

I. General Introduction

Life Application Bible Commentary –James:

In this epistle James addresses practical issues that are as current as this morning's newspaper, and yet his challenges are not dated. The timeless truth that James presents is that Christians must put their faith into action. The faith that Christians claim must be demonstrated in all the situations and circumstances of life—at work, at home, in the neighborhood, in church. Trials and hardships are not to be seen as hindrances to faith, but as opportunities to exercise healthy faith. Knowing God's Word is not enough. That knowledge must be applied to our everyday lives. Real faith is the application of God's truth to ourselves.

Small book tucked at the end of the New Testament.

Only 108 verses—

Can be comfortably read in 15 minutes.

I venture a guess that very few of us have ever read it through at one sitting.

We miss quite a blessing.

James is a book that is intensely practical.

Like a "string of beautiful pearls", James strings one subject after another.

The book is an intense call for Christians to put their faith into action.

The faith James urges us to is to be demonstrated in all situations and circumstances of life— at work, at home, in the neighborhood and in church.

James is known as a "general" or "catholic" epistle, along with 1-2 Peter, 1-2-3 John and Jude.

—Universal writings to church at large.

"First" of the general epistles.

Douglas J. Moo, writing in *The Tyndale New Testament Commentary* (James) says:

The Bible is being translated, commented on, read, studied, preached and analysed as never before. But it is questionable whether it is being obeyed to a comparable degree.

All this suggests that the message of James is one that we all need to hear—and obey. No profound theologian, James' genius lies in his profound moral earnestness; in his powerfully simple call for repentance, for action, for a consistent Christian lifestyle. His words need to thrust through our theological debates, our personal preconceptions, our spiritual malaise and set us back on the road to a biblical, invigorating, transforming Christianity.

Author: Probably James the brother of our Lord.

James is the English form of Jacob / named after the great forefather of Israel.

Known as "James the Just"

"Camel Knees" (from much time in prayer)

Relationship to Christ disputed by scholars.

3 main possibilities:

1. Cousins of Christ— Catholic Church does not believe Mary and Joseph had sexual relations (perpetual virginity of Mary), so it calls the brothers "cousins".

Theory known as "hieronymian".

2. Half Brothers of Christ— (Joseph's children by a previous marriage).

Theory known as "epiphonian".

3. Children of Joseph and Mary (Full blood brothers through Mary)

Matt. 13:55... *"Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?"*¹

Mark 6:3... *"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.*²

Theory known as "helvidian".

According to 1 Cor. 15, verse 7, the Lord appeared to James after the resurrection. It was apparently at that time he was converted.

John 7:5 tells us that Jesus' brothers did not believe in him.

James was head of the Jerusalem church.

He presided over the Jerusalem council in Acts 15:13.

James said, *"Brethren, listen to me."*³

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Five men named James in N.T.

1. James the Son of Zebedee

One of the twelve apostles, James / Father fishermen— owned business, had men employed.

Mother / Salome, often cared for Jesus' needs.

Matt. 27:56...Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.¹

Mark 15:40-41 ...⁴⁰ There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome.²

⁴¹ When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.³

Brother of John.

Never mentioned apart from John.

Always listed first, probably older (James / John). James killed by Herod Agrippa I, Herod the Great's grandson. Appo. AD 42-44, first of 12 apostles to be put to death. Only one whose martyrdom mentioned in N.T.

Acts 12:2...And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.⁴

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁴The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

James and John— rash / spirited / headstrong.

Mark 3:17...*and James, the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, "Sons of Thunder");*¹

Jesus nicknamed them "Sons of Thunder".

In Luke 9:51-56, they asked Jesus to call down fire on Samaritans who refused to accept Jesus.

51 *When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;*
 52 *and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.*
 53 *But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem.*
 54 *When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"*
 55 *But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "**You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;***
 56 *for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."]* And they went on to another village.²

They asked to be seated on Jesus right and left hand in glory.

Matt. 20:20-28...*20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him.*

21 *And He said to her, "**What do you wish?**" She *said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left."*
 22 *But Jesus answered, "**You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?**" They *said to Him, "We are able."*
 23 *He *said to them, "**My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.**"*
 24 *And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers.*

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

25 *But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.*

26 *"It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,*

27 *and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;*

28 *just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*¹

Mark 10:35-45...35 *James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, *came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You."*

36 *And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?"*

37 *They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory."*

38 *But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"*

39 *They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.*

40 *"But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."*

41 *Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John.*

42 *Calling them to Himself, Jesus *said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them.*

43 *"But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant;*

44 *and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.*

45 *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*²

James was one of the 3 (Peter, James and John) who were Jesus' most intimate companions.

These three saw:

- The healing of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37)
- The transfiguration (Mark 9:2)
- The agony in Gethsemane (Mark 14:33)

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

2. James the Son of Alphaeus

Also one of the 12 apostles.

Always listed in 9th position (Matt. 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:15, Acts 1:13)

Matt. 10:3... *Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus...1*

Mark 3:18... *and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot...2*

Luke 6:15... *and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot...3*

Acts 1:13...*When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.4*

3. James the Less

Son of Mary (Not Lord's mother)

Brother of Joses (Matt. 27:56, Mark 16:1, Luke 24:10)

1The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

2The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

3The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

4The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Matt. 27:56...*Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.*¹

Mark 16:1... *When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him.*²

Luke 24:10...¹⁰ *Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.*³

Mark 15:40 calls him "James the Less".

Greek "mikros" = small or less, could mean James the (smaller in size) or James the (less well-known).

4. James the father of Judas

Listed in Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13...

Luke 6:16...*Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.*⁴

Acts 1:13... *When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.*⁵

Father of Judas

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁴The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁵The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

One of the 12 apostles,
Listed next to last, before Judas Iscariot.

<u>Mark 3</u>	<u>Luke 6</u>	<u>Matt 10:3</u>	<u>Acts 1:13</u>
Simon	Simon	Simon	Simon
James	Andrew	Andrew	James
John	James	James	John
Andrew	John	John	Andrew
Phillip	Phillip	Phillip	Phillip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Matthew	Matthew	Thomas	Bartholomew
Thomas	Thomas	Matthew	Matthew
James	James	James (A)	James (A)
<u>Thaddaeus</u>	<u>Simon</u>	<u>Thaddaeus</u>	<u>Simon the Zealot)</u>
<u>Simon the</u>	<u>Judas</u>	<u>Simon the</u>	<u>Judas</u>
<u>Zealot</u>	<u>Judas Iscariot</u>	<u>Zealot</u>	
Judas		Judas Iscariot	

Thaddaeus = Lebbaeus

Thaddaeus = Judas, Son of James

Bartholomew = Nathaniel

Simon the Zealot = Canaanite

Why do we believe the author was James, the Lord's brother?

1. Speaks with authority of one who did not need to identify or defend himself or his writings.
2. Very Jewish book— James was a devout Jew. Traditional view (very old)

3. Given title of "The Righteous" or "The Just" because of his faithfulness to the Law and his constancy in prayer.

From his name and the contents of the epistle we can imply:

1. That he was a Jew / Race / Religion who had been converted to Christianity.
2. Probably not an apostle (would have claimed, like Paul, Peter, John [inferentially] do in their writings).
3. That he held a position of authority in the church.
4. That he was known well enough that his name alone served as his introduction.

James was a sibling-turned-servant, an antagonist turned apologist, a passive observer turned passionate follower.

Date probably AD 47-49 (Some scholars think possibly earliest NT writing).

James was martyred in 62 AD (written before).

Does not mention Jewish / Gentile controversy of Acts ch. 15 (AD 50) (written before).

James makes no mention of Paul— probably written before his rise to prominence.

No mention of false teachings as in Paul, Peter, Jude, John (written before).

Apparently written after:

- Death of Stephen (AD 35)

- Persecution which caused many Jerusalem believers to flee for their lives
- Conversion of Saul / Paul (AD 35)
- Death of James the apostle (AD 44)

Apparently written before:

- Council of Jerusalem (AD 50)
- Paul's 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys (AD 50-52, 53-57)
- Paul's final imprisonment and martyrdom
- AD 67
- Destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70)

Written to:

"...*twelve tribes scattered among the nations*" (NIV)

Christianity is Jewish. Jesus' parents were Jewish. Jesus was Jewish.

The early Christians were all Jewish.

All of the original 12 disciples were Jewish.

Jerusalem was the birthplace of the church.

Jesus crucified, buried, rose, ascended there.

Jerusalem church was home to apostles—

Growth was explosive— 1000s responded to the gospel.

Jesus told his followers to spread the faith beyond Jerusalem to Judea / Samaria.

*"...uttermost part of the earth"*¹ (Acts 1:18). Persecution resulted in scattering of Christians from Jerusalem throughout the Roman world. Everywhere these Christians went, they carried the gospel.

The believers at Pentecost came from many different foreign lands—

James, as the leader of the "mother" church at Jerusalem, sent this letter to those scattered Christians.

Peter lists "some" of the locations in Acts 2:9-11:

- 9 *Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,*
 10 *Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,*
 11 *Cretans and Arabs*²

Written to Jews, it is a book for all believers, both Jewish and Gentile. Very much for us today.

James' approach is direct and practical. He gets right to the point with Spirit-led answers to our problems.

Luther didn't like James very much. He called it an "epistle of straw lacking the wheat of the gospel".

Not accepted fully into canon till the end of the 4th century appo. 390 AD.

Two main problems:

1. Relatively unknown to many churches
2. Uncertainty about whether writer was an apostle or not

Luther said James "mangles the Scriptures and thereby opposes Paul and all Scripture".

