

# THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

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**I. WRITER:** There are 3 possibilities as to which James wrote this epistle.

**(1) James the son of Zebedee, the brother of John, one of the twelve.** He was one of Jesus' "inner circle" along with his brother and Peter. In Acts 12, Herod beheaded James. His death occurred early in the Jerusalem's church development which makes it impossible for him to be the writer.

**(2) James the son of Alphaeus, also one of the twelve apostles.** Matthew was also called the "son of Alphaeus". Is it possible that he was Matthew's brother? Very little is written about James and along with the lack of any leadership position would argue against him being the writer.

**(3) James, "the Lord's brother".** Matthew recorded that James was the name of one of Jesus' half-brothers (Matt. 13:55). James was an unbeliever during the days of Jesus's earthly ministry (John 7:5 – For neither did his brethren believe in him). But then in 1 Corinthians 15, we learn that after Jesus' resurrection, He first appeared to Peter, then the twelve (vs 5), then 500 brethren at once (vs 6), then we read of a meeting between Jesus and James:

**1 Corinthians 15:7** – After that, he was seen of James...

James's life was transformed by this meeting with Jesus. He was soon numbered among the apostles and according to Galatians 1 and Acts 15, he emerged as a leader in the church of Jerusalem. Thus, it is almost unanimously believed that the writer of this epistle is this James, the half-brother of Jesus.

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

James' life demonstrated humility. He began his epistle, referring to himself as a servant, a term meaning "bondslave." Although he was Jesus' half-brother and an apostle, he did not refer to himself as such.

**II. AUDIENCE:**

James is writing to the "12 tribes scattered abroad" referring to the Christian Jews that were scattered by the persecution that erupted in Jerusalem after the death of Stephen in Acts 8:4 - "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word". If so, James was writing to people he knew and loved. He had pastored them in Jerusalem, prayed for them in their dispersion, and now was writing to them with a shepherd's concern.

**III. DATE:** There is quite a bit of debate: 45 – 60 A.D. We will use 59/60 A.D.

Outline of James

- I. The Christian and His Battles (James 1:2–16)
- II. The Christian and His Bible (James 1:17–27)
- III. The Christian and His Brethren (James 2:1–13)
- IV. The Christian and His Beliefs (James 2:14–26)
- V. The Christian and His Behavior (James 3:1–4:12)
- VI. The Christian and His Boasting (James 4:13–5:6)
- VII. The Christian and His Burdens (James 5:7–20)

- I. The Christian and His Battles (1:2-16)
  - A. The Testings of the Christian Life (1:2-12)
    - 1. Testings are for a purpose (1:2-11)

**1:2 - <sup>2</sup>My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;**

The word translated here as “temptations” refers trials, afflictions, or adversity. The word pictures putting gold into the fire to test its purity. The word “divers” refers to different types of trials and adversity. Paul taught his young converts at the end of his 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey “that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” For what reason?

**1:3,4 - <sup>3</sup>Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. <sup>4</sup>But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.**

While God has many goals in allowing us to go through trials and adversity, the one emphasized here by James is patience. Just as Paul wrote in Romans 5:3, “knowing that tribulation worketh patience.” Patience is the sign of maturation and completion.

True patience is a surrendered will, knowing and believing that Romans 8:28 are true: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Apparently, patience can come no other way than by trials.

**1:5 - <sup>5</sup>If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.**

What a precious promise! God will not be upset with you asking for wisdom. Christ said in Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it shall be given you..." We need to be humble enough to ask for it.

**1:6,7 - <sup>6</sup>But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. <sup>7</sup>For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.**

God does not reward a lack of faith. Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please him:"

**1:8 - <sup>8</sup>A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.**

Faith brings stability. A double minded person can't stick to their decisions. In life we face many major decisions. A double minded man doesn't have the faith to stick to the right decision. And that lack of the ability to trust God can cause a person to forfeit God's will and blessings for their life.

**1:9 - <sup>9</sup>Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:**

God wants us to be able to rejoice in our humility by focusing on all that we have in Christ. Humility is valued by God. We see repeatedly in His word that God resists the proud. And God blesses us when we are willing to humble ourselves (he is exalted).

**1:10,11 - <sup>10</sup>But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. <sup>11</sup>For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.**

For a rich person to be able to rejoice when they lose the riches that they once had requires a focus on what they have in Christ.

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John Phillips wrote:

"To rejoice in adversity is a whole lot harder! There is nothing particularly spiritual about being poor, and there is nothing particularly sinful about being rich. Temptations exist at both extremes (and that's why Paul said in Philippians 4:11 "...for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound:..").

In His parable of the sower in Matthew 13, Christ pointed to the thorns that choked out part of the harvest and He said that the thorns represented "the cares of this world" which can be one of the greatest problems of the poor, and "the deceitfulness of riches", which can be one of the greatest problems of the rich. Worry about survival on the one hand and wanting more wealth on the other. Both can "choke the word". Rich or poor, the important thing is to keep close to Christ and to be content."

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### 2. Testings are for our profit (1:12)

**1:12 - <sup>12</sup>Blessed is the man that endureth temptation (or adversity): for when he is tried (or approved), he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.**

This word temptation can have one of two meanings: an appeal to sin, or a trial of adversity. James will use it both ways. Here James is referring to the effect of adversity and affliction, and that is that it refines us as gold and silver are refined.

