

2.19.17

James – Can You Handle It?

Psalm 15:1-3

O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord; who swears to his own hurt and does not change; who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

Historical Context

James is known as the step-brother of Jesus, writer of the Epistle of James in the New Testament of your bible, and the co-leader of the first Christian church in Jerusalem immediately after the first Pentecost along with disciples Peter and John. There is not a great deal of information about James prior to the death a resurrection of his stepbrother Jesus, but his emergence and leadership after Pentecost proved to be one of the more

dynamic and influential of all the apostles. He is credited as the writer of The Epistle of James, listed as one of the "General Epistles" because it was addressed to a broad audience of early church believers rather than to a specific congregation. In the introduction, he refers to himself simply as "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1). There are five persons called James (Greek, Jacob) in the New Testament:

One - James the son of Zebedee, brother of John, together nicknamed "Sons of Thunder," one of Jesus' disciples, a member of Jesus' inner circle. He died at the hand of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:2) between A.D. 41 and 44.

Two - James the son of Alphaeus, another disciple of Jesus.

Three - James "the Less" (Mark 15:40), possibly another name for James the son of Alphaeus.

Four - James the father of Judas, mentioned only by Luke (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13); the King James version translates as Judas, "brother of James."

Five - James, brother of Jesus. He is often referred to as James "the Just", who was martyred in 62 A.D., seems a reasonable and accurate choice for author of the epistle or letter of James, although it seems strange to some that he did not refer to himself as the "brother of Jesus." Perhaps in his humility in service to God and His Kingdom he places himself as he should be placed... a servant.

The Historical Person of James

Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55 establish the tradition that Jesus had a relative by the name of James. The relationship has been interpreted as half-brother or stepbrother. Paul likely referred to James when he recited the list of resurrection appearances of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:7), and he certainly identifies him as the "brother of the Lord" in an autobiographical section dealing with events after his own conversion (Galatians 1:19; 2:9, 12).

James's prominence in Galatians seems to indicate that he held some position of authority (Bishop or Overseer) in the Jerusalem church, appearing to be even more prominent than Peter (Cephas).

His position of leadership is confirmed again in the Acts of the Apostles (Luke), where again James is characterized as a central leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 21:18). James also played a significant role in what was called the *Jerusalem Council* by mediating the dispute between Paul and the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13).

Other information about James comes from later sources. Eusebius of Caesarea, quoting Clement of Alexandria, claims that James the "Just" was chosen as "bishop" of Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension. Eusebius, quoting Hegesippus, claimed that James practiced a spiritually rigid and disciplined lifestyle as far back as his childhood - he did not drink wine or strong drink - did not cut his hair - ate no meat - and neither anointed himself with oil nor bathed. He was constantly in prayer on his knees, so that they became calloused and leathery. Whether or not James had eccentric and ascetic tendencies, is not completely certain – what is clear is that he lived a disciplined and simple life that impacted and influenced others in similar ways. James was a deeply spiritual man and disciplined to his faith and the gospel of Jesus. He came on the scene late, rose to power quickly, and stayed in the place of most difficult persecution. His Jewish

legalism comes through - but even more so his understanding of how Christians must live in order to influence culture under intense persecution and extreme duress. The Coptic Gospels make claims that heaven and earth came into being for the sake of James, which demonstrates the power of James's reputation in some early groups – hmmm, that is all very interesting, but not necessary. Only a prideful and completely self-focused Christian would not respect who James was, and how he continues to this day to challenge and inspire Christians every where to live better, do better, and be better, than have been and know we should be. In reality, James probably did not have the official title of Bishop of Jerusalem since the term or office would not even be used for another fifty years or so. It is more likely that James held a strong position of spiritual oversight with Peter and John, but that James because of his call to stay in Jerusalem unlike the other disciples/apostles more than likely was recognized as the overseer in Jerusalem.

Another reality is that most New Testament scholars have not preferred the way in which Jewish Christianity looked back to James as its hero and leader. James was seen as the keeper of the law, as opposed to Paul, the so-called destroyer of the law.

But together Paul and James give the full dimension of faith. Paul wrote about inner saving faith from God's perspective. James wrote about outward serving faith from man's perspective. The true seed of saving faith is verified by the tangible fruit of serving faith. James' point is that biblical faith works.

The truth is that James and Paul were two strong-minded leaders (Type-A Personalities) who did not get along with one another very often. Clearly, there was some theological differences, viewpoints, and preferences between the two, but in hindsight, we have seen that biblical and theological disagreement has often time been used as an excuse for stubborn hearts and prideful spirits in men and women of God to not do the right thing. It does not make them evil, it just makes them human and real. Being human and real does not disqualify one from being used by God for His purposes and promises. James and Paul were no different.

The traditions about the death of James are confused and varied. According to historian Josephus, after the death of Roman procurator Festus and before his replacement arrived,

Jewish temple High Priest Ananus summoned the Sanhedrin and brought James and others to trial. Condemned ironically as a “breaker of the law”, James and the others were stoned. Another version has 3rd century church historian Eusebius quoting Clement of Alexandria, who stated that James was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple and was beaten to death with a club. Eusebius next quotes chronicler of the period Hegesippus, who said that James was thrown off the pinnacle of the temple, then stoned, and finally beaten on the head by a fuller with a club. A document called the Second Apocalypse of James, by Nag Hammadi, indicates that after he was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, since he was still alive, his accusers made him dig a pit, buried him up to his abdomen, and then stoned him.

One thing is certain; if we do not know exactly how James died, we can know that he died for his faith, allegiance to God, and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do we really need to know anymore?