¹The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Luther consigned James, along with Jude, Hebrews and the Revelation, to the end of his German New Testament. He obviously assigned it to a place of lesser value. He wrote, "I cannot include him among the chief books, though I would not prevent anyone from including or extolling him as he pleases, for there are otherwise many good sayings in him.

First accepted into canon appo. 200 AD.

East / West church complete acceptance appo. 390 AD.

J.C. Ryle, writing from Helmingham Rectory in December 1856, had this to say about his commentary on the gospels:

...I have constantly left unsaid many things that might have been said, and have endeavored to dwell chiefly on the things needful to salvation. I have deliberately passed over many subjects of secondary importance, in order to say something that might strike and stick in conscience. I have felt that few points, well remembered and fastened down, are better than a quantity of truth lying loosely and thinly scattered over the mind.

I now send forth the volume with an earnest prayer, that it may tend to the promotion of pure and undefiled religion, help to extend the knowledge of Christ, and be a humble instrument in aid of the glorious work of converting and edifying immortal souls.

These words describe my reaction to the message of the Book of James.

There is much more here than we can cover in 5 short sessions. We will

trust the Holy Spirit to choose the words and lessons he wishes us to hear as we go through the book.

II. Chapter One

1. 1:1Greetings, Recipients

*James*¹— no fancy titles, just "...a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ".²

Greek *doulos* = bondsman. Only Jude uses this same title without adornment.

Paul calls himself the *doulos* of Jesus Christ and his apostle (Rom. 1:1, Phil. 1:1).

Barclay lists 4 implications of *doulos*:

1. Absolute obedience:

Slave knows no law but master's law—

Bound to give master absolute, unquestioning obedience (How do we do?)

General William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was asked—"Why has your life counted so much for Christ?"

After thinking awhile, he replied, "I think it is because God has had all of me. From the moment I realized what God could do for the poor of London, I determined that God would have all there was of William Booth."

How do we do? Does God have all of us?

2. Absolute Humility:

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²Holy Bible, New Living Translation, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

Slave has no privileges, but duties.

Slave has no rights, but obligations.

Slave has lost himself in the service of his master (God).

3. Absolute Loyalty:

No interests of his own; only master's interests

His own profit and preference do not enter into the calculation.

His loyalty is to God (his master).

4. Pride:

Title by which OT greats were known...Moses, Joshua and Caleb, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, Isaiah, Amos, and Jeremiah. All were known as servants (doulos) of God (Hebrew).

The only greatness the Christian can aspire to is to be a slave of God.

*Greetings.1...*Regular secular word to open a letter.

Paul uses Christian form of "grace and peace".

James, writing to a widely scattered audience, uses the most general greeting he can.

*twelve tribes which are scattered abroad*¹:

Literally, "to the twelve tribes of the Diaspora".

Millions of Jews who lived outside the Promised Land.

So, all over the world were synagogues from which Christian preachers could start.

...Ready-made audiences who already knew the OT.

Jews were dispersed through, being taken from their homeland and being forced to live as exiles in foreign lands.

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

3 main expulsions:

1. Assyrians...Conquered Northern Kingdom about 722 BC. Jews moved to Assyria.
2. Babylon conquered Southern Kingdom about 580 BC. Jews moved to Babylon.
3. 63 BC...Pompey took Jerusalem.
Deported many Jews to Rome as slaves.

Many Jews left Promised Land on their own for more comfortable / profitable lands. Syria and Egypt received many of these Jews. There were more than 1 million Jews in Alexandria, Egypt.

Josephus wrote, "There is no city, no tribe, whether Greek or Barbarian, in which Jewish law and Jewish customs have not taken root."

*twelve tribes*² could mean:

1. Jews outside Palestine
2. Christian Jews outside Palestine
3. The true Israel of God, The Christian church.

2. 1:2-4.....Tested, Triumphant

*Consider it all joy*³

*various trials*⁴...(manifold, many)

KJ..."temptations"

2 general meanings:

1. Afflictions, persecutions or trials from providential circumstances
2. Solicitation to sin

¹The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

²The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

³The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁴The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

We cannot decide whether to have trials / temptations; We can only choose what our attitude to them will be.

When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends.

—Phillips

Trial or test directed toward an end,
that the tested one may emerge stronger / purer.

Greek uses:

Young bird "tests" wings

Queen of Sheba "tested" wisdom of Solomon (Heb.)

God "tested" Abraham.

Here a great and uplifting thought. Hort writes: "The Christian must expect to be jostled by trials on the Christian way." All kinds of experiences will come to us. There will be the test of the sorrows and the disappointments which seek to take our faith away. There will be the test of the seductions which seek to lure us from the right way. There will be the tests of the dangers, the sacrifices, the unpopularity which the Christian way must so often involve. But they are not meant to make us fall; they are meant to make us soar. They are not meant to defeat us; they are meant to be defeated. They are not meant to make us weaker; they are meant to make us stronger. Therefore we should not bemoan them; we should rejoice in them. The Christian is like the athlete. The heavier the course of training he undergoes, the more he is glad, because he knows that it is fitting him all the better for victorious effort. As

Browning said, we must "welcome each rebuff that turns earth's smoothness rough," for every hard thing is another step on the upward way.

v.3 - *endurance*1...KJ – "patience" much too weak a word. Revised Standard – "steadfastness"...unswerving constancy.

Word means not just ability to bear things, but ability to turn them into greatness and to glory.

Martyrs died not grimly, but singing. One smiled in the flames and said, "I saw the glory of God and was glad."

Endurance makes a Christian 3 things:

Perfect..."Perfection towards a given end"...used of a sacrificial animal.

"By the way in which we meet every experience in life we are either fitting or unfitting ourselves for the task which God meant us to do"
(Barclay)

Complete...Entire, perfect in every part.

Deficient in nothing...The defeat of an army, the giving up of a struggle...

Failure to reach a standard that should have been reached.

If we meet the tests correctly, we will reach nearer to the standard of Jesus Christ.

3. 1:5-8.....God's giving and Man's asking

Closely linked with verse before.

James has just said, "Meet the trials of life right and you will begin to be more Christlike." Someone may ask—How do I get the wisdom to do that?

James says, "Ask God".

James says, "Remember two things when you ask God for wisdom..."

1. How God Gives...Generously

The best gift can be spoiled by the manner of the giving.

We can give to get praise, honor, wealth.

We can give to humiliate.

"Cost me a lot—I really don't want to give you this."

"If you would have been responsible..."

"I sure hope you appreciate this..."

2. How to Ask...Faith—no doubts.

Drunk, staggering, going nowhere.

Lit., a man with two souls / minds. One believes; another disbelieves.

A man continually at war with himself. A man in which trust and distrust of God wage continual battle against one another.

4. 1:9-11As each man needs

James sees Christianity as bringing each man what he needs.

The poor learn self-respect.

The rich learn self-abasement.

The poor man learns that he matters.

In the church – no distinctions

1st-century slave may be pastor of congregation, preaching and giving sacraments.

His master may be simply a humble member.

In the world, every man has a task to do.

Every man is of use to God—

Even an invalid can move the world through prayer.

He matters to God

Someone said, "Call no man worthless for whom Christ died."

The rich man learns to trust in his riches—Can cope with his riches, can buy his way out of a scrape.

James uses a vivid illustration.

In the desert after a shower, thin, green grass sprouts—One day's burning sun will wither it.

Scorching heat—Southeast wind straight from desert—In an hour it can wipe out all vegetation.

The man who trusts in riches is trusting in what can be gone in an hour.

Since life / things are so uncertain, we are foolish to put our trust in things.

We should admit our helplessness and place our trust in God.

5. 1:12.....The crown of life

To the man who meets trials in the right way there is joy here and hereafter.

(i) In this life he becomes a man of sterling worth. He is dokimos; he is like metal which is cleansed of all alloy. The weaknesses of his character are eradicated; and he emerges strong and pure.

(ii) In the life to come he receives the crown of life. There is far more than one thought here. In the ancient world the crown (stephanos) had at least four great associations.

(a) The crown of flowers was worn at times of joy, at weddings and at feasts (cp. Isaiah 28:1,2; Song of Solomon 3:11). The crown was the sign of festive joy.

(b) The crown was the mark of royalty. It was worn by kings and by those in authority. Sometimes this was the crown of gold; sometimes it was the linen band, or fillet, worn around the brows (cp. Psalm 21:3; Jeremiah 13:18).

(c) The crown of laurel leaves was the victor's crown in the games, the prize which the athlete coveted above all (cp. 2 Timothy 4:8).

(d) The crown was the mark of honour and of dignity. The instructions of parents can bring a crown of grace to those who listen to them (Proverbs 1:9); Wisdom provides a man with a crown of glory (Proverbs 4:9); in a time of disaster and dishonour it can be said, "The crown has fallen from our head" (Lamentations 5:16).

We do not need to choose between these meanings. They are all included.

The Christian has a joy that no other man can ever have. Life for him is like being for ever at a feast. He has a royalty that other men have never realized for, however humble his earthly circumstances, he is the child of God. He has a victory which others cannot win, for he meets life and all its demands in the conquering power of the presence of Jesus Christ. He has a new dignity, for he is ever conscious that God thought him worth the life and death of Jesus Christ.

What is the crown? It is the crown of life; and that phrase means that it is the crown which consists of life. The crown of the Christian is a new kind of living which is life indeed; through Jesus Christ he has entered into life more abundant.

James says that if the Christian meets the testings of life in the steadfast constancy which Christ can give, life becomes infinitely more splendid than ever it was before. The struggle is the way to glory, and the very struggle itself is a glory.