**Prov. 25:4 - Take away the dross from the silver, And there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.**

Adversity and trials refine us or make us so that we may be conformed to the image of Christ and be better used by God. James then emphasizes the crown of life for those who endure the trials God allows them to go through. The crown of life is promised to “them that love Him.” And if we love Him, we will endure the trials and adversity He brings into our life.

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### B. The Temptations of the Christians Life (1:13-16)

**1:13 - <sup>13</sup>Let no man say when he is tempted (to sin), I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:**

Again, this word temptation is used in two senses: testing under trials, as in verses 2-12 and now an appeal to sin in verses 13-14. James says that we cannot blame God for our temptation to sin and that God does not tempt any person to sin.

Most of our temptations to sin come from within our own heart (our thoughts), which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). Christ said in Mark 7 that sin comes from out of our heart: we have to think on something within our heart before it can come out in action.

**Mark 7:21-23 - For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.**

**1:14 - <sup>14</sup>But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.**

Temptation comes from one of three sources: the world, the flesh, or the devil. Remember, John also gave three areas of temptation that the world provides:

**1 John 2:16 - <sup>16</sup>For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh (desire to do what I want), and the lust of the eyes (desire to have what I want), and the pride of life (the desire to be what I want),**

But all of these sources cannot force us to sin. They can only draw our attention and “tempt” us. All sin begins in our hearts as our heart either decides to agree with the temptation or it decides to reject it. When our heart agrees with that temptation then lust has then conceived within our heart and it’s just a matter of time before the sin will be manifested outwardly.

**1:15 - <sup>15</sup>Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.**

A child is conceived when two seeds, the seed of a man and a seed of a woman come together. In like manner, the lust within our heart joins with the outward temptation (those are the two seeds), to form a conception that brings forth (or gives birth to) sin. The temptation cannot conceive to give birth to sin without being joined with the desire of our heart. Our heart has to agree to it.

James then says that sin brings forth death. Sin always brings forth death. Romans 6:23 – “The wages of sin is death”. For a lost person, this death takes a person to hell. For the saved person, sin cuts off, like death, our fellowship with God. It is not until we confess it, forsake it, and ask for forgiveness that our fellowship with Him is restored.

**1:16 - <sup>16</sup>Do not err, my beloved brethren.**

James wants us to not be deceived about it.

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II. The Christian and His Bible (1:17-27)

A. God’s Word is likened to a gift (1:17-18)

**1:17 - <sup>17</sup>Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.**

God only gives good gifts. Even those times of suffering and affliction are good gifts from God. But here, James is referring God’s Word as the good and perfect gift from God as we see in the next verse.

**1:18 - <sup>18</sup>Of his own will begat he us (born again) with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.**

God brings about the new birth through His Word. How? Hearing the law convicts us of sin and reveals to us our lost state, then hearing the gospel gives us the focus to place our faith: Jesus Christ.

**Romans 10:17 - “. . .faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”**

**1 Peter 1:23 - <sup>23</sup>Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.**

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B. God's Word is likened to a graft (1:19-22)

1. To effect a change in our talk (1:19-20)

**1:19,20 - <sup>19</sup>Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: <sup>20</sup>For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.**

James write "Slow to speak": Because our speech reveals what's in our hearts. We might say, "I spoke without thinking". No, that's not true. Every word we speak comes out of our heart, and our brain. What we really mean is, "I didn't think it over and weigh the consequences before I spoke".

We get ourselves into more trouble with our mouths than with our actions and we hurt the people around us more with our words than we'll probably ever know.

"Slow to wrath". Most of the time our anger is pride based: we feel disrespected, or our expectations aren't being met. An uncontrolled temper will ruin our testimony as much as any immorality could.

2. To effect a change in our walk (1:21-22)

**1:21 - <sup>21</sup>Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted (or implanted) word, which is able to save your souls.**

By using that word "engrafted" or implanted, James is saying the principles of the Bible should be implanted into our nature, into our thinking. "Sin will keep you from the Bible, or the Bible will keep you from sin. Receiving with "meekness" means receiving the word of God with an attitude of humility whereby we accept God's dealings with us as good and do not resist His Word.

It is "able to save your souls". If applied to the lost, we've already seen how we're born again by the word of God. If applied to saved people: the word of God is able to rescue our souls from trouble in this life if we apply it.

**1:22 - <sup>22</sup>But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.**

Christ finished the Sermon on the Mount with the parable of the fool who built his house upon the sand as the person who doesn't obey the word of God and the wise man who built his house upon the rock as the person who obeys the word of God.

John Phliips wrote: "Bible study is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. And that end is responding. The Bible calls for a response, to do what it says! If we don't, it's like pouring water into a sieve."

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C. God's Word is likened to a glass (1:23-27)

1. A challenging experience (1:23-24)

**1:23,24 - <sup>23</sup>For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: <sup>24</sup>For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.**

James introduces a third illustration, that is the Word of God acts as a mirror. It shows us what we really are. If we look in a mirror and see a dirty face, but do nothing about it, you go away unchanged. If we look into the mirror of God's Word and it shows our sin, our flaws, but then you do not obey it, you go away unchanged. It is easy to read the word of God and think it is a picture of someone else: when in actuality it is a picture of you and me.

2. A changing experience (1:25-27)

**1:25 - <sup>25</sup>But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.**

Obedience to the word of God brings liberty, disobedience brings bondage.