The History of James and the Early Church

Some have claimed that Clement of Rome and Hermas made allusions to the text of James, but these are difficult to prove.

The fact is that no certain external evidence for the Epistle of James exists in the second century. By the third century, the Alexandrian church had accepted the universal Epistles in which James was included as quoted by Eusebius. Origen knew of an epistle "under the name of James" but had doubts that it was written by the Lord's brother. But, Dionysius of Alexandria, one of Origen's students, quotes from James, so it seems he has no problem accepting James as part of the New Testament. In the fourth century, Eusebius initially listed James under the disputed books that were generally known but after further research and considerations canonized the letter of James as an inspired epistle of the New Testament.

The controversy over James did not stop with the formation of the canon in the early church but was brought to focus in the Protestant Reformation by Martin Luther, who, comparing it with books "that show you Christ," dubbed James "an epistle of straw"; for he said, "it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it." Considering Martin Luther's view on "justification by faith, not works" and his very real struggle with anti-Semitism, that is not surprising. But again... human and real.

The Historical Writing of James

What we know as the Epistle of James is really a very personal systematic presentation dealing with trials, oppression, persecution, ethics, morals, spiritual admonitions - and a no-nonsense spiritual maturity. This is a sermon whose ending finally takes on the form of a letter. James is not typical. Difficult, profound, confronting, controversial – yes, but not typical. The letter gives the impression of comprised ethical and moral warnings, commands, and reprimands loosely joined together with critical wisdom. As you will see, it is almost like James is trying to get his readers to “clean up” and discipline their lives, so that they can embrace and be prepared for facing difficult times, and living with difficult people, under difficult circumstances.

The character of the writing is obviously Jewish, to the Jewish - James was a Jew. A Jew raised on the Law of Moses and the Prophets. Five times he uses as examples the Old Testament prophets, like Job and Elijah rather than Jesus. But no mistake, his ideas and the use of essential gospel commands link him closely to the sayings of Jesus represented in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7 and parallels in Luke). James clearly

represents the same ethical and wisdom traditions as those sections of the apostolic and Gospel tradition.

The language of James is that of an educated Greek who uses dramatic devices, such as rhetorical questions, metaphors to create intensity and urgency; such as tone, word play, direct and elevated vocabulary. His considerable skill places James among the most literate of New Testament authors. There are over fifty imperatives in just five chapters, one hundred and eight verses, in this one letter. James does not suggest he commands - in fact, he gives a command or call to action one out of every two verses, and that is hard to hear on any day, in any era, at any time.

Written to Who - Written When?

James addressed his letter to the twelve tribes of Israel scattered (The Dispersion) among the nations (chapter 1:1). He does not identify a specific location of his readers, but it suggests a known **Jewish-Christian** audience outside of Palestine.

In chapter 2:2 James used the Greek word for synagogue to refer to the meeting of Christians. He also referred to the Old

Testament and to information Jews would know well (chapters 4:6; 5:11,17).

The Jewish historian Josephus mentioned the martyrdom of James, and we can date his reference "to some events occurring around A.D. 62. This places the writing of James prior to this date. James described economic conditions in Palestine which disappeared after the war with Rome. The unjust treatment of laborers by landowners (5:1–6) would more likely appear before the war rather than after it. His use of the term elders in 5:14 supports a simple church organization. This encourages an earlier date for the book. The use of the Greek word for "synagogue" (2:2) to describe the meeting place of Christians indicates a time early in the spread of Christianity.

All of these facts point to a fairly narrow point of time in the fifties for the letter. However, most historians and scholars agree that James wrote his letter between 53 and 56 A.D.

James - To Us

Before we begin the expository study of James we should identify why we need James in our lives. Maybe for some it is so

that you can finally come to Christ, for others maybe James will help you to discipline the undisciplined areas of your life. Possibly some will use James to challenge the pride and disobedience that has always damaged your reputation and witness. Temper, tongue, trials, testing, tempted, gossip... whatever James needs to be for you there should be a plan about how to not only begin this James journey, but how you intend to finish it. You should start your plan with a desired or needed outcome for your spiritual and daily life. Who do you need to be at the end of James?

In the spirit of James (direct and to the point). Here is a template that I want us to follow as we thoroughly investigate the Word. My prayer is this... *God use James to speak strongly to me the truth about who I am, and how I live. Upgrade my thoughts, my words, and my deeds as i accept and respond to Your Word. Inspire, strengthen, and encourage everyone around me because of who You are, what You are going to do in me.*

My James Plan

Initiate - Conduct a sincere and honest introduction of yourself to God, by coming to Him in Christ. Make Him Lord over your life by asking Him to forgive you of your sins and surrender your heart, mind, and life to Him. Have you become a follower of Jesus?

Examine - Conduct an honestly examination our lives in the light of the truth of God's Word. The bible says the Word of God is like a mirror. A look into the mirror of James will help to show us who we really are, and identify what we need to do about it. Can you see who you are, and who you need to be?

Comply - Commit to obeying what God teaches you - no matter what. **James will tell us** that we have to be "doers of the Word and not hearers only". It is not that hard to say we are Christian, attend a Bible study, a Sunday worship, share the lesson, and have some dialogue; it is much more difficult to go out into life and practice what we have learned. The blessing of God does not come in merely studying the Word, but in our willingness to obey the Word. Will you do what you need to do?

Prepare - Get ready for some trials and testing. Maybe you are already being tried and tested and just don't understand or were unprepared. Start a regular regimen of prayer for not only your life, but for the lives of those you love as well. Usually our circumstances will reflect what God is wanting to teach us. So whenever we are serious about spiritual growth and our faith, the enemy gets serious about opposing us. Don't get worried or fearful of this - get prepared for this. The outcome is going to be well worth it. Are you ready for what lies ahead?