6. 1:13-15.....Blaming God; Evading responsibility

Jewish way of thinking which puts the blame for temptation on God.
Every man is pulled in two directions:

In Romans 7:22-23, Paul says, "²²For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members."¹

Jews believed in yetser hatob (good tendency) and Yetser hara (evil tendency).

They believed evil tendency came from Satan. Rabbis believed that since God created everything, he must have created the evil tendency also.

What's wrong with that?

A man can blame God for his own sin.

Vv. 14-15 put the blame squarely on the sinner.

Sin is the result of a choice

Man's first instinct is to blame someone else. Adam blamed Eve—Eve blamed serpent.

Adam really blamed God.

Robert Burns wrote,

Thou knowest that thou hast formed me
With passions wild and strong
And list'ning to their witching voice
Has often led me wrong.

Conduct as it was because God made him as he did

Mission men—

Reason for a drink:

Too hot, I need a drink

Too cold, I need a drink

Too tired, I need a drink

Not tired, I need a drink

¹The New Revised Standard Version, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989.

Bored, I need a drink
 Too stressed, I need a drink

God permits trials to make us strong; He never entices us to do evil.

Sin comes because of man's desire vv. 14-15..no desire, no sin.

Barclay:

He can so hand himself over to Christ and be so engaged on good things that there is no time or place left for evil desire. It is idle hands for which Satan finds mischief to do; it is the unexercised mind and the uncommitted heart which are vulnerable."

Desire considered long enough becomes action.

Sin produces death.

*brings forth death*¹...word for birth.

The great value of this passage is that it urges upon man his personal responsibility for sin. No man was ever born without desire for some wrong thing. And, if a man deliberately encourages and nourishes that desire until it becomes full-grown and monstrously strong, it will inevitably issue in the action which is sin—and that is the way to death. Such a thought—and all human experience admits it to be true—must drive us to that grace of God which alone can make and keep us clean, and which is available to all.

*Do not be deceived*²...God will not tempt with evil. His gifts are good / unchanging.

¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

7. 1:16-18.....An unchangeable, good God

God is unchangeable—Never slightest hint of inconsistency in his dealings with us.

Every gift, from God, is good—

Nothing which comes from God is bad.

*Every good gift and every perfect gift*¹ is a perfect hexameter line of poetry in Greek,

Either James has a rhythmic ear for a fine cadence or he is quoting something we don't know about today.

Uses astronomical terms to describe God's unchangelessness.

These words describe the variations of:

Length of day and night,

The course of the sun,

The waxing and waning / differing brilliance of stars and planets,

Variability is characteristic of all created things.

Jewish morning prayer: "Blessed be the Lord God who hath formed the lights."

The lights change, but he who created them never changes.

V. 18... *word of truth*²...(gospel)...Man is reborn into new life through gospel—Shadows are ended—Truth has come.

Ancient Hebrews' firstfruits sacred to God;

We become the property of God and the gospel.

God does not tempt us—He gives us the good gift of salvation through the gospel.

¹*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

8. 1:19-20.....Quick; Slow

Wise man knows it's dangerous to speak too fast and to be unwilling to listen.

Fact is, most of us speak too much.

Lincoln—"Better to close your mouth and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt."

Prov. 10:19... When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is prudent.¹

Prov. 13:3... He who guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.²

Prov. 29:20... Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.³

We have 2 ears but only one mouth, so we should hear more and speak less.

Someone once paid tribute to a great linguist, saying that he could be silent in seven different languages. We should listen more and speak less.

slow to anger⁴...

Teacher will be tempted to be angry with the slow / backward even / more the lazy student. But only on rare occasions can we accomplish more with anger than with encouragement.

Preacher tempted to scold (anger).

He loses his power and influence when he does not show by word and gesture his love for his people.

¹*The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

²*The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

³*The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

⁴*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Parent tempted to anger, lash out at child—usually produce a more stubborn resistance.

Anger almost always hurts our fellow man and ourselves. Carnal anger always does. The accent of love always has more power than the accent of anger

—“*A soft answer turneth away wrath...*”¹

9. 1:21Teachable spirit

*putting aside*²...Strip yourself—(stripping off one's clothing). Strip yourselves of all defilement.

*filthiness*³...vivid word

Filth that soils clothing or the body.

Possible meaning "wax in ear".

Possibly James is saying, "Get the wax out of your ears and listen to God."

Sin can make us deaf to God.

*wickedness*⁴, *superfluity of naughtiness*⁵

Not "extra-bad sin"—Wickedness in the smallest measure is already excess.

Vivid Greek word—tangled underbrush or a cancerous growth which must be cut away—

My lot—5-6 years...Vines grew up through boards, blocks so I could not move them— Had to pull and cut away—

Picture James is giving: "Clear away the undergrowth of vice and wickedness in your lives."

Receive the inborn, *engrafted*⁶ Word with *meekness*⁷, gentleness.

¹The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁴The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁵The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁶The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁷The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

Two possible meanings:

A. Innate as opposed to acquired

--That natural knowledge of God and good and evil—like conscience

--An instinctive knowledge of good and evil in our hearts

B. Implanted

--Parable of the Sower

God implants his Word and knowledge in our hearts.

Through his prophets and preachers and through Jesus Christ, God sows his truth in our hearts.

Probably both meanings apply here.

The wise man will listen and obey.

gentleness, *meekness*¹—

The quality of the man whose feelings are under perfect control.

The temperament of a soul in which everything is mixed in the right proportions.

Barclay writes:

No one can ever find one English word to translate what is a one word summary of the truly teachable spirit. The teachable spirit is docile and tractable, and therefore humble enough to learn. The teachable spirit is without resentment and without anger and is, therefore, able to face the truth, even when it hurts and condemns. The teachable spirit is not

¹The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

blinded by its own overmastering prejudices but is clear-eyed to the truth. The teachable spirit is not seduced by laziness but is so self-controlled that it can willingly and faithfully accept the discipline of learning. Praut^{cs} describes the perfect conquest and control of everything in a man's nature which would be a hindrance to his seeing, learning and obeying the truth.

10. 1:22-24.....Hearing and Doing

James gives us two vivid pictures in these verses.

First: The man who goes to church, listens to the reading and preaching and thinks that listening has made him a Christian.

He has forgotten that what is heard and read in church must be lived out.

So easy to identify Christianity with church attendance and Bible reading.

Second: The man who looks into the mirror and sees himself and all the smuts and disfigurements and the messed hair, and goes away and forgets what he looks like and therefore does nothing about it.

In listening to the Word, we should see our sins and failures and then, with God's help, do something about them.

James reminds us that what is heard in the holy place must be lived out in the market place—or there is no point in hearing at all—

There was a flock of Ducks that lived on the farm.

They had flown in many years before and the farmer was kind and didn't hunt and only occasionally took a few eggs. Every year the ducks talked about flying off into the blue southern skies but time passed and the old ducks died and new generations of ducks were born. The farmer took to feeding the

ducks grain and taking more eggs and soon they were farm ducks. The ducks got real comfortable. They had their cozy little homes and plenty of food. Why they even started a little Church. They called it the "flock."

They would gather to hear rousing sermons by an old drake. He would preach his heart out. He would tell them, "God didn't intend for ducks to waddle around a farm. God made ducks to fly.. To soar into the heavenlies.. To fly above the earth.. To eat the wild grains.. and to enjoy the wonder of creation."

The ducks loved it. They would "quack" out loud.. They would "honk".. Some the young mallards even cried out, "Get Down, Old Drake.."

When the sermon was over the ducks would file out the door and give the pastor the right wing of fellowship and they would say things like, "Great sermon, Pastor.. Why I almost felt like I was flying.. Just great.. You preached the truth today.. We need more sermons like that.." And then they waddled home.

Even as the great flocks flew overhead.. Even when the honking of the Canadian Geese filled the skies.. They waddled on home, heads down, looking for a piece of grain here, a grub there.

Waddling on home..

* * * * *

Sometimes we settle for so much less than what God intended. We are satisfied to walk through life. We miss so much because we don't look up, because we don't to listen to the

call of God. Man was never meant to be earthbound. We are not to be satisfied to just walk through life. We're to walk briskly.. to run. We were meant to rise up with the wings of Eagles.. to fly. No.. No.. to soar.. To soar through life on the wings of eagles.. (Isaiah 40:31)

One of my favorite stories about church is the "Church of the ducks" It seems there was a community full of ducks and every Sunday they would come to duck church. Each week the ducks would waddle into the building, they would sing duck hymns and share a duck offering and then the duck preacher would get up and he would preach. His message was always the same, he would look at the audience and he would spread his wings and he would say, we can fly, we can fly. All we need to do is use the wings that God has given us. The other ducks would be so excited about what the duck preacher was saying they would quack loudly in agreement. He would then close the service with a benediction and the ducks would waddle out one by one, never using the wings God had provided for them.

A lot of Christians are that way as well. God has given us an invaluable resource known as prayer. Jesus told his disciples in Mark 11:23-24 "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.

11. 1:25.....True law

James calls the law two things:

I. *perfect law*¹

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

- a. It is God's law, given and revealed by him.
- b. It cannot be improved upon.

Christian law is the law of love.

Love can never be completely satisfied.

- c. Greek word teleios means perfection toward a given end.

A man who obeys the Law of Christ will be perfect because he will fulfill the purpose for which God sent him into the world.

II. *law of liberty*¹

The Law usually reminds us of slavery and drudgery, but the perfect law is a law of liberty.

My work at the mission. Men who are under tyranny of anger, desire or destructive habits.

Come into glorious freedom when yield to Christ / Perfect Law

*looketh into*², *continueth therein*³

As we continue to concentrate of "the glory of the Lord" revealed in His Word, Paul declares we "... *are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory...*"⁴ (2 Cor. 3:18)

12. 1:26-27 True worship

¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

³*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁴*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

The word translated *religion*¹ in KJ is better translated "worship".