**1:26 - <sup>26</sup>If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.**

The word "religious" means spiritual. They "seem" to think of themselves as spiritual, but the lack of control of their tongue shows they are deceived about their true condition.

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One commentator (Phillips) wrote: "Christianity is not a religion; it is a relationship. It is Christ. A person could be religious and yet miss the whole point of Christianity altogether. The test of true religion, according to James, came down to how that religion affected a person's tongue. A person who seems to be "religious" but who cannot control his tongue is self-deceived. His religion is useless."

**1:27 - <sup>27</sup>Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction (this is Christian service), and to keep himself unspotted from the world (this is separation).**

Pure religion or true salvation is manifested by serving others and separation from the world. James is saying that salvation has evidence. First, there is the concern for others by reaching out to them. Second, there is separation from the world.

**Romans 12:2 - And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**

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### III. The Christian and His Brethren (2:1-13)

#### A. Partiality: a sin against the Lord (2:1-7)

##### 1. The problem stated (2:1-4)

**2:1 - <sup>1</sup>My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons.**

It has been said many times, "The ground is level at the cross" meaning, all men are sinners in need of a Saviour. It does not matter, rich or poor, young or old, important or unimportant. God is no respecter of persons, so neither can we be:

**Acts 10:34 - Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:...**

James is saying faith in Christ is incompatible with discrimination. The two simply do not mix.

**2:2-4 - <sup>2</sup>For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; <sup>3</sup>And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: <sup>4</sup>Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?**

James is warning against thinking about people unequally and treating people unequally. It is pure hypocrisy for a Christian to favor someone because of their social position or economic situation.

##### 2. The problem studied (2:5-7)

**2:5 - <sup>5</sup>Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?**

All of the apostles, except perhaps Matthew were poor, and so were many of the prophets. It is not a sin to be rich, but riches can change deceive people into believing either they are right with God, because they think He is blessing them financially, or they think they do not need God.

**2:6,7 - <sup>6</sup>But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? <sup>7</sup>Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?**

We should not admire the rich or desire to be one of them. Why? Because so often it is the rich to oppose God's people, oppress God's people, and blaspheme God?

#### B. Partiality: a sin against the law (2:8-13)



**2:8 - <sup>8</sup>If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:**

James quotes Leviticus 19:18 and calls this the “royal law”.

**Leviticus 19:18 - Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD.**

Christ had stated in Matthew 22 that the first and great commandment was to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind”. Then He said the second was to “love thy neighbor as thyself”. This command is easy to understand, but very difficult to do. And in the context here, it means loving the poor as well as the rich.

**2:9 - <sup>9</sup>But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.**

James tells us that any respect of persons is sin. To discriminate or think we are better than someone else, to be prejudiced is in the same category of sin.

**2:10 - <sup>10</sup>For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all.**

Any sin at all makes us a “sinner”! You can keep all the 10 commandments your whole life, but then you just break one commandment, just one time, then you have broken them all. In context, James was if you live a spotless life, but discriminate or show partiality, then you are guilty of breaking the whole Law of God.

John Phillips wrote this:

“Certain sins do not tempt us at all. But we all have some areas where we are vulnerable. To break just one of God’s commandments, just one time, is all that it takes to constitute one a sinner. Our failure to keep all of the commandments makes us guilty of breaking all of the commandments. It takes only one sin to make a person guilty.”

**2:11 - For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.**

Again, to break one law makes one a lawbreaker, a condemned transgressor of God’s Law.

**2:12,13 - <sup>12</sup>So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup>For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.**

The “law of liberty” is literally the law by which we are made free. I think it refers to the gospel. James is also saying that, if we have received mercy through believing the gospel, we need to show mercy ourselves.

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**Matthew 5:7 - *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.***

One commentator wrote, "If God's mercy does not touch our hearts and transform our lives, then His mercy and forgiveness might very well be withdrawn. (Not that we would lose our salvation, but He may allow us to suffer all the reaping that our sowing demands.) The principle, as set forth by James, is that the person who makes no allowances for others will find that no allowance will be made for them either. God expects that recipients of His mercy will have a change of heart toward others."

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### IV. The Christian and His Beliefs (2:14-26)

This is the passage that has caused all the controversy through the centuries. Paul made it abundantly clear in many passages that faith in the sacrifice of Christ alone can save us.

**Romans 3:28 - Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.**

**Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.**

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### A. The approach (2:14)

**2:14 - What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?**

James is attacking the error of what we call today, "easy believism". It is an intellectual acceptance of the truth without repentance that does not result in the salvation of the soul. James is asking, "can that type of faith save anyone?" when he asks, "though a man may say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?"

One commentator wrote, "We have all met people who say that they believe but whose lives contradict the claim. This was James's concern."

James is asking, "Can that type of faith, that has no evidence, save anyone?" He simply says that the faith which saves you will produce works of faith, not to earn salvation, but because of salvation. And if there are no works manifesting from the faith that a man claims to have, is that faith real? Simply claiming to be saved doesn't save anyone. True salvation is a conversion wrought by the Spirit of God resulting in the repentance of the person and subsequent faith in Christ, with the consequence of works following. Paul is in total agreement with this in:

**Ephesians 2:8-10** - <sup>8</sup>For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God:* <sup>9</sup>Not of works, lest any man should boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

The good works are ordained of God to follow our being saved by grace through faith.

