jesus is not saying that it is sinful to have things but rather He is examining where the true treasure of man's heart is. Consider two passages that cause us to understand that riches are not sinful it is rather one's approach to those riches:
 - a. *"And Jesus said unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go*

- through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*" (Matt. 19:23-24). Mark tells us that the rich man under consideration is the one who *"trust in riches"* (Mk. 10:24). To *"trust"* (*peitho*) = "to trust, rely on, have confidence in a person or thing" (LS 615). What ever way one desires to examine the proverb, *"A camel going through the eye of a needle,"* one will conclude that the task is impossible. Those who put their trust or confidence in riches (or anything else) rather than God will not enter into heaven.
- b. The apostle Paul said, *"Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed"* (I Tim. 6:17-19).
 - c. These two passages clearly illustrate that being rich is not the problem under consideration. The issue under discussion is rather the mind that desires the riches of this life rather than desiring the eternal riches of heaven.
4. Again, Solomon wrote, *"He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loves abundance, with increase: this also is vanity"* (Eccl. 5:10). Here the Preacher helps us distinguish between right and wrong when it comes to having things in this life. To *"love"* silver and to *"love"* abundance is to err. It is referred to as *"vanity."* Man's love ought to be directed at God by keeping His commandments in fear (see Jn. 14:15). There is nothing wrong with having possessions; however, if my love, confidence, and hope are placed therein I am going to be seriously disappointed in eternity. The apostle Paul would later write, *"But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows"* (I Tim. 6:10) (see study # 43; Admonition to the Rich).
 5. Some have pressed the material issue so far as to avoid working, saving for the future, and then relying on the government, through unemployment benefits, and other brethren for sustenance. Let all know that God no where commends the man that will not work and provide earthly goods for his family (see Eccl. 2:21; 4:5-6; 9:10; 10:18). Solomon wrote, *"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good"* (Eccl. 11:6).
 6. James and Jesus' clear message is that one whose purpose in this life is to gain more and more of this worlds goods rather than storing up spiritual treasures of knowledge and wisdom will gain their immediate reward (i.e., riches, fun, weight loss and comfort). There is nothing wrong with having the goods of this world; however, when the treasures of this world take precedence in my life I need to do some re-prioritizing. No one can take away my heavenly home; however, earthly goods can be stolen and consumed due to their temporal nature.
- B.** *"Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, cries out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth"* (5:4).
1. James has called upon those who have set their minds on the riches of this world to weep and howl because the misery of eternal judgment comes upon them (I hope you have enjoyed the short time of riches and dainty foods because the eternal time of suffering comes).
 2. The word *"fraud"* (*apostereo*) = "to be unjustly withheld" (Moulton 47). Some rich were so heartless that they kept back payments from their laborers that they may be even richer. God condemns such behavior in both the Old (Lev. 19:13; Jer. 22:13; Mal. 3:5) and the New Testaments (Col. 3:22-25; 4:1). Let us recall that Able's blood cried out to God from the grave and so the cries of those taken advantage by the rich cries out. God hears!
 3. The term, *"Lord of Sabaoth"* is found one other time in the New Testament. Paul had said, *"And, as Isaiah hath said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We had become as Sodom, and had been made like unto Gomorrah"* (Rom. 9:29 from Isaiah 1:9). The thought is that God is the Lord of all nations and thereby all powerful.

- C. *“Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter”* (5:5).
1. To live *“delicately”* (*truphao*) = “to live delicately and luxuriously” (Moulton 410). Delicate living has to do with fulfilling the fleshly desires of pleasure. The rich who have little to no concern about eternity seek to fulfill their inner desires with luxury and comfort in the here and now. Jesus had warned, *“But take heed to yourselves, lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare: for so shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of the earth”* (Lk. 21:34-35).
 2. Like a cow that is fattened for the slaughter so the rich fill themselves with the dainties of this life and are fattened for the Day of Judgment when God will condemn them to everlasting punishment (see Amos 6:1-6).
- D. *“Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous one; he doth not resist you”* (5:6).
1. The rich, who have no thought of eternity in heaven, *“condemn”* (*katadikazo*) and *“killed the righteous one.”* The word *katadikazo* = “to give judgment against” (Moulton 215). Those who are mindful of the things of this world rather than heaven condemn and kill Jesus in that they stand opposed to him.
 2. While Christ’s standards are opposed the Lord does not *“resists”* the ungodly. To *“resists”* (*antitassomai*) = “to be averse (i.e, having feelings of great distaste... intense dislike) (Moulton 33). The apostle Peter said of Jesus, *“Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judges righteously”* (I Pet. 2:23). Though Jesus is treated with disdain by the worldly He continues to be patient and loving toward them (see II Pet. 3:9).