It is the outward expression of ritual and liturgy.

James is saying the finest worship is worthless without service to the poor and personal purity.

True worship lies in practical service to mankind and purity in one's own personal life.

It is so easy to substitute ritual and liturgy for sacrifice, service and purity.

III. Chapter Two

1. 2:1Respect of persons

Undue and unfair partiality

Pandering to someone because he is rich and influential or popular.

Peter learned not to show respect of persons in Acts 10:34 when he saw the vision of the sheet with all the goodies on it.

Words literally mean "to lift up a person's face", in contrast to "casting down his countenance".

One great characteristic of God is his complete impartiality.

Leviticus 19:15... *'You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.*²

We should never give undue weight to a man's social standing, wealth or worldly influence.

2. 2:2-4The peril of snobbery

(Play act with one man poorly dressed and one man richly dressed)

¹The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Discuss

What did you think?

How did you feel?

How can we do this today?

HippieKJ

Short skirt

Pants for ladies

V. 2... *assembly* (V), **meeting** (NIV), Gr—"synagogue"

Only place in NT where a Christian group is called a synagogue.

Wealthy of James' day often wore rings to impress others.

--on every finger but the middle one.

Often more than one per finger.

Sometimes rented rings to make an impression.

Clement of Alexandria recommended that a Christian should only wear one ring.

It should be on the little finger.

It should have a religious symbol, dove, fish, anchor, justified it to be used as seal.

There were social problems in the early church.

Church was the only place where social standards did not exist.

In the secular world, there was a clear line drawn between:

Rich and poor

Slave and master

Slave was a living tool with no rights.

Master had absolute control over slave, even the right of life and death.

But in the church, those distinctions were not supposed to exist.

Rich and poor, slave and master, sat down beside each other.

The master may be sitting in the audience while the slave conducted the service or gave him the sacraments.

There were no class distinctions in the church.

But there was a temptation to fuss over the rich man who was converted.

--Like a special trophy for Christ.

Barclay says,

The Church must be the one place where all distinctions are wiped out. There can be no distinctions of rank and prestige when men meet in the presence of the King of glory. There can be no distinctions of merit when men meet in the presence of the supreme holiness of God. In his presence all earthly distinctions are less than the dust and all earthly righteousness is as filthy rags. In the presence of God all men are one.

V. 4 has a problem with translation.

King James says *partial*¹.

Other translations are *discriminating*², *made distinctions*³

The Greek word can have two meaning.

1. You are wavering in your judgements.

You are torn between the world's standards and God's standards.

2. You are guilty of making class distinctions which should not exist in the church.

3. 2:5-7The riches of poverty / The poverty of riches

¹The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

²The Amplified New Testament, (La Habra CA: The Lockman Foundation) 1999.

³The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

How stupid we are. We value by the world's standards.

James says, "Aren't the poor of this world usually richer in faith than the rich?"

"Don't the rich oppress and sue you?"

"Aren't the poor who are rich in faith heirs to eternal life—

"Whatsfa the matter for you!?"

It is so easy for us to get caught up in measuring things with the world's yardstick.

Abraham Lincoln said, "God must love the common people, he made so many of them!"

Church has always had a special place for the poor—

Christ said, "*Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*"¹

In Jesus' ministry, it was the common poor people who heard him gladly.

In 1 Cor. 1:26, Paul says: "*For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble...*"²

The poor heard Jesus gladly.

The rich young ruler went sorrowfully away.

In James' day, the rich oppressed the poor—sued them for their debts.

Summary arrest—Creditor met a debtor on the street, he could literally grab him by the neck and drag him to debtors' court. No mercy was shown.

The rich had many reasons to insult the name of Christ (Christian). His former slave who became a Christian would be different.

1. He would have a new owner, a new independence, no longer cringe at his master's power.

2. He would have a new honesty,

¹*The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

better slave, but not able to engage in dishonest practices for his master.

3. He would have a new sense of worship. On the Lord's day, he would be laying aside his work for worship.

So James says,

1. God chose the poor to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.
2. The rich oppress you and drag you to court.
3. The rich abuse / insult the name you have taken.

So why do you dishonor the poor and honor the rich?

*name by which you have been called?*¹...The word for a wife taking a husband's name or a child being called by his father's name.

When we become Christians, we take the worthy name of Christ.

Augustus Caesar was holding court for a young man who had slept on duty—penalty for this was death—As the battle-hardened guards stood by, they tensed as they worried about what Caesar's verdict would be—

He considered the case and then faced the young man and said, "What is your name?"

"Augustus," he quietly answered.

Augustus roared, "Young man, change your conduct or change your name!"

He didn't want anyone bearing his name to act in an unmilitary fashion.

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Our master doesn't want us to bear his name and conduct our lives like the devil.

Phillip Yancey, writing in *The Jesus I Never Knew*, makes this insightful comment:

No one who meets Jesus ever stays the same. Jesus has rocked my own preconceptions and has made me ask hard questions about why those of us who bear his name don't do a better job of following him.

4. 2:8-11The royal law

Royal law = Law of:

1. Supreme excellence
2. The Law given by the King of Kings
3. The King of all laws.
4. The Law which makes men kings and is fit for kings.

James says, if you keep the greatest law, you will be king of yourself, and a king among men.

James says the royal law is "*YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF*"¹
v. 9... *convicted*², guilty

v. 10... *offend*³...Not cause to be upset, but to fail; to sin: to fail, fall, offend, stumble; to sin in a way that causes another to stumble

Used here and in 3:2; 2X

James says, you break one law, you are a lawbreaker—

Do one sin / sinner; one lie / liar; one killing / murderer.

James uses examples of adultery and murder. We think of them as pretty bad sins.

¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

Barclay says,

A man may be in nearly all respects a good man; and yet he may spoil himself by one fault. He may be moral in his action, pure in his speech, meticulous in his devotion, but he may be hard and self-righteous; rigid and unsympathetic, and, if so, his goodness is spoiled.

5. 2:12-13.....The law of liberty / Life of mercy

James reminds us of two great facts:

1. Christian life is a life of liberty.

We will be judged by that law.

Not, like Pharisee, governed by external laws and rules, but governed by the inner compulsion of love.

He follows the way of love not because of a fear of punishment, but because Christ's love in his heart makes him want to do so.

Do we get this?

It is so easy for us to revert to keeping rules...

To live our lives in the fear of man, not of God.

Ed Welch writes a book When People are Big and God is Small.

God wants our whole-hearted devotion and obedience. I fear many times we live our lives and make our decisions, in light of, "What will they think?" instead of "What will God think?"

2. Only he who shows mercy will find mercy.

Scripture is full of this teaching.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." 1--Matt. 5:7

If you forgive men, your Heavenly Father will forgive you. If not, too bad.

Unforgiving servant in Matt. 18

v. 13...*mercy rejoiceth against judgment*¹

NAS...*mercy triumphs over judgment*²

Apparently James is saying that in the day of judgement, the merciful man will find that even his own sins have been blotted out. Of course, we know that only Jesus' blood can blot out sins, but the merciful man will have appropriated that forgiveness because he was / is merciful.

In the light of these truths one can only pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me" (Ps. 139:23-24). Let me not sin by being partial to the rich or by despising the poor, even under nicer names. Teach me to judge my conduct in the light of Thy Word. Let me not be guided by my own fears or by the prejudices of the day in which I live. Lead me in the paths in which I ought to go; then shall I come before Thee unafraid. In Jesus' name I ask it. Amen.

6. 2:14-26.....Faith and Works

This passage, from 14-26, has been used to show that Paul and James taught different gospels.

Paul taught that a man has been justified completely by faith, without works.

James says we must have works—

But James is saying not that we don't need faith, but that if we have faith we will have works to bear our faith out. If we don't have works, we don't have faith.

¹*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

James is condemning profession without practice—Paul would agree.

The fact is, no one can be saved by works, but no one can be saved without producing works.

A. vv. 14-17Profession / Practice

James chooses a vivid illustration to show that profession without practice is nothing.

What if a man has no clothes or food? What if his friend expresses deepest sympathy for his plight, but doesn't do anything to help him? What good is that? How can faith be valid without works to back it up?

Practical point:

How can we do this?

Obvious by not helping the poor.

But isn't it a fact that many times we have urgings to do good things and fail to do them?

Write that letter,

Give that encouragement,

Help that neighbor,

Visit that sick one,

James reminds us how easy it is to profess and how hard it is to practice.

Do It Now

Stop for a moment and share

Show someone you care

Someday they will fade away

And you will be left in despair

Time is precious and will not allow
 A second chance, do it now
 Somehow

Have you heard them speak after
 How they miss the laughter
 Wishing they had noticed
 Had they listened a little harder
 Time is precious and will not allow
 A second chance, do it now
 Somehow

Don't look back and wonder
 When everything is over
 Could I have made a difference
 Did I withhold the answer
 Time is precious and will not allow
 A second chance, do it now
 Somehow

—by Janet Boyd a.k.a. Bee Spirit

B. vv. 18-19.....Not either or, but both and

James anticipates an objection:

"Well faith and works are really only two different ways of living out the faith."

James says, "Oh no! It's not either faith or works, but both faith and works."

Life must consist of thought and action.

Kipling writes, "O England is a garden, and such gardens are not made by saying, 'O How beautiful,' and sitting in the shade; while

better men than we began their working lives by digging weeds from garden paths with broken dinner knives."

Action follows thought—Thought must be followed with action. There must be prayer and effort.