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B. The appraisal (2:15-18)

**2:15,16** - <sup>15</sup>If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, <sup>16</sup>And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit?

A starving Christian brother cannot be saved from his starvation by mere words.

**1 John 3:17** - But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (it doesn't)

**2:17,18** - <sup>17</sup>Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. <sup>18</sup>Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.

Simply put: One has a dead faith if it does not produce good works or a changed life.

**2 Corinthians 5:17** - <sup>17</sup>Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

If there is no external evidence of converting faith, then there probably was no conversion at all. At salvation, the Holy Spirit enters into us, and we are changed. If you've been saved, you can remember that change. Instead of living to please yourself, the difference was that now you care about pleasing God. And that desire to please God will be manifested in our life with works.

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C. The application (2:19-20)

**2:19-20** - <sup>19</sup>Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. <sup>20</sup>But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

Simply believing in God has saved no one. Most people in hell today believed in God and many believed in Jesus Christ. Remember Matthew 7:21-23 tells us that: "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;..." We need to be born again by the Spirit of God. James is saying the demons also believed in God and believed that Christ was the Son of God.

**Luke 4:41** - <sup>41</sup>And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking *them* suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.

Those demons feared Christ, and even obeyed His commandments, but didn't repent. So, a belief in God and in Christ without repentance and submitting to Christ as Lord will not save anyone. So, there is a dead faith, a false profession, a mental agreement to the facts of the Word of God and the gospel. And there is a living faith with the fruit of the Spirit that can't be faked. It is a good thing to examine ourselves, whether we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5). It strengthens our assurance, or it reveals to us that we are lost.

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#### D. The appeal (2:21-26)

Paul and James each looked at the word justified from two sides. James uses the word "justified" here in chapter 2 to refer to the fact that a person is proven to be righteous by their works, not made righteous by their works. Paul used the word "justified" to being made righteous by their faith.

**2:21-24** - <sup>21</sup>Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? <sup>22</sup>Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? **23**And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. <sup>24</sup>Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

James gives 2 examples here of genuine faith, Abraham and Rahab. Remember, James is using the word "justified" in the sense of being shown to be righteous (not made righteous). "Was not Abraham our father shown to be righteous by works, when he had offered Isaac his son..."

Abraham's faith was shown to be real in his obedience, in his works of being willing to offer Isaac. Is our faith real or complete if we say we believe, but we don't put our faith into action and obey? And notice verse 23, that Abraham's obedience then fulfilled the scripture of Genesis 15:6 which said that Abraham believed in the Lord and God counted that belief for righteousness.

So, Abraham's willingness to obey and offer Isaac fulfilled or "verified" that scripture that he was saved by faith. His faith was proven to be real by his works. The Bible is clear, however, that his faith was counted to him for righteousness and not his works. He was saved by faith!

**Romans 4:1-3** - <sup>1</sup>What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? <sup>2</sup>For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God. <sup>3</sup>For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness (in Genesis 15:6, long before Isaac was even born).

So, clearly Abraham was saved by his faith, but his faith was shown to be true (justified) by his works. He demonstrated his faith by his actions: he believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead, so he obeyed God's command to offer his son on the altar. His faith enabled him to obey God.

**2:25 - <sup>25</sup>Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified (shown to be righteous) by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way?**

Hebrews 11:31 tells us "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." She betrayed her own people by hiding the Israelite spies. She also put her life and the life of her family at risk by doing it.

Because of the statement that she made in Joshua 2:11... "for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." She acted out of faith in Jehovah, believing God was going to destroy her city, but that also He was able and willing to spare her and her family. She was shown to be righteous by what she had done. She ended up marrying Salmon and became the mother of Boaz, and the great-great grandmother of David and was in the line of the Messiah!

**2:26 - <sup>26</sup>For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.**

When a person dies, the spirit of the person departs and all that remains is a dead body. James makes the application that faith without evidence is a dead faith. There is no change in the life of that person because there is no Holy Spirit inside that person.

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V. The Christian and His Behavior (3:1-4:12)

A. Sin in the life revealed (3:1-4:5)

Remember that chapter and verse divisions in the Bible were added later. So, in the context of "faith without works is dead", James brings up how saving faith should be manifested in our life. He begins with the tongue.

1. Sin in the mouth (3:1-12)

**3:1 - <sup>1</sup>My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.**

"Masters" means teachers or instructors.

**1 Corinthians 12:28,29 - And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers,...**

**Ephesians 4:11,12 - And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers, For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:**

Teachers were connected with pastors, and perhaps the offices were united in one person. God will judge teachers in a more stringent way than nonteachers. Luke 12:48 - "For unto whomsoever much is given of him shall be much required:" A teacher has a grave responsibility: basically, to commit or transmit the truth to the next generation. And to do that he/she must:

- 1) Live what he teaches ("Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only": he will lose those he is attempting to teach if he isn't),
- 2) To be certain he is teaching the right thing ("Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needed not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth").
- 3) To be certain he is teaching *all* the counsel of God. The positive and negative.

God holds all of us, but especially teachers accountable for what we say.

**3:2 - <sup>2</sup>For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect (*telios*: meaning complete, mature) man, and able also to bridle the whole body.**

James gives a characteristic of the perfect man; besides being patient, he is able by God's grace to control his mouth and not offend with it. Spiritual maturity is reflected by control of one's tongue.