Quantify - Devise a metric for your spiritual growth and the powerful work of God in your life. Remember where you were when we started James - compare it to where you are when we finish! Track the distance between the darkness you have come from and the light you are walking in as you infuse your life with the truth of God's Word each day. Will you follow through and finish what you started?

James - Can You Handle It?

Tested - Tempted - True

1:1-18

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Blessed is the man who remains

steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

Expository James (Chapter 1 - Verses 1-4)

[1] James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

Verse 1 - The letter begins with a brief but traditional opening: the name of the writer, to whom it is written, a word of greeting.

James was apparently confident with a to the point introduction. He did not boast about his status in the church, or that he was the brother of Jesus. The lack of a formal introduction means that James was probably well known to the recipients and had enough relationship and authority to send this kind of letter. James' name was actually Jacob (Hebrew; *Lakobos*).

It is not certain why the English translators chose "James" rather than "Jacob." "James," "Jake," and "Jacob" all come from the same root. Bible translations in other languages tend to utilize the transliterated name from the actual Hebrew.

James, described himself as a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ. He saw himself a bond-slave (*doulos*), meaning that he was permanent property, in permanent service, out of permanent love and gratitude. He rightfully could have called Jesus his brother - rather in humility and revelation he calls him "Lord." Clear to see that James recognized the deity of Jesus by placing Him coequal with God. Interestingly, he used the full name, "the Lord Jesus Christ." "Jesus" /*sa* means "Savior" and "Christ", it is the Greek for "Messiah," the "Anointed." The eternal "Lord" became the Savior, "Jesus," and rose again as the

Everlasting and Sovereign, "Christ." The Lord of lords is King of kings (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelations 17:14; 19:16).

The letter of James is addressed in verse one to the twelve Hebrew tribes scattered among the nations at that time. James was writing specifically to the Messianic Jews dispersed from their homeland. The technical term "scattered" (*diaspora*), occurs in only two other places in the New Testament (John 7:35; 1 Peter 1:1). It refers to the Jews who were scattered among the Gentile nations just as their ancestors had been in the days of the ancient Jewish Captivity. Early Biblical history reveals Israel's twelve tribes were often scattered - but coming home, often wandering - but never lost. James writes to the dispersed Messianic Jews in this context. They are again listed at the close of biblical history in the Book of Revelation: Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin (Revelation 7:5-8; 21:12).

The end of verse one is a one word sentence; Greetings. This is a common opening for thousands of ancient letters, and not uncommon to any other New Testament letter. This is the Greek salutation much like the English "Hello" or "Welcome."

It is interesting that James did not add the Jewish salutation "Peace" (*salom*).

[2-4] Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Verse 2 - James comes in hot. To attain Christian maturity and live a holy life it is essential to have a strong and unwavering foundation. It is also essential to maintain the right attitude towards God's expectations of us as we live real life. The believer in Christ must be able to stand with confidence - not doubt. No way should you be pushed down and overcome by life trials and life tests. No way should the follower of Jesus be pulled away and defeated by temptation in those tests and trials. In life you get pushed and you get pulled - stand up, hold on, move forward - one step of faith at a time. Call that "faith strong." Most want to be "faith strong" but wonder how to get there. James will say that a believer can be "faith strong" by pursuing, perceiving, and practicing the Word of God. Trials from without and temptations

from within are no match for a Christian who stands "faith strong" - in Christ.

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds." I'm sure this was surprising advice for the persecuted Jewish believers scattered among the Gentile world (pagan and non-Jew peoples). **James believes trials should not be perceived as a punishment or a curse, but as a legitimate growth opportunity.** Trials should be prayerfully navigated with an attitude of joy. Not *fake joy* - real joy. James insists that trials should produce "pure joy" (unmixed), not just "a minute of joy" somehow stuffed into a lifetime of grief. James' command on this was direct and insistent, however he did not "big time" or arrogantly-condescend to his readers - rather he connects with them by warmly calling them (as he does throughout the letter) "my brothers."

Tweet: @jamestuffluv - Most of u can see by now that I say hard things in a direct way - but u will also see moving forward that I care deeply, and love much.

It is important to note that James did not say that a believer should be joyous **FOR** the trials - but **IN** the trials. He describes "trials of many kinds" (*peirasmois; external -poikilois; internal*), but in the real time context of these persecuted Messianic Jews he is talking to the external oppression and hardship. His direct advice - when surrounded by, and faced with these trials, the only right response is a joy response.

James Moment - Most people count their blessings with all joy when they avoid or escape trials. Wrong. Count your blessings with all joy while in the middle of those trials. (check out 1 Peter 1:6,8)

The logical question now surfaces. How can a person find real joy in trials?

Verse 3 - Christians can find real joy in trials when they fully understand there are invaluable life lessons and spiritual reward that can only come from these kinds of testing. I call it "**The Joy in Knowing.**" Joy in knowing simply means, knowing that the outcome or end result will work for your good, leads us to take on trials and difficulty with a right response - joy. Trials, rightly

taken with a right response, produce the powerful virtue of **endurance**.

Say to your trial - no matter how long it takes, I'm going to outlast you. In faith, I have learned the joy in knowing I can still be standing when this trial is over and done.