Martin Luther was close friends with another monk. He was as fully-persuaded as Luther that the Reformation was necessary. They agreed that Luther would go out and fight the battle and the friend would stay in the monastery and pray. One night the friend had a dream. He saw a single reaper engaged in an impossible task of reaping an immense field by himself.

The lonely reaper turned and the monk saw it was the face of Luther, and he knew he must leave his cell and go and help.

Prayer needs action.

It is only through deeds that faith can show itself.

C. vv. 20-26.....The Proof of faith

Two biblical examples of faith having works:

Abraham's faith was proved when he was willing to sacrifice Isaac.

Rahab's faith was proved when she sheltered the spies.

Rahab was a: woman, Gentile, prostitute

(Heb. 11:17-19, 31)

Jewish legend says that she became a Jew—married Joshua and became a direct ancestress of many of the priests and prophets, including Ezekiel and Jeremiah.

So faith and works are not opposite. They are in fact inseparable.

No one will ever be moved to action without faith; and no man's faith is genuine unless it moves him to action.

IV. Chapter Three

1. 3:1The teacher's peril

This was written when any member could speak in the meetings. Some people like to monopolize.

Moffatt: "My brothers, do not crowd in to be teachers: remember, we teachers will be judged with special strictness."

1 Cor. 11:26-34 tells us Paul's thoughts on order in the assembly:

- It must be for edifying.
- Must be in order of turn.
- 2 or 3 only speak
- Women silent

James would agree.

Teachers were very important in the early church. Charged with the awesome responsibility of shaping the minds and faith of new believers.

There were teachers who failed and became false teachers.

Teachers who:

- Tried to add circumcision and the keeping of the law
- Teachers who did not live out what they taught
- Teachers who tried to teach before they themselves had been taught
- Teachers who taught for honor and for financial reward
- Teacher who were "opinionated" or seeking prestige

The people James is writing to wanted to be teachers. James demands that they should never forget the responsibility of handling God's precious Word.

2. 3:2Universal danger

James sets down two ideas which are very Jewish.

A. There is no one who doesn't sin in something—

The word means to "slip up".

Sin so often is the result not of deliberate disobedience, but of a "slip up" when we are off guard.

One of the pseudo-books has this quote: "There is no man among them that be born, but that he hath dealt wickedly: and among the faithful there is none who hath not done amiss."

B. The second idea James brings is this: That there is no sin easier to fall into than the sin of the tongue.

The writer of the extra-biblical book of Ecclesiasticus, Jesus Ben Sirach, writes extensively on the dangers of sins of the tongue.

¹³Curse the whisperer and doubletongued: for such have destroyed many that were at peace. ¹⁴A backbiting tongue hath disquieted many, and driven them from nation to nation: strong cities hath it pulled down, and overthrown the houses of great men. ¹⁵A backbiting tongue hath cast out virtuous women, and deprived them of their labours. ¹⁶Whoso hearkeneth unto it shall never find rest, and never dwell quietly. ¹⁷The stroke of the whip maketh marks in the flesh: but the stroke of the tongue breaketh the bones. ¹⁸Many have fallen by the edge of the sword: but not so many as have fallen by the tongue. ¹⁹Well is he that is defended from it, and hath not passed through the venom thereof; who hath not drawn the yoke thereof, nor hath been bound in her bands. ²⁰For the yoke thereof is a yoke of iron, and

the bands thereof are bands of brass. ²¹The death thereof is an evil death, the grave were better than it. ²²It shall not have rule over them that fear God, neither shall they be burned with the flame thereof. ²³Such as forsake the Lord shall fall into it; and it shall burn in them, and not be quenched; it shall be sent upon them as a lion, and devour them as a leopard. ²⁴Look that thou hedge thy possession about with thorns, and bind up thy silver and gold, ²⁵And weigh thy words in a balance, and make a door and bar for thy mouth. ²⁶Beware thou slide not by it, lest thou fall before him that lieth in wait. ¹

3. 3:3-5a.....Little but powerful

Apparently James is anticipating an argument like, "Hey, the tongue is such a small part of the body, why make such a fuss about it?"

To answer that argument, James uses two pictures:

First Picture is a small bit in a large horse's mouth—We can control its whole body.

Second picture— A small rudder on a great ship can turn the boat wherever the helmsman wishes.

James is not pleading for silence. He is not forbidding speech. He is pleading for control of the tongue—For a wise use of speech.

4. 3:5b-6.....Destructive fire

The Jewish people were very familiar with forest fires. In the dry season, the dry grass, low thorn bushes and scrubs were as dry as tinder. If they were set on fire, the flames were like a wave which could not be stopped.

The damage the tongue can do is like a fire in two ways..

First, it is wide-ranging. The tongue can damage at a distance. A word dropped at one end of town can end hurting at the other end—

The hand kills only at close quarters; the tongue is like an arrow which kills at great distances.

Psalm 73:9... *They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.*¹

Barclay says,

A man can ward off a blow with the hand, for the striker must be in his presence. But a man can drop a malicious word, or repeat a scandalous and untrue story, about someone whom he does not even know or about someone who stays hundreds of miles away, and cause infinite harm.

A Second reason the damage of the tongue is like a fire is that it is uncontrollable.

Colorado wildfire—Set in anger. Mrs. Barton (forest ranger) burned letter from estranged husband—200,000 acres—3+ lives—50+ buildings. 2 fires burning separately linked up. Firefighters could not control them. Wind, dry timber, uncontrollable...Like the tongue on the loose.

Three things come not back:

The spent arrow,
The spoken word,
The lost opportunity

There is nothing so hard to kill as a rumor or a malignant story.

It's so important that we think before we speak; Once the words are spoken, we cannot take them back or control them. Anybody want to comment on this?

¹The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

There are two different phrases in this passage:

v. 6... *world of iniquity*¹ or *unrighteous world*²

Could mean "adornment"...That which makes evil attractive.

By the tongue, men can make evil appear as good. The tongue could be used to excuse, justify or persuade others into sin.

It could also mean "world" in the sense of "evil world"...That part of the body without God.

An uncontrolled tongue is like a world which is hostile to God. –That part of us which disobeys Him.

*course of nature*³, *the course of our life*⁴

Lit., "the wheel of being"

James probably means "the whole of life and living".

James is saying that the tongue can kindle a fire which can destroy all life. And the tongue itself is kindled with the very fire of hell. What a terrifying thing. How we need to allow the Holy Spirit to gentle it for us.

5. 3:7-8.....Beyond all taming

Genesis tells us that man is to have dominion over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

James is probably thinking of that when he says "*...every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed...*"⁵, but no one, by himself, can tame the tongue.

6. 3:9-12.....Blessing and Cursing

¹*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

²*The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

³*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁴*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁵*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

There is a dual nature in each of us. Paul talks about it in Rom. 7:
*"...I do the very thing I do not want to do..."*¹ *"...I am not practicing what I would like to do..."*² *"Wretched man that I am!"*³

James says that no where is that dual nature more evident than in the tongue. The Jews were constantly blessing, eulogizing God. And yet the same tongues which blessed God cursed men who are created to be like God.

James says, "Something's wrong here!

"That's not natural!"

James uses two word pictures:

Stream / fountain gushing sweet water and bitter.

Tree bearing different kinds of fruit.

Peter such a great example of this principle.

"Lord, I'll die with you!"

*"I do not know the man!"*⁴

John the Beloved said, *"...Beloved, let us love one another..."*⁵, but he also said, "Lord, let's fry the dumb Samaritans!"

It's so easy to be inconsistent with our tongues.

Praise, teach, preach on Sunday, then snap and scrap with our family at home or engage in questionable stories / coarse talk on Monday at work.

Would our church friends recognize us if they would hear us at our workplace?

The tongue has the power to curse or heal. To tear down or build up. To encourage or discourage.

How careful we should be with our tongue.

The Anchor Bible Commentary has this to say about the tongue:

¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁴*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁵*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

When the inner life is cleansed and controlled by the Holy Spirit, the Christian's speech can be disciplined in ways that are pleasing to God. The tongue, unruly though it be, is caged in the mouth, and God can give grace to close the cage when it ought to be closed!

The following lines are a fitting conclusion to this section:

...Make it pass,
 Before you speak, three gates of gold:
 These narrow gates. First, "Is it true?"
 Then, "Is it needful?" In your mind
 Give truthful answer. And the next
 Is last and narrowest, "Is it kind?"
 And if to reach your lips at last
 It passes through these gateways three,
 Then you may tell the tale, nor fear
 What the result of speech may be (Beth Day).

7. 3:13-14.....The man who should not teach

James is asking, "Is there anyone among you who wishes to teach? Let him live his life in such a way that gentleness is the controlling power within his heart.

A teacher is subject to two temptations:

1. Arrogance—Rabbis were often arrogant, puffed up in pride. They were used to being listened to and having their words accepted. It is very difficult for a teacher or a preacher to remain humble, but it is absolutely necessary.

2. Bitterness—To be absolutely convinced of one's own beliefs without at the same time being bitter to those of others is no easy thing, and yet it is necessary for the teacher / preacher. Barclay lists 4 characteristics of wrong teaching in this passage:

1. It is fanatical—The truth is held with unbalanced violence rather than with reasoned conviction.

2. It is bitter—It regards its opponents as enemies to be annihilated rather than as friends to be persuaded.

3. It is selfishly ambitious. It is more eager to display itself rather than to display the truth. More interested in the victory of its own opinions than in the victory of the truth.

4. It is arrogant. Its attitude is pride in its knowledge rather than humility in its ignorance.

The real scholar will be far more aware of what he does not know than of what he knows.

8. 3:15-16.....The wrong kind of wisdom

James describes false wisdom three ways:

1. It is earthly. Its standards and measurements are by worldly terms. Its aims are worldly aims.

2. It is characteristic of the natural man.

This wrong wisdom is an animal kind of thing—same thing that makes an animal snarl and snap.