James now gives us several illustrations to drive home the point of how difficult it is to control the tongue and how powerful of an influence it is in our lives.

**3:3-4 - <sup>3</sup>Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. <sup>4</sup>Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.**

James is making the point that if a man can control a powerful horse with a simple bit and bridle and can control a great ship with a simple rudder, then why can't man control his own small tongue? The answer again, is that our tongue is controlled by our heart. Even though it is small, the tongue possesses great control over our lives and those around us.

**Proverbs 18:21 - Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.**

Our words can be so destructive to those around us. A harsh word from a parent can crush a child and leave a wound that lasts a lifetime.

**3:5-6 - <sup>5</sup>Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! <sup>6</sup>And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.**

The tongue is compared to a fire: when it is under control, it is a blessing; when it is out of control, it is devastating. And it only takes a spark to start a forest fire. Our mouth can literally destroy those around us emotionally and spiritually. The scars we can leave with our tongue can cause effects that last a lifetime. If we can't control our tongue, we can destroy those around us.

**3:7-8 - <sup>7</sup>For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: <sup>8</sup>But the tongue can no man tame; *it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.***

Man has trained all sorts of animals to do his will. Lions and tigers in circuses. Elephants as submissive workers. But not our tongue. The tongue is untamable because it is controlled by our heart, which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. However, although no man can tame his own tongue on his own, if he is saved, the Holy Spirit within will be evidenced by some change in his speech.

**3:9-12 - <sup>9</sup>Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. <sup>10</sup>Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. <sup>11</sup>Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter? <sup>12</sup>Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.**

James gives three examples from nature of things bringing forth what God designed them to bring forth: a water spring, a fig tree, and a vine. They all produce what God designed them to produce. And if a person's tongue is bringing forth cursing instead of blessing towards others, it is because there is something wrong with that person's heart. Perhaps that person may need to be saved.

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## 2. Sin in the mind (3:13-18)

**3:13 - <sup>13</sup>Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.**

True wisdom based upon the fear of the Lord will show itself with meekness. "Knowledge puffeth up" (1 Corinthians 8:1), but wisdom from God gives meekness, which is "strength under control". Wisdom is demonstrated by the decisions we make every minute of every day, and true wisdom doesn't seek to show itself off.

**3:14-16 - <sup>14</sup>But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. <sup>15</sup>This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish. <sup>16</sup>For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work.**

The "wisdom" of the world wants to show itself off and draw attention to itself. It loves to argue and strive. But the mind of Christ has no envy or strife (mentioned in Philippians 2, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."). We can't do God's will with an attitude of wanting credit or recognition.

**3:17-18 - <sup>17</sup>But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup>And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.**

The wisdom which comes from God is not mingled or mixed: it's undiluted and pure. It manifests the fruit of the Spirit. The Greek word for "gentle" describes a person who does not stand up for his rights but who is willing to make room for others. The word for "easy to be entreated" can be translated also as "approachable", or "compliant".

True wisdom that is given by the Holy Spirit of God dwelling within results in meekness, humility, mercy, and forbearance (yielding to others). It has patience and foresight to see that God will judge matters justly and doesn't need instant justification and recognition.

### 3. Sin in the members (4:1-5)

**4:1 - <sup>1</sup>From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?***

Mankind will always be striving and fighting with each other until we are all either in the lake of fire or given our glorified body. Why will men always be fighting? Because of our sin nature.

**4:2 - <sup>2</sup>Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.**

This desire to have and killing to obtain is the spirit of the lost person and in opposition to the Spirit of Christ (which teaches us to "let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves"). That spirit of selfishness and pride represents the old nature.

Then James mentions "Ye have not because ye ask not". He tells us that our desires should be taken to the Lord in prayer - to have them fulfilled, denied, or refined to His will. And we need to accept the answer from Him.

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One commentator (Phillips) wrote:

"Prayer is a mysterious thing. It is one of the laws of the universe, as real and as functional as the laws of electricity, sound, magnetism, or light. As God weighs all of the factors of matter, space, and time in the balances of His purposes, so He takes into account all of the features of our nature, persons, and personalities, along with all of the facets of our minds, hearts, and wills. Along with all of these things, He takes into consideration our prayers. The prayers of God's people are an important factor in the great equation of His involvement in the affairs of this world. God assures us that our prayers count."



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**4:3 - <sup>3</sup>Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.**

Prayer is not guaranteed to get us whatever our hearts desire. God is not going to grant us our every wish. Scripture teaches several principles about praying properly.

1) It should be in line with God's will. God will not bless a prayer of selfishness.

**1 John 5:14 - And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.**

2) It should be in faith:

**Matthew 21:22 - <sup>22</sup>And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.**

3) It needs to come from a heart that is not harboring unconfessed sin.

**Psalms 66:18 | If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*:**

4) It should have some fervency, not indifference. Fervency means we care.

**James 5:16 - <sup>16</sup>Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**

5) It should be offered in an attitude of thanksgiving and praise.

**Philippians 4:6 - Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.**

**4:4 - <sup>4</sup>Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.**

Idolatry in the Old Testament was equated with adultery. If we have been saved, we have been bought with a price, and we belong to Christ. To have a love for the world is to commit adultery in our relationship with Christ.

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**1 John 2:15 - <sup>15</sup>Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

“A man may have a competent portion of the good things of this life, and yet may keep himself in the love of God; but he who sets his heart upon the world, who places his happiness in it, and will conform himself to it, and do any thing rather than lose its friendship, he is an enemy to God; it is constructive treason and rebellion against God to set the world upon his throne in our hearts.”