This is not a new revelation - this is a simple but strong and faithful reminder. James wrote, "because you know" (*ginoskontes* - knowing through experience). Everyone has experienced both the pain of problems, and the profit of persistence. There is no gain in endurance without some investment - sacrifice and service in trials. It is the true part or portion of true faith that produces perseverance. The testing refers more to "approval" than to "proving." The word (*dokimion*) appears only here and in 1 Peter 1:7. Faith is like gold; it stands in the test of fire. Without this approved standard of faith, trials would not give us the perseverance we need. True faith, like pure gold, endures, no matter how hot the fire. True faith therefore develops, or more literally "works" (*katergazetai*), perseverance or staying power. The noun "perseverance" (*hypomonen*) means steadfastness or endurance in the face of difficulties.

Verse 4 - Perseverance is only the beginning of benefits. There are more advantages to trials. Perseverance must finish its work. Just as tested and true faith works to produce perseverance, so perseverance must be allowed to work to produce the ultimate by-products of spiritual maturity and personal wholeness. This is the overriding goal James sets before his readers - how to achieve spiritual maturity while living in a real world, with real trials. Why? The spiritually mature Christian knows the how and why to navigate trials with joy. These two words describe the ultimate goal of Christian faith: **mature** and **complete**.

Mature (*teleio*), often translated "perfect or "finished."

Complete (*holokleroi*) to give the idea of being perfectly formed or fully refined in every part.

James asserts that trials infused with persistent faith can be and should be faced with joy because it will produce the valuable virtue of **perseverance**. He says that when we **persevere** in trials it will develop a spiritually **mature** and **complete** Christian who lacks nothing - a Christian who can be all God expects him to be.

Say to your trial - I'm all in, I will pray more, love more, worship more, and serve more. In faith, I have learned the joy of knowing that I can work through this trial until it is over and done.

Of course, James' logic and premise is challenging because of our humanity - but it remains true. He pushes back to say in spite of our humanity **there is a clear path to overcoming trials** but it requires determination and commitment to our faith in God, who has promised to use our trials to make us into the people He wants us to be - His version of us. Better, stronger, wiser, and more steadfast. Trust in God leads us through the difficult realities of our humanity to reveal how trials can be welcomed with an attitude of joy. So, the answer according to James is that our attitude needs to change. No one likes to hear that - but we need to hear it. Can you handle it?

Resources: Holman Commentary - Max Anders, Corrective Love - Thomas Oden, Encyclopedia of Early Christianity - Everett Ferguson Editor

3.19.17

Expository James (Chapter 1 - Verses 5-12)

[5] If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Verse 5 - To those who feel confused and frustrated by the high goal of "not lacking anything," James wrote, If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God. Assistance is readily available from "the giving God" (*tou didontos theou*).

To those who are lacking wisdom, God says this valuable resource is available - we must simply ask. James assumed his readers would feel the need for wisdom (*sophias*), not just knowledge - there is a difference.

"Having the knowledge of something is one thing - knowing what to do about it is another. One is information, the other is wisdom."

God will not only provide wisdom, but will do so generously, not grudgingly.

[6-8] But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Verses 6-8 - However, God's provision has some prerequisites. To receive God's wisdom in trials, we believers need to be wise in how and what we are asking for.

First, we must believe and not *doubt* (*diakrinomenos*, the word for "doubt," indicates *vacillating*).

MUST HAVE FAITH

We should not come to God like a wave of the sea, blown [horizontally] and tossed [vertically] by the wind. God is not pleased with a double-minded (*dipsychos* "two-souled") man who is unstable in all he does. Ironically, the answer we need from God depends on our assurance and trust in God - FAITH.

[9-12] Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

Verses 9-12 - Secondly, one who asks for wisdom needs to evidence hope. Seeking a better way to live, love, and serve God. You don't need wisdom if you don't want hope.

MUST HAVE HOPE

Wisdom gives hope, and hope **IS** the eternal advantage. Whatever the social or economic status, the believer must see the eternal strategy and advantages. Any believer in Christ regardless of temporal circumstances can be confident in their strong spiritual standing, knowing that they have "eternal glory" in Christ (2

Corinthians 4:17). Social prestige is an illusion and can't be trusted, earthly or material wealth buys pleasure and power but not happiness and peace, and being famous fades quicker than a cheap paint job in the Arizona sun. **Hope in the eternal is evidence of believing faith.**

Finally, the one who asks for wisdom must be steadfast (*steady, determined*) and infused with love.

MUST HAVE RELENTLESS LOVE

Remember this, repeat this - **God blesses the one who perseveres under trial**. In this verse James sings the same song he sang in *verses 2-3*, "trials - testing - perseverance - embrace it." The Christian who steadfastly endures (*hypomenei*) trials (*peirasmon*) and has stood the test (*dokimos genomenos dokimion*)... will receive the crown of life. This "crown" consists of life, that is, the crown **IS** life (*Revelations 2:10*). The life which is promised is probably life here and now (but covered in the glow of eternal life in Christ), life in its fullness, life in its completeness" (*verse 4*). God promises such life to those who love Him.

Romans 8:28-29

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Key word love. Love for God enables believers who undergo and overcome trials to rest confidently in Him - knowing all things are going to work for our good. We think it, James says it - Relentlessness and steadfastness will reveal their love. (Some, however, say the crown refers not to full life now but to eternal life later, for all true believers do in fact love God; *1 John 4:8*.) I disagree in this context, and here is why. Not everyone who truly believes in God fully obeys God. Jesus said, "if you love me, you will obey me." We need that wisdom here and now, so we can love Him with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength - fully. If we do that, Jesus said we would fulfill all the law and please the Father. **To truly obey Him is to fully love Him.** Don't get lost - just get love. Back to James.

So, to pull this together... asking for wisdom with faith (*verses 6-8*), hope (*verses 9-11*), and love (*verse 12*), brings with it not only

the blessing of wisdom, but also the blessing of a life changing victory and a real-life lesson in overcoming.