II. Admonition to be Patient in light of the sure Coming of Jesus (5:7-11):

- A. *“Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain”* (5:7).
1. James now exhorts Christians, in light of some suffering at the hands of wicked rich men (James 5:1-6), to be *“patient until the coming of the Lord.”* James had admonished the suffering Christians of chapter 1:2-4 to develop *“patience”* (*hupomone*) i.e., endurance and perseverance in the face of intense trials of life. The Greek word now used for *“patience”* is *makrothumeo* which means “to wait with patient expectation” (Moulton 256). The exact Greek word is also found at Hebrews 6:15 where the author states, *“For when God made promise to Abraham, since he could swear by none greater, he sware by himself, saying, surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise”* (Heb. 6:13-15). Abraham’s hope was in God and so he desired and expected to receive the promises of God. Abraham believed in God’s promises, he patiently waited, and was eventually blessed with a son. Likewise, the Christian today ought to evidence their desire and expectation to receive God’s promises by living patiently (i.e., wait patiently with the expectation of receiving the *“crown of life”* [see James 1:12]).
 2. As the farmer hopes and expects the rains to come in their season so that his crops may produce the desired fruit even so must the Christian patiently await the promises of God. Those promises are sure. Though our lives may be difficult we must wait out these days knowing that the Lord comes. The Christian is depicted as confident in the face of trials (see study # 1).
- B. *“Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord is at hand”* (5:8).
1. Christians are to patiently await the promise of the coming of Jesus and the reception of their crown of life. The apostle Peter said that it comes in *“due time”* (see I Pet. 5:4-6). Endurance is the character trait encouraged here (see study # 1). We ought not to let any man or event cause us to give up our hope of receiving the crown of life that will occur at *“the coming of the Lord”* which *“is at hand.”* There are over 300 references to the coming of Jesus in the New Testament. The author of Hebrews writes, *“So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation”* (Heb. 9:28). Note that the Lord’s coming is *“at hand.”* Not that Jesus was about to come any second but so sure is it that he comes that it is referred to as *“at hand.”* Actually no man knows when that day will be (see Matt. 24:36ff). Jesus will come at an unexpected time

- and thereby those who have been patiently waiting for him will be doing what they always do; i.e., living faithfully (see II Pet. 3:8ff) (see study # 44; The Second Coming of Jesus).
2. Notice also that James admonishes the Christians to “*establish your hearts*” because the Lord comes again. To “*establish*” (*sterizo*) = “to set fast; to set in a certain position or direction... to render mentally steadfast, to stand immovable, to be mentally settled” (Moulton 204). The Bible heart of man is his ability to reason (Mk. 2:8), think (Prov. 23:7), understand things (Matt. 13:15), and purpose within one’s self (II Cor. 9:7). Christians ought to purpose within to stand immovable in the face of “*manifold trials*” of this life (see James 1:2). Herein is the perfect mind. The mind that desires heaven above any earthly glory or riches! (see study # 42; The Perfect Mind).
- C. “*Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the judge stands before the doors*” (5:9).
1. The word “*murmur*” (*stenazo*) = “to groan or moan, sigh deeply” (LS 744)... “to give vent to querulous or censorious feelings” (Moulton 375). Those who do not exercise patience (i.e., resist pressure with endurance knowing that Christ is coming soon) will face God’s judgment.
 2. Sometimes people get frustrated with others because of the trials they are facing. We may take out our frustrations that are brought on by hardships upon those we should be showing love and gentleness to. James states, “*behold, the judge stands before the doors.*” The Lord is depicted as the judge who stands before the door of eternity. Man’s actions here on this earth will determine what door he enters. There is a door that leads to eternal damnation and a door that leads to eternal glory with God.
 3. Sometimes we get frustrated by the attempts of the wicked to discredit and treat us as idiots because we believe in God. No doubt a poor brother who had his wages withheld by the rich would be frustrated. Let us ever keep the cross in view as we undergo hardships in this life. Jesus never returned sinful actions of anger for the anger that was pored out on him (see I Pet. 2:18-19).
- D. “*Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord*” (5:10).
1. The ability to endure the fiery trials of life ought to be accomplished because eternity is at stake. The right thinking brother (the perfect mind) is one who is bent on going to heaven. James calls upon his audience to consider the great example that was set by the prophets of old time. The prophets often suffered much yet they remained faithful due to God’s promises (see Matt. 5:12; Acts 7:52; Heb. 11:32-40). One suffering prophet that comes to mind was Jeremiah during the days of the wicked king Zedekiah:
 - a. He was **plotted against** by his own home town (Jer. 11:18ff) and those of Judah in general (Jer. 18:18).
 - b. Jeremiah was **rejected** by those of his own house (Jer. 12:6).
 - c. **Beaten** by the elders and chief priests (Jer. 20:1-2; 35:15).
 - d. Captured and **sentenced to death** for his depressing words (Jer. 26:8ff).
 - e. Thrown in **prison** (Jer. 32:1-5; 37:15).
 - f. His message was one of doom that irritated the princes of Judah and moving them to capture and **toss him into a miry pit** (Jer. 38:1-6).
 - g. Latter, many in Israel would look to Jeremiah as a **false teacher** (Jer. 43:1-3).
 2. Jeremiah and many other prophets were treated like criminals for “*speaking in the name of the Lord.*” The apostle Peter tells us that these men were “*moved by the Holy Spirit*” to speak words of divine revelation (II Pet. 1:21). To be “*moved*” (*phero*) = “to produce, bring forward, cite... to bring one word, to tell, announce” (LS 858). While these prophets announced truth they were persecuted and so it will be with the godly man today (see Jn. 15:17ff). Divine revelation cuts deep into a man’s soul and exposes his sin (see Heb. 4:12). Let us all teach and patiently endure the consequences from sinful men (see I Thess. 3:1-3). Consider the prophets who endured and many Christians as well (see Heb. 10:32-39). May the Lord strengthen us through His word that we may never give up our hope of eternity in glory (see I Pet. 4:12-19)!