-Matthew Henry

**4:5 - <sup>5</sup>Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?**

This is a difficult verse. Barnes writes, “Few passages of the New Testament have given expositors more perplexity than this verse.” It is hard to find an OT verse that fits this quote. And so expositors can only guess if it is God’s spirit or man’s spirit spoken of. There are 2 ways to interpret it:

1) Is this saying that man’s spirit within him lusts enviously? That’s the way Matthew Henry sees it:

“The spirit which naturally dwells in man is always producing one evil imagination or another, always emulating such as we see and converse with and seeking those things which are possessed and enjoyed by the world. Now this way of the world, stirring up lusts and falling into strifes and quarrels for the sake of these things, is the certain consequence of being friends to the world.”

-Matthew Henry

2) Is this saying that God’s Spirit that dwells in us is jealous of us? That seems to fit the context of verse 4, that we’re committing adultery if we love the world.

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B. Sin in the life resisted (4:6-10)

1. The call to submit (4:6-7)

**4:6 - <sup>6</sup>But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.**

James now gives us in this verse the secret of spiritual strength: humility to access the grace of God.

Phillips wrote:

“To accept God’s grace, we must lay aside all pride and come as a repentant sinner to the foot of the cross. He “giveth grace unto the humble”, adds James. God’s grace does not end with our salvation; it provides us with all that John we need for the journey home. The key is the word grace. That is the secret of the virtuous life. It is the deathblow to our pride. The proud man will not accept God’s grace, so God resists him.”

If we want God’s grace in our life; we need to remain humble. Because pride in our heart will cause God to resist us. God resists self-sufficiency and pride in any form, but He blesses humility. One of the best illustrations of this from the Old Testament is King Uzziah (or Azariah). King Uzziah began to reign when he was 16 years old:

**2 Chronicles 26:5 - And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.**

He prospered greatly. He had military successes against the Philistines and Arabians. He was rich, powerful, and famous! He had it all! But all of it was from God!

**2 Chronicles 26:16 - But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.**

His pride got him into trouble and God gave him leprosy to humble him.

How do we keep ourselves humble especially after God has blessed us and our ministry? One way is our daily devotions that include a time of thanking God for all He's done will keep our heart humble and loving God as we see all He's done for us.

**4:7 - <sup>7</sup>Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**

This is the second secret to spiritual victory. However, we tend to focus on the second half of this verse, "resist the devil, and he will flee from you". But resisting Satan in the flesh will not cause him to flee. Satan is not the least bit afraid of us. In fact, trying to resist him in the flesh is what he wants us to do: He is the master of deception, and he knows all about us.

The key is the first part, "Submit yourselves therefore to God". Our submission to God causes Satan to flee. Resisting the devil requires humility and dependence upon God instead of upon self.

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2. The call to commit (4:8-10)

**4:8 - <sup>8</sup>Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.**

The call to submit to God is followed by a call to commit. We first submit ourselves to God and then we are to draw close to Him. God is pictured many times in Scripture as having prepared the way to Himself, holding out His hands, so to speak, waiting for our response to Him:

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**Isaiah 1:18 - Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.**

**Matthew 11:28-30 - Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls...**

**Revelation 3:20 - Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.**

God has made a way for all men to come unto Him, but we have to do our part as well. We have to go to Him, to seek Him.

**Jeremiah 29:13 - And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.**

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One commentator (Phillips) wrote this:

“Between God and man is distance that cannot be measured in miles (kilometers). That kind of distance expresses itself in rebellion, as when the Prodigal Son took his journey into the far country. That kind of distance expresses itself in self-righteous religion, as when the elder brother was angry and would not go up to the feast, preferring to sit outside in bitter, hypocritical scorn.

God has devised the means to bridge that great gulf on this side of the grave. God has taken the initiative. He has come as far as He can. Although He stops short of violating the human will, He stands with welcoming arms outstretched and says, “Come!” He refuses to close the book before He says it again and again, “Come! Come! Come! (3 times in Rev. 22:17).

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We come first as poor, lost sinners, and He puts us in His family. At times, we drift away, but He calls us back. James was doubtless thinking of some people who have wandered. “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” Straying sons are not like lost coins. Straying sons have wills of their own. The father of Prodigal Son did not run into the far country in search of his son. He watched and waited. When the prodigal came to an end of himself, arose, and came to his father, however, his father ran to meet him to welcome him home.

If distance has grown between God and us, we can be sure of one thing – God hasn’t moved! All kinds of things contribute to that distance. Failure to maintain a meaningful daily quiet time alone with God in prayer and in the Bible will do it. Allowing known and unconfessed sin in one’s life will do it. Exposing our minds to the wrong books, internet sites, television, or movies will do it. Indulging in questionable amusements will do it. Ignoring the prompting of the Holy Spirit will do it. Willful disobedience to God’s revealed will do it. God’s word is clear: “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.””

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**4:9-10 - <sup>9</sup>Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness. <sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.**

Backsliding needs to be a cause for mourning. Once we recognize our state of distance from God, we need to be heart-broken over it, instead of indifferent about it. It needs to affect us and move us. The realization that we are not right with God should cause us to grieve and yearn to change our course. Verse 10 again teaches that humility is required even for getting right with God.