James Moment - To have the right attitude in trials, we must push ourselves and work to see the advantages and the benefits of trials. Don't let yourself off the hook - right attitude, right heart - game changer!

But, James is clear that if it is just too difficult to see what we need to see, we can ask for help in our time of trouble - we should ask for wisdom! And, if we ask correctly (faith, hope, relentless love), God will give us the insight and right attitude in every kind of trial - He will get us through. As James says... we can rejoice in trials (*verse 2*) and be blessed (*verse 12*) by enduring them.

3.26.17 - 4.2.17

Expository James

Chapter 1 - Verses 13-18

The Real Resistance

James spoke strongly about the potential of unraveling and giving up under the attacks and pressures of trials - not understanding this is dangerous. Because he had been a firsthand witness, James knew that followers of Christ can fall hard to the attractions, deception, and pleasures of temptation.

Just as a wrong reaction to a time of real life testing will obstruct spiritual growth and maturity, so will a wrong response to temptation. James outlined the source of temptation, the steps in temptation, and the solution for temptation.

Source of Temptation

[13-14] Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

Verse 13 - James offered a sharp rebuke to those who find an easy excuse for their sinning and wrong behavior. To free themselves from responsibility they say, "I am tempted by God," or "from God" (*apothēou*), denoting the origin, not merely the agency. James made it crystal clear that God cannot be tempted. There is nothing in God to which evil can make an appeal. He is literally "untemptable" (*apeirastos*; check out Hebrews 4:15). To add to it, James says, "*and He Himself He tempts no one.*" So, God often tests us, but God never tempts us.

Verse 14 - The source of temptation is from within a person; it is our own evil desire, lust, or inner appetite for sin. We are pulled away in moments of weakness and enticed by overwhelming feelings of want. Our temptation process is sometimes similar to - *I want to feel this, I want to have this, I should have this, I'm going to have this...* This inner craving draws a person out (*exelkomenos*) like a fish lured and drawn from its hiding place, and then entices him (*deleazomenos*, from the verb *deleazo*, meaning; *to bait, to catch a fish with bait, or hunt with snares*). So a person both builds and baits his or her own trap.

Steps of Temptation

[15-16] Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Verses 15-16 - The genealogical image is strong here. Evil desire conceives, and from this conception, sin is born. The unmentioned father is most certainly Satan. The shamed child - sin, then matures and produces its own offspring - death. The steps are pretty clear: unchecked, uncontested, unchallenged evil desire produces sinful thinking and wrong behavior, and unconfessed sin brings about death. How curious that sin gives birth to death. It seems odd, but James warned his Jewish brothers and sisters in the Christian faith who would read this "genealogy" not to be deceived or pulled away by it. Just as a right response to trials can result in growth to full and healthy spiritual maturity, so a wrong response to sinful desire will result in decline to miserable spiritual poverty and ultimately to death itself.

Solutions to Temptation

[17-18] Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

Verses 17-18 - In complete contrast with the curse of death that descends from unrestrained, unchecked sinful desire is the hopeful scene of new life that flows freely from the Word of truth (*Ephesians 1:13*). The father of darkness - Satan (*Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13*) - generates the offspring of sin, shame, and death. The Father of the heavenly lights (God, Creator of heaven and earth) gives salvation, hope, life, and He is unchanging. Shadows from the sun shift, but not the One who created them! The words, every good and perfect gift is from above, have a poetic and soulful cadence in Greek. They are literally, "every good act of giving (*dosis*) and every perfect gift (*dorema*) is from above."

The solution for temptation will always to be found in a close relationship with the Father through Christ Jesus. Followed by a

constant and obedient response to His Word. As believers and followers of Jesus, must rest in the unchangeable God of light and rely on His life-giving "Word of truth" (*Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:15*).

There is no reason why one of God's chosen first-fruits (us), or regenerated believers, has to give in, give up, and lose to temptation. We must learn (become efficient) to resist the deadly evil force of temptation, or we can never grow into the spiritual maturity God desires of us - the children of light (*Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5*). In Christ... we can do this.

4.30.17

Expository James

Chapter 1 - Verses 19-27

James 1:19-27

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled

before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

We Are Hearing... But, Are We Listening?

As you can see, James keeps it real in these nine verses. He does this by issuing spiritual warning to his readers against pseudo-behavior (fake, pretend, distracted, and apathetic behavior).

Acting as if we are listening instead of really listening, giving the appearance of obeying instead of actually obeying, and talking about serving instead of genuinely serving. For a minute, I thought we might could skip this passage since I knew that it didn't apply to anyone of us here at Reunion... but, then my conscience got rudely interrupted by the Holy Spirit, and well, here we are. I am assuming that someone else here also needs some James this morning, so lets clear our minds, open our hearts, and receive the word.

Context

James lays out the warning against inactive and inattentive listening. We have heard messages from God's Word, learned

new truths, and even been transformed, by the mercy and grace of Christ. Inquiring James wants to know, ***Are we still learners who have not yet become doers?***

Apparently, God is not content when his people merely attend Church and hear sermons and teachings - but, I think we knew that. I also think we know that assimilate and integrate. He wants us to absorb His message of truth, and change our lives because of it. Inattentive, distracted listening which produces little to no change is a spreading disease in our life as a Christian. To prevent and avoid poor listening, this passage gives a warning in verses 19-21, a contrast to verses 22-25, and a demand in verses 26-27.

Let's break this apart so we can better understand a pretty clear message.