- E. *“Behold, we call them blessed that endured: ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful”* (5:11).
1. To be *“blessed”* (*makarizo*) = “to pronounce happy, felicitate [made happy]” (Moulton 256). These enduring prophets and people of God who have gone on before us are pronounced happy in that they have nothing but the promises of God to look forward to in eternity. So much sorrow upon the earth brings even greater joys into eternity.
 2. One man who experienced sorrows above measure is Job. Job lost property and even his children. Job did not; however, curse God, blame his wife, or get angry with his friends because of his hardships (see Job 1:20-22; 2:9-10).
 3. The *“end of the Lord”* is the fact that His objective is to exercise pity and mercy upon those who suffer. The Lord’s comforting words are discovered in the promise of his coming again and bringing his saints home to glory (see I Thess. 4:13-18).

III. The Value of Prayer (5:12-20):

- A. *“But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; that ye fall not under judgment”* (5:12).
1. To *“swear”* (*omnuo*) = “to promise with an oath (a solemn, formal declaration or promise to fulfill a pledge, often calling upon God or a god as witness – AHD 856)” (Moulton 287). We hear people today say, “I swear to God I will do such and such...” or “I swear by heaven and earth that I am telling you the truth...” Jesus had instructed his disciples to not swear by heaven, earth, by Jerusalem, and neither by thy head during the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:34-36). Why are such statements condemned by God (see study # 45; Oaths)?
 2. Jesus said, *“But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one”* (Matt. 5:37). A man’s *“speech”* (*logos*) = “the word or that by which the inward thought is expressed... that which is said or spoken... words, i.e., language” (LS 477). The Christian’s spoken words, in relation to accomplishing confidence in others, should be either yes or no rather than, “I swear it is so...” But again we ask, “Why?”
 3. Jesus said that when one swears (i.e., makes a promise to others by calling God, heaven, earth, etc. to witness) it is *“of the evil one.”* James said that such language brings one, *“under judgment.”* While the Mosaic Law commended oaths by the name of God (see Lev. 19:12; Numb. 30:2; Deut. 23:21) the Law of Christ condemns such use of speech. The death of Jesus ended many of the Mosaic laws (see Col. 2:14). There were to be no more sacrificing of animals (cf. Heb. 10:1-2) and neither do we find instruments of music in worship (Eph. 5:19). While some sins, such as adultery, were carried in to NT law others were left out. The authoritative teaching of Christ was that when a man gave his word in NT times it should be truth and nothing but the truth. Seeing that divine revelation was completed and all truth made available to man there is no need for swearing (see James 1:25). Christians ought to always live in such a way that reflects that complete divine revelation and truth. When the Christian, whose life is governed by truth and a hope of heaven, tells someone that a matter is so, said statement will need no accompanying oath. Christians can be trusted by their word and their word alone!
- B. *“Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise”* (5:13).
1. James encourages the suffering Christians by admonishing them to pray when they are experiencing times of *“suffering.”* Their suffering may be in the form of physical abuse or mental anguish. Whatever the cause of their suffering they ought to pray to God. Paul is a good example of this instruction. When he suffered due to the thorn in his side he prayed fervently to the Lord to remove it. Though the Lord did not remove it he none-the-less found comfort in God’s judgments (II Cor. 12:7-10) (see study # 4).
 2. Furthermore, James instructs Christians who find themselves on the other end of the spectrum. These Christians are not suffering physical or emotional maladies at all. James instructs these fortunate brethren to *“sing praises.”* We ought to be thankful to God when things are going well in our lives (see study # 46; Give God Thanks).