3. It is devilish. It comes not from God, but from the devil.

It produces the kind of situation which the devil delights in, not God.

James says this wrong wisdom produces bitter fruit...

Drives people apart...

Produces strife...

Destroys unity...

Hinders the work of Christ...

Barclay:

There is a kind of person who is undoubtedly clever, with acute brain and skillful tongue; but his effect, nevertheless, in any committee, in any church, in any group, is to cause trouble and to disturb personal relationships. It is a sobering thing to remember that the wisdom he possesses is devilish rather than divine.

9. 3:17-18.....True wisdom

James uses 8 words to describe true wisdom.

1. *pure*¹...Greek—pure enough to approach the gods. So cleansed of ulterior motives and self that it is pure enough to see God.

2. *peaceable*²...right relationships between man and man, and between man and God.

Clever / arrogant wisdom separates man / man. Makes a man look with superior contempt on his fellows.

3. *gentle*³...Gentle, moderation, patient. The man who knows how to forgive when strict justice gives him a perfect right to condemn—a sweet reasonableness.

¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

4. *easy to be intreated*¹...reasonable.

A willingness to listen, to hear the other side of the argument, not stubborn or rigid, skilled at knowing when to yield.

5., 6. *full of mercy and good fruits*²...

5. *full of mercy*...Pity for the man who suffers unjustly. Mercy for the man who is in trouble even if the trouble is his own fault.

Pulling me out of the river

6. *good fruits*...Mercy that issues in good fruit. Practical help.

Christianity is not merely an emotion: It is action. We can never say that we have truly pitied anyone until we have helped him.

7. *without partiality*³, *unwavering*⁴, "undivided"...not wavering and vacillating. Some people always have an open mind. Christian wisdom is based on the certainties that come to us from God through Jesus Christ.

8. *without hypocrisy*⁵...Not put on—Not deceptive—Not for show—Honest. Never pretends to be what it is not. Never acts a part.

Revised = "...*the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*"⁶

*peace*⁷ = right relationships between man and man.

Nothing good can grow in an atmosphere where men are not at peace.

¹*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

²*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

³*The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

⁴*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁵*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁶*The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

⁷*The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

A group where there is bitterness and strife cannot produce Christian fruit.

V. Chapter Four

1. 4:1-3.....Man's pleasure or God's will

James says there is a basic question each of us must answer:

Will I submit to the will of God? Or will I gratify my own desires for the pleasures of this world?

Desire is at the root of all the evils which ruin life and divide men.

NT agrees:

Luke 8:14... *"The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity."*¹

Titus 3:3... *For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.*²

Barclay:

The ultimate choice in life lies between pleasing oneself and pleasing God; and a world in which men's first aim is to please themselves is a battle ground of savagery and division.

James says a life dominated by pleasure and desire has 3 consequences:

1. It sets us against other men / women.

¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

People desire certain basic things...

- a. Money
- b. Power
- c. Prestige
- d. Possessions
- e. Gratification of bodily lusts.

When men desire the same things, they become competitive...

...trample each other to get...

...eliminate each other.

Obedience to the will of God draws men / women together in love / service.

Obedience to craving for pleasure drives men apart; it drives them to rivalry for the same things.

2. Craving for pleasure drives men to shameful deeds.

Envy, enmity, murder, immorality

Before we do a sin, there is a desire / a thought. If we allow ourselves to desire sin, that thought begins to dominate our thinking.

Begins thinking of ways to obtain the wicked desire.

One day desire, thought, become actions.

3. Craving for pleasure shuts the door to prayer.

If we pray for only selfish desires, God cannot answer our prayers.

True prayer says, "Thy will be done". The prayer of a pleasure-dominated man is "My desire be satisfied".

Barclay:

In this life we have to choose whether to make our main object our own desires or the will of God. And if we choose our own desires, we have thereby separated ourselves from our fellow men and from God.

Anchor Bible Commentary:

It is impossible to maintain a selfish spirit in the presence of God. As we draw close to him we are more and more inclined to say "not my will but thine be done." But until we pray, and until we yield, we go on with the inner war, the outer conflict, and the utter unhappiness.

2. 4:4-7.....Infidelity to God

Authorized: masculine / feminine -- *adulterers*¹, *adulteresses*²

Actual text contains only feminine word "adulteresses".

It is figurative—Not literal, physical adultery—but spiritual.

OT shows us God as husband of Israel.

Israel as his bride.

Isaiah 54:5... *"For your husband is your Maker,
Whose name is the Lord of hosts;
And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel,
Who is called the God of all the earth."*³

Jeremiah 3:20... *"Surely, as a woman treacherously departs from her
lover,*

*So you have dealt treacherously with Me,
O house of Israel," declares the LORD.*"⁴

¹The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

²The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

³The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁴The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

God portrays the worship of false gods and making covenants with them as adultery against him.

NT speaks of an adulterous generation:

Mark 8:38... *"For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."*¹

Many scriptures refer to the church as the Bride of Christ.

So when we disobey God, it's like breaking the marriage vow.

Our relationship with God is like the intimate relationship between a husband / wife. When we sin, we break God's heart.

A vv. 4-7 Friendship with World / Enmity with God

James says to be in love with this world is to be the enemy of God.

1. Doesn't mean nothing is good in this world.

Puritan walking with friend..."That is a lovely flower."

"I have learned to call nothing lovely in this lost and sinful world."

Not James' meaning here.

2. kosmos...The world apart from God.

Rom. 8:7-8... *7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,*

*8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*¹

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

2 Timothy 4:10...*for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.*²

"worldliness"...If we dedicate our life to material things, we cannot dedicate our lives to God. We become his enemy.

3. Jesus says in Matt. 6:24, "*No one can serve two masters...*"³
We can be so dominated by desire for stuff, that the world becomes our master.

Or we can use things of this world to serve our fellow men and prepare for eternity.

We can use the world or be used by it. To use the world to serve God / man is to be friend of God.

To use the world to control and dictate is to be God's enemy.

B. vv. 4-7 God, the jealous lover

v. 5—very difficult verse:

Cited as Scripture, but we don't know where.

a. James may be quoting a work, we now know nothing of, which he thought was Scripture, or

b. He may be summarizing the teaching of the OT.

Translation difficult:

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

NAS...*Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?*¹

KJV...*Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?* ²

Amplified...*Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us and He yearns for the Spirit [to be welcome] with a jealous love? [Jer. 3:14; Hos. 2:19ff].*³

Two possibilities:

"He jealously yearns for the devotion of the Spirit which he has made to dwell within us."

or...

"The Spirit which God has made to dwell within us jealously yearns for the full devotion of our hearts."

In either case, "God is the jealous lover who will tolerate no rival".

The OT never hesitates to apply the term "jealous" to God.

Behind this word is the amazing truth that God is the lover of the souls of men. A man can be in love with only one person at a time.

We as the bride of Christ must be careful not to share our love of God with other people or things.

C. vv. 4-7 Humility / Pride

¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

³*The Amplified New Testament*, (La Habra CA: The Lockman Foundation) 1999.

James anticipates a question...

"If God is like that, how can men give him the devotion he demands?"

James says, "God makes big demands, but he gives great grace. Grace cannot be received till we know we need it.

God opposes the proud; gives grace to humble.

Greek word "proud" literally means "one who shows himself above other people"

Pride is a thing of the heart. Haughtiness describes it well.

Possible to walk with downcast humility and all the time have in the heart a vast contempt for all our fellow men.

Pride shuts us off from God for 3 reasons:

1. We do not know our own need.

We so admire ourselves that we think we have no needs.

2. We cherish our own independence.

We don't need help from men or from God.

3. We do not recognize our own sin.

We think only of our own goodness and never realize that we have sin in our lives.

This kind of pride cannot receive help, because it does not know it needs help.

James says humility has two characteristics:

1. If we take a stand against the devil, we will prove he is a coward.

The devil can wrestle, but he cannot throw us.

1 Peter 5:8-9...*8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 1

Jesus resisted Satan in the wilderness. The ultimate mark of humility is to recognize we must fight the devil not with our strength, but with God's power.

2. Humility knows it has the greatest privilege of all—the right to approach God.

In OT, only the priests could do that.

Through the work of Christ, every believer can approach the throne of God.

Heb. 4:16...*Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*2

Heb 7:19...*(for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*3

We must have humility, but that humility should give us dauntless courage.

It assures us that the way to God is open to the most fearful saint.

Anchor Bible Commentary:

1The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

2The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

3The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

The devil knows well enough that his greatest hope of drawing Christians away from a whole-hearted and voluntary submission to God lies in appealing to their wounded pride.

How true...Think about the times you disobey or are rebellious. It can usually be traced to wounded pride.

3. 4:8-10.....Godly purity

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. 1

Can't have intimate relationship with God if we don't spend time with Him.

James address *sinner*² in v. 8—"hardened sinners" James demands an outer and inner cleanness.

Outer...Hands, washing; Ceremonial; Outward.

The phrase evolved from an outward washing of hands, a ritual, to seeing that God demanded moral cleansing inside, not merely ritualistic outside cleansing

Inner...the demand of God that we be inwardly clean.

Bible demands fourfold cleansing.

Lips:

Isaiah 6:5-6...⁵ *Then I said,
"Woe is me, for I am ruined!
Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I live among a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."
6Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his
hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs.³*

Hands:

¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Psalm 24:4...*He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood
And has not sworn deceitfully.*¹

Heart:

Psalm 73:13...*Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
And washed my hands in innocence;*²

Mind:

James 4:8

A man's words, deeds, emotions and thoughts should all be purified.
Inwardly and outwardly we must be clean, for only the pure in heart
will see God.