Verse 19 - Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;

Christians can pretend to obey God without truly listening to his commands. The readers of James's letter knew the life-changing

power of God's Word - the gospel. Jews who at great risk had come to faith and belief in Jesus as Messiah. James pushed them to demonstrate (put it out there - viral) this life-change, particularly in their speech and behavior. He began this push by warmly addressing them as "*My dear brothers*", and **then** challenged them to be **quick to listen**, slow to speak and slow to become angry. The commands of this verse, can and should refer both to our relationships to one another, and to God. We are to be quick to hear and slow to talk both toward other people and toward God.

The command from James to be **quick to listen** calls for an eagerness and hunger (*heagerness; new word*) to hear and obey God's message. The appeal to be slow to speak demands silence (stop talking), until we have fully understood and applied the message. It is a call for self-discipline (or duct-tape). Without it we will continue to produce hasty, poor-timed reactions and responses. [Personal Example]

The challenge to be **slow to anger** is a spiritual warning against personal hostility, and self-destructive behavior. It is pretty obvious that you and I cannot hear God if we remain distracted

with variable emotions filled with resentment, hatred, or revenge-driven attitudes.

Our culture entices us to express our feelings, regardless of whether they are good or bad, peaceful or inflammatory, godly or ungodly, appropriate or inappropriate. What is right, good, and appropriate has been re-written for us - James reminds us of the truth, and gives us a different but good look. James presents the **wise person** as one who **listens to God** and to others, then responds attentively and wisely, answering with careful and thoughtful words.

Verse 20 - for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.

This verse supports the command to be **slow to become angry**. Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. The anger prohibited by this passage is not so much a flashing, destructive temper as a simmering pot of hostile, mean-spirited feelings.

Human anger wastes the energies of God's people, produces divisions, and often comes from selfish ambition. The righteousness that God desires includes deeds which are pure; ... peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (James. 3:17). Angry words and deeds cannot produce purity and peace. Proverbs 29:22 warns that *"an angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins."* Moses' murderous anger in Exodus 2:11–15 resulted in his flight from Egypt and added forty additional years to the misery of the Jews in Egypt (Acts 7:27–32).

The mischievous works of angry Christians prevent the unsaved world from seeing that the God of all the earth does right (Genesis 18:25). It is impossible to look at the disorderly conduct of fighting believers and worship the God they profess to serve. This should make Christians cautious in our display of an angry spirit.

Verse 21 - Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

As believers and followers of Jesus we can react to life and life's situations in a constructive way, giving a positive response instead of emotively indulging in the hurtful and sinful anger that easily restricts God's righteous designs and blessings over our lives. In this verse, James issues another command, and then he provides a prerequisite for obeying the command, an incentive for obedience, and a description of our attitude in obedience. The command is to **accept the word planted in you**. This calls for a genuine and open welcome to the influence of God's message of truth in our lives (1 Thessalonians 2:13). The prerequisite is to **get rid of all moral filth** and the evil that is so much of who our culture has become. The only way to obey that command is to rip away (like clothes on fire) any moral indecency and malicious and hostile attitudes. There is no middle ground to stand on. Immediate - determined - decisive - distant.

Why do this?

The incentive for obedience is that God's word planted in you can and will save you. Obedience to God's Word promotes righteous and good living, and develops godly character. We demonstrate a

genuine likeness toward Christ as we get rid of the insatiable appetite for immorality and evil. This shows the evidence and presence of a real experience of salvation.

In our obedience we must display humility. We must not quarrel or quibble with God as we receive his message. We must receive the spiritual medicine which our divine physician prescribes for us.

David committed adultery with Bathsheba and carried out a plan to murder her husband (check out 2 Samuel 11). For some months he refused to acknowledge **his sin** until the prophet Nathan boldly said to him, "You are the man" (2 Samuel 12:7). In Psalm 51 we catch a snapshot of a David who has finally come to his senses and expressed full and real repentance. David asked for mercy (Psalm 51:1–2), acknowledged his sin (Psalm 51:3–6), pleaded for cleansing (Psalm 51:7–9), and asked for divine renewal (Psalm 51:10–12). We should respond to the Lord with equal passion.

4.7.17

Passionate Participants not Casual Observers

Verse 22 - But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Here, James's command is literally to "keep on becoming doers of God's Word." He insisted on an obedience which lasts. This does not minimize the importance of hearing God's Word. It does emphasize strongly the need for acting. Too often Christians view a sermon as an interesting moral or theological lecture. We need to do something other than sitting and listening. Jesus pronounced a blessing only on those "who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:28).

The command to listen to God's Word describes someone who attends a lecture. The hearer could nod agreeably to the message but do nothing as a result. God wants a listener to become a disciple, an obedient follower of Jesus. One who hears the message without doing anything is self-deceived. Such a listener has made a false estimate of the situation. Jesus warned against this error (Matt. 7:21–27).

Verse 23–25 - For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

James presented a negative and a positive illustration of a response to God's message. Using the strong image of poor and non-responsive listening, verses 23–24 compares those who *only hear* but do not listen to God's Word to people who look into a mirror and dash away with little memory of what they saw. Mirrors during the time of Christ, and the writing of James' letter, were made of polished metal - not quite the precision accessory of vanity and accent design that they are today. People used them to wash their faces, shave their beards, apply general cosmetics, and comb their hair. Then they quickly left, giving little thought to the image they had seen. James's point being, we can repeat this experience in the spiritual realm. We give a quick glance into God's Word, find a morsel of truth (maybe in context,

maybe not), and quickly move into another task or activity without remembering or applying what we read.

Look at verse 25, how James uses the mirror metaphor with four verbs to picture the response of obedient listeners to God's message.