### C. Sin in the life repudiated (4:11-12)

**4:11-12 - <sup>11</sup>Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. <sup>12</sup>There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?**

What is James saying when he says, “speak not evil one of another”? The Greek word translated as “speak evil” (in the negative) means “slander” or “criticism” or “accusation”. Paul wrote of this:

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**Ephesians 4:29-32 - Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. <sup>30</sup>And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: <sup>32</sup>And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.**

James expands it further to say, “he that speaketh evil of his brother and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law.” James combines the two (speaking evil and judging our brother) and says doing either is to speak evil of the law and judge the law.

We are not to judge others. There are certain things we are to judge (like doctrine), but not the person or heart or motive of others. So, just what should we judge? We are to judge certain things such as the spirits:

**1 John 4:1 - <sup>1</sup>Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.**

**Matthew 7:15,16 - Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. <sup>16</sup> Ye shall know them by their fruits.**

And we’re also to try the doctrines being taught. We’re even to mark those involved in the false teaching and avoid them:

**Romans 16:17 <sup>17</sup>Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.**

But, at the same time, we're not to speak evil of anyone, including those which have been just mentioned:

**Titus 3:2 - To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.**

In summary, we are to judge actions and doctrines, not people and their hearts. No human is worthy to judge another human.

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## VI. The Christian and His Boasting (4:13-5:6)

### A. Boasting about our plans (4:13-17)

**4:13,14 - <sup>13</sup>Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: <sup>14</sup>Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.**

James warns against making big plans for the future without God's direction. Plans like moving to a different location, making money, climbing the career ladder, etc. those plans are worldly and carnal. We need to be more concerned with staying surrendered in the middle of God's will than with getting gain or advancing our careers.

For those who are saved, we need to let God plan our days and activities. We need to make our decisions based on faith as Paul wrote in Romans 14:23, ...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. All decisions we make without faith; without seeking God's will on it are sin like who to marry, which job to take, where to live, what activities we are going to allow ourselves to do, etc.

**4:15,16 - For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.**

Our lives are in the hand of God. He's the One who's really in control after all. And all that we do, if we are saved, we do by the grace of God. When we have thoughts of "I've really got my act together, I'm really going to accomplish a lot with my career, or with my finances, or with my abilities" we are ignoring His will in our life, and ignoring His plans for our life. Because the focus is on self and self-gain, that thinking is evil.

**4:17 - <sup>17</sup>Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.**

The context of this verse is insisting on making our own plans without considering God's will is sin. But the broader application is of course to *anything* that we know is Bible truth and not obeying it is sin. God holds us accountable for what we know.

### B. Boasting about our prosperity (5:1-6)

James is not condemning money. The problem is not money itself, but how our heart reacts to it. It is the love of money that is the root of all evil, not money itself (1 Tim. 6:10). James is not condemning people because they are rich, but because of their wrong relationship to their riches. He is condemning them for how they got their money, for what their money means to them, and for what they are doing with it after they get it.

In these 6 verses, James seems to be speaking of the ungodly (or lost) rich. He is telling his saved audience that they live in a wicked world where the godless rich will take advantage of them, knowing that God will deal with the godless rich in eternity.

This dilemma of the wicked prospering and getting rich while the servant of God can sometimes spend his life in poverty has been perplexing men throughout the ages. But God's word is clear that it should not bother us when the wicked prosper and get rich. Psalm 73, for example, is written on this topic. For the lost man, the riches of this life won't last forever, and the judgment of hell awaits them.

God's word is clear that, first of all, He wants His people to be hardworking, diligent, honest workers to provide for themselves, their own families, and for those in need (1 Thess. 4:11,12; 1 Timothy 5:8). And God blesses diligence and hard work. He may even allow us to prosper. He certainly prospered Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon and many of the kings of Judah.

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**Proverbs 10:22 - The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.**

**Proverbs 12:24 - The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.**

If God does bless and the riches come, He expects us not to set our hearts upon them and covet them:

**Psalm 62:10 - "...: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them."**

We should instead maintain the attitude that our trust is in God to provide for our needs, and not trust in the money itself. Being rich is not sinful in itself (after all, it's God who blessed), but where is the trust of the one who has money? Is it in the money or in God?

**1 Timothy 6:17 - Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;**

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**5:1 - <sup>1</sup>Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.**

There are times when God allows the rich to see the loss of their coveted riches during their lifetime. These miseries that James refers to may be both temporal (in this life) and eternal (if they don't get saved and end up in hell).

**5:2,3 - <sup>2</sup>Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.**

Verse 2 is a graphic description of lost wealth. In the light of the coming of Christ, the rich are warned that all the riches of the world will come to nothing. Christ's taught:

**Matthew 6:19-20 - <sup>19</sup>Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: <sup>20</sup>But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:**

And in verse 3, it is as if James is saying "When you die, your silver and gold will be left behind, rusting and cankered, wasting away". Death certainly separates a rich man from his money and James is condemning the rich for hoarding their money.

**5:4 - <sup>4</sup>Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.**

God will judge the manner in which we make money as well as how we've managed it. Were we fair in our work (for example, not cheating our employer by being lazy or being on our phones when we should be working), or were we fair in paying wages if we were the employer? Did we give liberally to the poor amongst us?

**5:5,6 - <sup>5</sup>Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup>Ye have condemned *and* killed the just; *and* he doth not resist you.**

James expresses condemnation to the rich who have ignored the needs of others, especially to those who have oppressed others to obtain their riches. Riches can make one proud and insensitive to the needs of others.