Tall order.

Takes all our commitment.

A. vv. 8-10 Godly sorrow

v. 8...NASB... *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.
Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-
minded.*³

James calls for 3 things:

1. Affliction: *afflicted*⁴ (KJ); *miserable*⁵ (NASB)

Describes an army whose food is gone and who have no shelter
from stormy weather.

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁴The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁵The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

James is not calling for an abstinence from luxury and the worldly pleasures of the good life.

He is talking about people who are in love with this world—who have forgotten they are citizens of heaven.

James is calling for discipline, self-control, and a wise abstinence from the things of the world which would draw us away from our devotion to Christ.

2. Mourning: Laughter to sorrow; joy to gloom.

When we come to God in our sin, we realize how truly sinful we are and we will mourn.

When Wesley preached to the miners of Kingswood, they were moved to such grief that the tears made paths down the grime of their faces.

Only after this mourning can one have the joy of sins forgiven. The joy of grace received.

3. Weep tears of sympathy.

Up to now, these people lived only for themselves. Now their eyes were open to see the plight of those around them.

Barclay:

So, then in words deliberately chosen to waken the sleeping souls, James demands that his hearers should substitute the way of abstinence for the way of luxury; That they should become aware of their own sins and mourn for them; And that they should become conscious of the world's need and weep for it.

B. vv. 8-10..... Godly humility

The thought of humility stands large in the Scriptures.

Job 22:29... *"When you are cast down, you will speak with confidence,
And the humble person He will save."*¹

Prov. 29:23... *A man's pride will bring him low,
But a humble spirit will obtain honor.*²

Isaiah 57:15... *For thus says the high and exalted One
Who lives forever, whose name is Holy,
"I dwell on a high and holy place,
And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit
In order to revive the spirit of the lowly
And to revive the heart of the contrite."*³

Matt. 23:12... *"Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and
whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."*⁴

It's only when we realize our own
...Ignorance, will we ask for God's guidance.
...His poverty, does he ask for the riches of God's grace.
...Weakness, will he ask for God's strength.
...Own sin will he realize his need of a savior and of God's
forgiveness.

Barclay says there is one sin that is the basis for all others:
--Forgetting that we are creatures and that God is creator.

When a man realizes his own creatureliness, he realizes his own
helplessness and goes to the source of help, which is God.

Then he goes in God's strength.

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁴The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

As long as a man sees himself as independent of God he is on the way to ultimate collapse and defeat.

4. 4:11-12.....The sin of judging others

"Stop talking harshly" ...To speak harshly of; To slander, Usually of one who is not there to defend himself.

The Bible is full of condemnation of the slanderer and the gossip.

Psalm 50:20... *"You sit and speak against your brother;
You slander your own mother's son."*¹

Psalm 101:5... *Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy;
No one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure.*²

1 Peter 2:1... *Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander...*³

Prov. 6:16-19...¹⁶ *There are six things which the LORD hates,
Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:
17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
And hands that shed innocent blood,
18 A heart that devises wicked plans,
Feet that run rapidly to evil,
19 A false witness who utters lies,
And one who spreads strife among brothers.*⁴

God hates the sin of gossip / slander.

James gives two reasons:

1. It is against the royal law

¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁴*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

We should love our neighbor as ourselves. (James 2:8)

Should be evident—We can't love and slander.

If we break the law knowingly, we set ourselves above the law.

We are not to judge the law, but obey it.

If we speak evil of our neighbor, we have taken the right to break the law and stand condemned.

2. A second reason God hates gossip—It takes the prerogative of God.

Only God has the right to judge.

Matt. 10:28... *"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."*¹

Psalm 68:20... *God is to us a God of deliverances;
And to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death.*²

We take God's prerogative when we judge.

We need to see gossip / slander as terrible sins which breaks the royal law and infringe on the rights of a holy God.

Anchor Bible Commentary

The connection with the preceding passage is the fact that when a Christian begins to drift away from God, he begins to grow critical of his brethren.

5. 4:13-17.....The mistaken confidence

Go to now!...Lit. "Woe unto you"...Aramaic = "Ah, you!"

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

James is giving a word picture which would be very familiar to his hearers.

Jews were the great traders of the ancient world. Many new cities were founded.

Founders looked for citizens to occupy them. Citizenship was offered to Jews because where the Jews were, money and trade followed.

The picture is of a man looking at a map and saying,

"Here is a new city; great trading chance; I'll get in on the ground floor; I'll trade for a year and make a fortune and come back rich."

James says, Man proposes, God disposes. God is in charge; you aren't.

The ancients understood the uncertainty of the future.

Rabbis said, "Care not for the morrow, for ye know not what a day may bring forth. Perhaps you may not find tomorrow."

The uncertainty of the future is one more reason for us to realize our complete dependence on God.

Twice this year I have been very close to death. It makes me realize how completely dependent upon God I am.

Anchor Bible Commentary:

A tiny clot of blood in the brain may cause instant and unexpected death. The heart concealing an unknown weakness or driven too hard, may cease to beat. The psalmist wrote,
"My days are like a shadow that declineth..." 2 Psalm 102:11

Not that we are terrorized into fear and paralyzed into inaction; But to commit our plans into the hands of God, remembering that those plans may not be within God's purpose.

If we do not remember this, we are guilty of arrogant boasting.

Greek, "The wandering quack"

¹The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

²The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

Offered cures which were no cure.

Boasted of things which he was unable to do.

No man has the future in his hands and it is arrogant to claim we do.

James ends with a threat.

If you know a thing is wrong yet continue to do it, it is sin.

You have been warned; you know the truth. To continue to act like you have the ability to dispose of your life is sin.

The future is not in your hands, but in God's.

VI. Chapter Five

1. 5:1-3.....Worthlessness of riches

In the first 6 verses of chapter 5, James is doing two things:

1. To show the ultimate worthlessness of all earthly riches.
2. To show the detestable character of those who possess the riches.

He hopes to prevent his readers from placing all their hopes and desires on earthly things.

"If you rich would know what is coming...

"The terror of judgement and the Day of the Lord."

wail!...to shriek, to howl

Picture of the frantic terror of those on whom the judgement of God has come.

In the East, there were three main sources of wealth—James has a word for the decay of each of them.

1. There was corn and grain—James says, "Your grain is rotten".

2. There were garments = wealth.

Joseph gave changes of garments to brothers.

Achan brought disaster on Israel because he coveted a Babylonian garment.

James says, "Your garments will be eaten by moths".

3. There was gold and silver.

"Rusted clean through"...Gold and silver do not rust—But even these non-perishable metals will perish.

The rust, decay, moths prove the impermanence and ultimate valuelessness of all earthly things.

The desire for things is like rust, eating into the very body and soul.

Then sarcasm:

"Fine treasure you have heaped up for the last day—It will all decay!"

2. 5:4-6.....The way of selfishness and its end

1. The selfish rich have gained their riches by injustice.

Day laborer in Palestine was always a day away from starvation.

His pay was small.

He could not save.

Had to buy food with entire pay.

If pay was held back for even one day, the family did not eat.

It is a great injustice to hold back pay already earned.

The Bible is clear on this point:

Deuteronomy 24:14-15...14 *"You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns.*

15....." *You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the LORD and it become sin in you.*¹

Leviticus 19:13... *'You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning.'*²

God is for the poor; against the selfish rich.

Anchor Bible Commentary:

God is as much concerned with how we earn our money and how we spend it as he is with how much we put into the collection plate.

2. The selfish rich have used their wealth selfishly.

They have lived in luxury.

Greek: "to break down"...The soft living which in the end breaks down the life and destroys a man's moral fiber.

*wanton*³...to live in lewdness and lasciviousness. The selfish rich have used their wealth to gratify their own love of comfort and to satisfy their own lusts.

3. *nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter*⁴

The end of specially-fattened cattle / fowl is to be slaughtered for some feast.

Those who have sought the fat, luxurious life are fattening themselves for slaughter at the day of judgement.

¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁴*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

4. The selfish rich have slain the unresisting righteous man.

Christ was slain by selfish, sinful, rich men.

James may be saying, "In oppressing the poor, you rich are crucifying Christ again".

3. 5:7-9.....Waiting for the coming of the Lord

The early church expected the Second Coming. The farmer waits for the crops.

early...rains1...Late October / early November. Without it, the seed would not germinate.

late rains2...April / May. Without it, the grain would not mature.

Farmer needs patience; crops / Christian needs patience; Second Coming.

During the waiting, they must confirm their faith.

--Not blame one another, because in judging, they will break the royal law and will be condemned.

To walk in love with saints above
Will be a wondrous glory;
But to walk below with saints you know—
Well, that's another story!

James thought the judge was near.

The words used to describe the Second Coming...

The arrival of a king

God appearing to his people and mounting his eternal throne.

God directing on the world the full blaze of his heavenly glory.

1The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

2The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

NT teaching about the Second Coming:

1. No man knows the day or the hour, not even Christ.

Mark 13:32... *"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."*¹

Human speculation is futile and even blasphemous. None of us can know what is.

2. It will be unexpected and sudden to those who are not looking for him.

We cannot wait to get ready when he comes.

We must be ready for him to come.

Our duty:

1. We must be always watching / looking for him.

¹ Peter 4:7...*The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.*²

2. Long delay should not produce disbelief.

² Peter 3:4.....*and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."*¹

3. We must use the time given to us to prepare for his coming.

¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

4. We must have our relationship with fellow men in order.

Phil. 4:5...*Let your moderation ("forbearing spirit") be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.*²

"forbearing spirit"...a spirit that is more willing to forgive than to demand justice.