First, *obedient believers* look intently into the the perfect law that gives freedom. This describes someone who looks intently at God's message with a desire and passion to learn. The same verb—translated as bent over—pictures the apostle John staring into Jesus' empty tomb (John 20:5). Because of what he saw, John's look led to an obedient faith (John 20:8).

Second, *obedient believers* continued to do what God said. They put God's Word into practice and follow through with commitment.

Third, *obedient listeners* do not forget what they hear. Spiritual amnesia never conquers their minds.

Fourth, *obedient listeners* do what God's message instructs them to do.

Good listening - determined endurance - clear memory - willful obedience - characterize committed and passionate Christians. Committed and passionate Christians are "heager" (hungry and eager) to receive and obey what God ask and expects them to do. God's Word is the perfect law that gives freedom. Obedience to Jesus' commands in Scripture brings freedom from sin and death. When we fully surrender to God's message, this law of liberty produces a powerful attitude and mind-set to obey God's will joyfully. We have freedom because we truly want to serve God. Jesus promised this freedom to those who believe and obey.

John 8:31-33

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Obedient and faithful people are promised God's blessing. We do not need to wait for a future blessing - we already have His

blessing in our grasp. Doing what God asks (expects, commands), brings His blessing with it. As James says, Listen, Look, Obey... Be a willing participant, and not just a casual observer.

Psalm 1:1–3 summarizes the blessings of obedience. Those who meditate on the Law of the Lord will be *“like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”*

5.14.17 - 5.21.17

Verse 26 - If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

In this verse James describes a person who considered himself to be religious, but did not listen well to God's Word. Although he had already covered considerable ground on the "listening" issue, this approach connects effective listening directly to the discipline and self-control of the tongue (more in chapter 3). One step further... James indicates that lack of control and discipline is evidence of spiritual arrogance and weak faith. In those patterns and behaviors, it doesn't matter how much public prayer and fasting, how much giving and showing up to church - its shallow, it's hollow, and it's just a show. James doesn't completely blow -up this kind of faith, but he added that inner control of the tongue must accompany outward performance. Keep a tight rein on his tongue sometimes described the bridle used with a horse. The tongue is compared to an unmanageable horse which needed bit and bridle to tame its excesses.

Controlling the tongue is so important that James devoted most of chapter three to its use.

James leveled two accusations at the person who practiced outward religion without inner control.

First, his religion is deceiving. This repeats the idea of verse 22, in different words. What a disappointment to find after a lifetime of pseudo-religion that you have only been practicing self-deception!

Second, his religion is worthless. Peter used the same word—translated as empty—to describe useless pagan practices his readers had followed before they became Christians (1 Pet. 1:18). Religious practices without inner control, or personal discipline, have no more saving power than any other godless religion.

Verse 27 - Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Two evidences demonstrate *pure-religion*: deeds of compassion and inner purity. This does not reduce Christianity to mere benevolence. True religion has even more features than James has mentioned. The emphasis here is that for God to accept our worship, it must be accompanied by loving ministry and a dedicated life. Both Christians and non-Christians could see and understand this type of evidence.

To look after orphans and widows demanded demonstrations of concern and active involvement. The psalmist pictured God as a defender of orphans and widows (Psalm 68:5). Christ used the word for *look after* in Matthew 25:43 to describe the ministry of caring for those in prison. Obeying this appeal calls for more than an occasional visit. It demands genuine compassion and true engagement. Non-polluted, non-contaminated, demands a freedom from the deceived heart, sinful behavior patterns in the world. Peter used this word to refer to Christ as "*without ... defect*" (1 Peter 1:19). We Christians are to model our purity after that of Jesus.

"Pure religion" is worship of God, free from any moral corruption or spiritual impurity. Pure religion is alive, vibrant, and committed

to God through Jesus Christ. This is much more than someone who usually attends church, periodically gives money, and lives in decent morality. Pure religion demands self-control, self-sacrifice, and self-denial. The person with pure religion shows self-control by managing the tongue so that it praises the Lord and avoids the action of insulting and attacking human beings. A person committed to practicing *pure-religion* (in James context) shows the heart of service, by using time, talent, and treasure to care for others who are needy - cannot help themselves. Among the neediest groups in the first century were orphans and widows. Who would that be today?

A person committed practicing *pure-religion* shows self-control and discipline by working to set themselves apart from the evil of the world (in the world - not of the world). The world provides a system of values influenced by evil and to God - these values are in direct conflict. Wise, committed believers will identify worldly influences and avoid them.

Those James Moments - Chapter One

- **God permits trials to develop stamina in his people.**
- **God gives rewards to those who show their love for him by enduring trials.**
- **God does not use evil to tempt his children to disobedience.**
- **All good has its source in our God.**
- **Surrender to God's expectations brings a blessing in the act of obeying.**
- **Controlling what we say, and how we say it, gives tangible evidence of our obedience.**
- **Caring for the weak and needy shows we are following Christ, and have captured His heart.**

5.28.17

Expository James

Chapter 2 - Verses 1-13

James 2:1-13

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which He has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called? If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as

yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

In Christ, We Are Better Than That

James is of course consistent with his very specific and direct admonitions and instructions. Chapter two, obviously he is unhappy (troubled) with the inconsistent behavior and character among his Jewish brethren (Jewish believers). He goes immediately after their attitudes toward others, and then challenged their failure to act consistently with how they believed, and with what true faith and pure religion required. He first condemned the attitude of favoritism and gave suggestions on how to combat this obstacle to spiritual maturity. A Christian must learn to accept others, whatever that persons cultural or

socio-economic status. A Christian must consistently show the common love and compassion of Jesus to all. His message - In Christ - we are better than that.