One commentator (Phillips) wrote, "What the oppressive rich people forget, in their dizzying round of pleasure and as they indulge their every whim at the expense of those whom they have swindled, is that a day of reckoning is to come."

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VII. The Christian and His Burdens (5:7-20)

A. The burden of poverty (5:7-11)

**5:7,8 - <sup>7</sup>Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. <sup>8</sup>Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.**



All through scripture we are taught that we should live with the coming of Christ in mind. The confidence of His second coming gives us hope and that hope should enable us to endure with patience whatever afflictions we face in this life.

**5:9 - <sup>9</sup>Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.**

We usually think of it as holding a grudge: being bitter and not forgiving someone for some offense we perceive they inflicted on us. But the Greek word translated as “grudge” can also mean “to murmur against.” So, James may be telling us not to murmur or complain against each other.

Christ’s second coming will also be a time of judgment for those who are saved at the judgment seat of Christ. James emphasizes that us holding any bitterness or envy in our heart against another saved person will bring us condemnation at the judgment seat. The children of God need to get right with each other.

**5:10,11 - <sup>10</sup>Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. <sup>11</sup>Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.**

As much as the prophets were honored and loved of God, and doing the will of God, they were intensely persecuted and suffered greatly. And the Bible is clear that if do live for Christ, we’ll face opposition and persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).

**Matthew 5:11,12 - Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.**

James then refers to Job in the sense of patience during afflictions. Job wasn’t suffering persecution as much as affliction. Affliction is hardship of any sort. Persecution is to suffer from someone’s pursuit of us: it comes from people. Affliction is used of God to teach us and mold us to become more like Christ. It is essential in the life of a Christian.

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B. The burden of proof (5:12)

**5:12 - <sup>12</sup>But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.**

God expects us to keep our oaths or vows, but Christ told us not to make them at all, but to just say yes or no and do what we say.

**Matthew 5:34,35 - But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.**

So, a simple yes or no will do. And we should keep it.

### C. The burden for prayer (5:13-18)

**5:13 - <sup>13</sup>Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry let him sing psalms.**

James now tells us our response to affliction should be prayer. God allows affliction for the primary purpose of turning us to Him and causing us to grow in Christlikeness.

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**1 Peter 5:7 - Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.**

**Philippians 4:6 - Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.**

The word merry simply means cheerful. If we are not currently feeling affliction, one sure way to keep our walk with God close is singing to ourselves psalms and spiritual songs. This can be overlooked today, but we are clearly admonished to do it.

**Ephesians 5:19,20 - Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God...**

**5:14,15 - <sup>14</sup>Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: <sup>15</sup>And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.**

In this passage, a simple method for healing is described: calling the pastor or pastors of the church (the elders) to anoint the sick person with oil (a picture of the Holy Spirit) and praying with faith over the sick person. This is not describing a "faith healer". It's the Lord who heals, God's power in answer to the prayer, not the Pastor anointing with oil.

However, it may not be God's will to heal, at least not at that time. For example, in Paul's case in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 where Paul was given a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble and he sought the Lord three times to be healed. He was told no, and "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And Paul learned to glory in the illness so that the power of Christ could be more manifested in his life as he learned to trust less in his flesh and more in Christ.

So, the idea that God will heal everyone if they have enough faith is simply not scriptural. And when someone is not healed by this method, it can cause a lot of distress. John Phillips gave the example of his daughter who was born with a severe case of diplopia (when one of her eyes was deviated).

A missionary suggested they follow this passage, and they did. She wasn't healed. And he began to doubt his faith. Several months later, he visited that specialist and learned that an operation could be performed when the child was two years old. She had the operation when she was two and things were fine. He realized God did that.

The key is that God will heal if it is His will. Maybe illness is necessary to accomplish something greater. Maybe the healing will come, but much later than we would like, after the affliction has done its work in our life.

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**5:16 - <sup>16</sup>Confess *your* faults (or offences) one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**

We are to confess our sins to God according to 1 John 1:9, but our faults (offenses or transgressions) to each other. This is simply apologizing and making right the things we have offended each other for. We need to be right with each other (even our spouse) if we don't want our prayers hindered.

James also mentions that fervency is also needed for prayer to avail and produce results. Fervency comes as a result of caring about what we're praying for, and it can only be produced if we expect God to answer.

**5:17,18 - <sup>17</sup>Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. <sup>18</sup>And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.**

James uses the example of Elijah, who was just as human and depraved as we are. Yet he was able to effectually avail in prayer with God, holding back rain for 3 1/2 years, and then causing it to rain again at his request. The two keys are that he was praying according to God's will, and in faith.

#### D. The burden for people (5:19-20)

**5:19,20 - <sup>19</sup>Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; <sup>20</sup>Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.**

Some believe that this refers to a saved person who has gone astray. He uses the term "**Brethren**, if any of **you** do err from the truth..." The word "convert" and "converteth" isn't always used in reference to salvation, but also in reference to simply getting right.

Others think that it seems to instead refer to an unsaved person within a church who has not yet come to the truth and been saved. There are phrases that imply salvation: such as “save a soul from death” and “hide a multitude of sins”.

James might be using it both ways: referring to helping a backslider to get right or someone who is under a false profession to see that and get saved.

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So, ends to book of James.