*...let not the sun go down upon your wrath*³

5. We should live close to Christ.

1 John 2:28...*Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.*⁴

This world, and its stuff is not purposeless, but is moving toward the great climax of Christ's Second Coming.

4. 5:10-11.....The triumphant patience

It is always a comfort to know others have come through what we have to go through.

The prophets could never have done their work without patient endurance.

*patience of Job*⁵...Far too passive a word.

We see him very passionate.

Passionate about what has happened to him

Passionately questioning his so-called friends.

Passionately agonizing over the thought that God may forsake him.

But the great fact we see is that he did not lose his faith.

¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

³*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁴*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁵*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

The word is a word that speaks of, not a passive patience, but a gallant spirit which can face the storms of doubt, sorrow, and disaster and come out stronger on the other side.

...A faith which may be tortured by doubt and questions, but which still believes.

5. 5:12.....Oaths needless, foolish

James is quoting Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5:33-37:

33*"Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.'*

34*"But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,*

35*or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.*

36*"Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.*

37.....*"But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything **beyond these is of evil.**¹*

This teaching was very important in the Jewish world—

The Jews considered two kinds of oaths—

Binding and non-binding.

Binding = specific name of God used—Once God's name was used, he became an active partner in keeping the oath.

Non-binding = If God's name was not specifically invoked, the oath could be ignored—

So it became a game of skill and wits to outfox your opponent or your business partner by pronouncing an oath which you could back away from.

--Complete mockery of the whole idea of swearing oaths in the first place.

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Mr. Clinton; good lawyers; sharp businessmen who think it isn't actually false, even if the impression given is false, It's OK.

Oathtaking was common—

The very fact that it was common defeated its purpose. The power of the oath lay in the fact that they weren't necessary. So when men began to multiply them, they became less effective.

Oaths prove lying and cheating.

Only when men cannot be trusted must they be put under oaths.

The rabbis said, "Accustom not thyself to vows, for sooner or later thou wilt swear false oaths".

The Essenes held that if a man required an oath to make him tell the truth, he had already branded himself untrustworthy.

Every word is spoken in the presence of God and therefore ought to be true.

6. 5:13-18.....Singing, Healing, Praying

James lists some great characteristics of the early church:

1. It was a singing church.

The early church used songs and hymns.

Ephesians 5:19... *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord*¹

Colossians 3:16... *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*²

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Pliny, governor of Bithynia, wrote to the Roman Emperor in AD 111 to tell him about Christians. He said,

They are in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it is light, when they sing in alternate verses a hymn to Christ as God.

Truly we have something to sing about— The gift of salvation through Christ.

2. A healing church:

The Jew who was sick went first to the rabbi, then to the doctor. The rabbi anointed him with oil.

Justin Martyr writes that many demoniacs were healed by Christians after exorcists had been helpless to cure them.

Tertullian in appo. 250 AD says the Roman Emperor Alexander Severus was healed by anointing administered by a Christian named Torpacion. In gratitude, he kept him as a guest in the palace until the day of his death.

In the first Epistle of Clement, the prayer of the church is "Heal the sick; raise up the weak; cheer the faint-hearted."

ANOINT WITH OIL

Many earnest students of the Scriptures have been puzzled over verse 14. In this verse a ceremony is described in which oil is used in connection with the sick. Nowhere else in the New Testament is similar teaching to be found. So the

question is raised, "Should we, in the present day, anoint with oil in such cases?" Some godly Christians answer this question strongly in the affirmative. C. T. Studd, alone in the heart of Africa except for one young co-worker only twenty years of age, seemed at the point of death. In the darkest hour he recalled this promise. He writes: "There was but one 'elder' and he was in his twentieth year; no matter, 'One day is as a thousand years.' But where was the oil? Neither salad, olive or even linseed oil did we possess! What's the matter with lamp oil? What, kerosene? Why not? It is oil, and that is all the Book says, and we cannot afford to be narrow-minded. The 'elder' brought in the lamp oil, dipped his finger, anointed my forehead, and then knelt down and prayed. How God did it I don't know, nor do I care; but this I knew next morning, that whereas I was sick, nigh unto death, now I was healed. We can trust Him too little, but we cannot trust God too much (C.T. Studd, by Norman P. Grubb, pp. 152-3).

3. a praying church

There are three Jewish ideas here.

1. The Jews believed sickness was due to sin.

The rabbis said, "There is no death without guilt, and no suffering without sin."

They believed the sickness could not be healed without God's forgiveness. When Jesus healed the man with the palsy in Mark 2:5, he began by saying, "*Son, your sins are forgiven.*"¹ We know today that there doesn't necessarily have to be a connection between sickness and sin.

¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

What we also know is that no man can know true healing of mind, soul or body until he is right with God.

The connection between the body and the mind has been well documented medically.

2. Confession is very important to the healing process.

That's why we make it a part of the anointing service. Confession is especially important to be made to the person who has been wronged.

We remove two barriers when we confess—

--The barrier between us and God,

--The barrier between us and fellow men.

Sin breaks our fellowship with God and with man.

Horizontal, vertical relationships.

3. The Jew thought that no limits can be set to the power of prayer.

Jewish saying: "He who prays surrounds his house with a wall stronger than iron." Penitence can do something; but prayer can do everything.

Tennyson wrote:

More things are wrought by prayer
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or goats
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend?

For so the whole round earth is every way bound
by gold chains about the feet of
God.

"Elijah a man like us"...What a mind boggler! Muller, a man who ran a vast orphanage with 100s of orphans, never asked men for money. He simply prayed. He says,

It is true that faith, which I am enabled to exercise, is altogether God's own gift; it is true that He alone supports it, and that He alone can increase; it is true that, moment by moment, I depend upon Him for it, and that, if I were only one moment left to myself, my faith would utterly fail; but it is not true that my faith is that gift of faith which is spoken of in I Corinthians 12:9...it is the self-same faith which is found in every believer, and the growth of which I am sensible of to myself....

[George Muller, while trying to decide if God wanted him to minister and work in Germany...

5 great difficulties lay in the way]

I had a secret satisfaction in the greatness of the difficulties which were in the way. So far from being cast down on account of them, they delighted my soul; for I only desired to do the will of the Lord in this matter...the greater the obstacles, the more abundantly plain the proof, that I had come to a right judgement, if they were removed by prayer...I did nothing but pray. Prayer and faith, the universal remedies against every want and every difficulty; and the nourishment of prayer and faith, God's Holy Word, helped me over all the difficulties.

7. 5:19-20 Truth must be practiced

*truth*¹...The NT is clear we must not just know the truth—We must "do" the truth.

We must love the truth (2 Thess. 2:10).

We must obey the truth (Gal. 5:7).

Truth must be displayed in our lives (2 Cor. 4:2).

It must be spoken in love (Eph. 4:15).

John 3:21... "*But he who practices the truth comes to the Light...*"²

John says we must practice the truth.

A. vv. 19-20..... Rescuing sinning souls

The saving of a soul is the most noble endeavor we can aspire to. James is talking here not of a soul finding salvation, but of a soul who, having been saved, wanders away from the truth.

To turn that one back, to snatch him as a brand from the fire is indeed a noble work.

*cover a multitude of sins*³...Probably refers to the making right of many sins in the wanderers life. Another way of saying they are forgiven.

*save a soul from death*⁴...Probably physical death.

Church taught that persistence in sin can lead to pre-natural death.

1 Cor. 11:30...*For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep*¹

The man in 1 Cor. 5 who was sinning with his father's wife was to be turned over to Satan for the *destruction of his flesh*². Possibly physical death.

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²*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁴*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

Anchor Bible Commentary:

Doremus Hayes writes of this entire epistle:

All who are long on theory and short on practice ought to steep themselves in the sprit of James; and since there are such people in every community and every age, the message of the epistle will never grow old.

VII. Closing Thoughts

Belvidere (vv. 1-4)...6/30/02

R.C. Sproul tells how a beautiful 36-year-old lady came to see him for counseling. She was a knockout--absolutely stunning.

She shocked him by beginning the conversation by saying, "You need to help me. I'm ugly. I don't like myself. I can't relate to my husband."

He wasn't sure if she was fishing for a compliment, but she was serious. This beautiful lady truly thought she was ugly!

As R.C. questioned her, this tragic story came out:

She had developed early, and by the 7th grade she had a very shapely body. She also had zits, pimples, buckteeth, and glasses like Coke bottles. One day she was walking across the school lot when she heard one of the boys saying to another, "Put a bag over her head and she would be a knockout." That thoughtless statement stayed with her. By the time R.C. saw her, the orthodontist had fixed the teeth; the pimples and zits were replaced by a lovely complexion; the glasses were replaced by contacts. But she still thought she was ugly— She still thought she should have a bag over her head.

All because of a tragic, thoughtless remark made years before.

How carefully we should guard our words.

Rom. 3:13 says, "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS"¹

R.C. tells how he had a beautiful German shepherd puppy, Hosanna. It was out in the yard one day and was bitten by a rattlesnake. Its head was 2 times normal size. He took it to the vet. He told him, "There is a 50/50 chance that the dog will survive." He left it there. Several weeks later the vet called. He said, "You can come and get your dog. But you need to know it isn't very pretty anymore." He explained that the poison had caused the skin and flesh on the dog's face to die and slough off (nucrosous).

He was prepared, but could not believe how ugly the dog's face was. Every place the poison had touched had fallen off. It was scabbed and grotesquely twisted into a hideous sight. R.C. brought the dog home, and every time he looks at that dog's face, he is reminded of the power of the tongue to poison and harm.

We have sacks of venom under our tongues that can deeply wound and kill the psyches of those we speak to.

¹ *The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.