- C. *“Is any 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: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him”* (5:14-15).
1. The word “*sick*” (*astheneo*) = “to be weak in faith, to doubt, hesitate, be unsettled, timid [Rom. 14:1; I Cor. 8:9, 11, 12; II Cor. 11:29]; to be afflicted, distressed, needy [Acts 20:35; II Cor. 12:10; 13:4, 9], to be sick (physically) [Matt. 25:36]” (Moulton 55). The Greek word *astheneo* is used in various contexts to mean various things regarding one being weak. The context of James suggests that **spiritual weakness** is under consideration. Here is one who is sin sick.
 2. Elders in the church can help such an individual through anointing with oil and prayer. However you want to view the idea of anointing with oil and prayer it obviously equates to the “*prayer of faith that shall save him that is sick.*” When a man is struggling with a sin in his life to the point that he confesses and recognizes his weaknesses to the elders he is obviously giving effort to do better in life. Said individual has made request for help not only from the elders of the church but more importantly from God. James tells us that such a submissive attitude displayed on the part of the sinner leads one to receive forgiveness. Time and time again we find the scriptures simply pointing out that God wants our humble effort in serving Him (see study # 37; Bible Humility).
- D. *“Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed, the supplication of a righteous man avails much in its working”* (5:16).
1. When one “*confesses*” sin they have acknowledged their error. Herein is the manifest attitude of one who is meek, humble, and lowly in this life. One who voluntarily subjects themselves to the law of God. The Lord thoroughly drove this point home in the OT by the teaching of the prophets (Lev. 26:40; Ezra 10:11). When I sin against someone else I ought to have the humility and love to confess that sin. God forbid that another would have to come to me and say, “Why have you sinned against me... when will you repent of this thy wickedness?” Let us all swallow our pride and admit when we are wrong.
 2. The “*healing*” under consideration is not of physical wounds but rather wounds caused by one’s sin. The context of these verses thereby suggests that sin, rather than physical sickness, is under consideration at James 5:14ff.
 3. Said healing infers that when one sins he is spiritually sick (see I Cor. 11:30). The prayers of the righteous; however, “*avails much in its working.*” God certainly hears the prayers of the righteous and will perform their desires in relation to forgiven man of their sins (Ps. 66:18; 109:7; Prov. 28:9; Isa. 1:11-15; Matt. 6:5-8; 7:7-11; Jn. 9:31). We ought to thereby pray for the forgiveness of one another’s sins (see I Jn. 5:14-17).
- E. *“Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit”* (5:17-18).
1. James now uses an example from the OT to illustrate the effective power of prayer. The story of Elijah is found at I Kings 17-19. Elijah came on the scene when wickedness had reached its peak through idolatry and a wicked king in Israel named Ahab (see I Kings 16:29ff). Elijah was no different than you or me in that he struggled with sin and hardships of this life. Yet one thing that separated Elijah from many others was that he continued to press forward though he was weak in the flesh at times. Elijah saw the reality of God and the Lord wanted to instill that attitude in all Israel. To remedy the faithless hearts of Israel the prophet of God prayed that it would not rain for three years and six months. Jehovah’s purpose to save Israel was achieved through Elijah’s prayer of faith. When Elijah prayed again and it rained (in addition to the contest on Carmel) the people once again cast off their idolatry and put their faith in Jehovah.
 2. James’ point is that when godly men pray for godly purposes the Lord certainly hears.
- F. *“My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converts a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins”* (5:19-20).
1. Forgiveness of one’s sins through a spirit of humble confession and desire to do what is right seems to be the underlying theme of the book of James. Said approach to life is the perfect one

(see James 1:2-4; 4:15-17; 5:8 and Phil. 3:15). Those who have the perfect outlook in life will do all within their power to turn their own self and sinners from the course of eternal destruction (see study # 42).

2. To promote such an outlook in life is not only love defined but also the manifest expression of wisdom (see James 3:13). Those who lack such a divine approach to life are admonished to pray that such a mind would be developed before it is everlasting too late (see James 1:5).