God wants us (His people) to demonstrate a true faith-pure religion by moving forward in Christ with the practice of equal treatment to all (in context). James says this is done through a sincere and welcoming hospitality, genuine acts of love, and humble deeds of compassion and kindness. As Christians we have a great opportunity to teach and to show compassion for the poor (in body and spirit) and spiritually hungry rather than be wrongfully attracted and manipulated to the influence and power of affluence and celebrity. In fact, James ***calls out*** the Christian who does not resist the practice of rejecting and excluding another human-being, based on their race, culture, money, power, or influence. He will use this chapter to tell his readers that this **is not** what Christ, or His followers should be about. **In Christ, we are better than that.** He is going to insist that we do better. Here is how...

- **Identify and Rebuke Partiality (Verses 1-4)**
- **Understand the Evil Outcomes of Partiality (Verses 5-7)**

- **Commit to the Laws of God's Love and Mercy Which Overcome Partiality (Verses 8-13)**

Finally, in our welcome to others (verses 1-7). The unity found in Christ has its source in the fact that in His church, all are a community, family. Rich and poor stand side by side in Him. So, in the church, to be that faithful community of believers, we reject and resist all fake religion, false pretense, arrogant partiality, and seek to create and affirm unity in every way. Rich and poor are to be treated with equal regard, and mutual respect, with full appreciation and dignity for all mankind; anything else is a poor witness to the name by which we are called.

Our calling of love (verses 8-13). As persons of faith, responsive to the royal law (the command to love one another was spoken by Jesus, in John's gospel 13:33-34), we are to love our neighbors without partiality. Making distinctions between rich and poor and thus showing favoritism, is as much a violation of the divine intent as the more obvious sins identified in the Law. It is truly important to understand James' point when he said *"Whoever keeps the whole Law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking it all."* The Law of the Old Testament is

a unity. As a whole balloon is broken by just one tiny poke of a pin, so a person becomes a "lawbreaker" by violating just one requirement of the Mosaic Law.

Verse 1 - My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

The key command is clear: don't show favoritism. God shows no favoritism (Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25); if God doesn't, neither should we. James clearly condemns prejudice and preferential treatment.

This verse acknowledges and honors Jesus as our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, and warns that partiality against the poor or lesser-than, is inconsistent with faith and mission in Jesus Christ. By using the language "*My brothers*", James shows that he wrote to his readers as a family of believers and urged them to show the **reality of their profession**, and **give witness to their faith**. These readers (newly converted Jews), were now ready to hear James tell them **who this Jesus was**.

First, Jesus is the object of our faith. We have placed a trust or given a commitment to Him. We are believers in Jesus, and followers of His message and mission.

Second, Jesus is the Lord of Glory (*grk; doxes*). The translated Greek literally reads, *"our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Glory."* James gave the title of "Glory" to Jesus, using a term that represents the full presentation of God's presence and majesty. Jesus is the glorious God. This is a remarkable confession considering how James wrestled with coming to this faith, and revelation of this truth. Now James instructs others in the expectations and behavior of how God wants His people to live and love with others. How we treat one another is at the top of God's list. **James gets it - in Christ, we are better than that.** The practice of favoritism involved giving benefits to people who had outward advantages such as money, power, or social prominence. The readers of James were courting the favor of these important people by showing preference for them over the poor. Mosaic Law had forbidden simply giving blind respect to persons of prominence (Deuteronomy 1:17). And now James teaches that the fulfilled law in Christ, rebukes it even more. To

the violators and aggressors, James says... "Stop, stop the fake religion, and stop it now."

Verses 2–4 - For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

James illustrates the issue, starting with, *Suppose... a gold-fingered, brilliantly clothed man comes into your meeting place.* He contrasts the rich man with, *A poor man in shabby clothes also enters.* He uses the word shabby (*grk; rypara - meaning: moral filth*). He ends the illustration with a penetrating question, *And if you give special attention to the rich man, by giving him preferred seating, and disrespect and dishonor to the poor man by telling him to sit at your feet - aren't you partial and prejudiced?*

The question in the original Greek assumes an affirmative answer. James' brethren must plead guilty not only to discriminatory divisiveness, but also to assuming the role of judges with evil thoughts of partiality.

These verses illustrate the spiritual and natural discrimination that can, and does take place in the Church of Jesus.

Verse 4 uses a question to accuse the readers of a pair of evil actions. The truth is they had indeed discriminated and become evil judges.

First, they discriminated among themselves. They were guilty of creating divisions in their midst despite the fact that they had accepted the abolition of class distinctions (check out Galatians 3:28).

Second, they acted like evil-minded or prejudiced judges, regulating their conduct by blatantly false principles.

They practiced a favoritism toward the rich inconsistent with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for all people. If they continued to practice it, they could not claim to be followers of

the Lord who abolished partiality and loved everyone and Christ had loved them. A wide difference separated the faith they professed from their partisan practices. James again... In Christ, we are better than that.

What Does That Look Like For Us?

In context, We can apply this partiality warning in our own attitudes and relationships with different races, socio-economic class, and political positions. As much as we try to cloud and confuse, the message is fairly clear - **In Christ, we are better than that.**

Think quickly of Jesus and the conditions of the world into which He entered on our behalf. Political oppression, religious corruption, and socio-economic tension and divide. This is similar to where we are today. Process your attitudes and responses to others this morning through this instruction of James.

Verses 5-7 - Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those

who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

With the plea, Listen, my dear brothers, James went on to explain why their preferential judgment was wrong.

Believers belong to Jesus, not to the wealthy establishment and exploiters. James' readers would have to agree with these contentions, and to recognize that insulting the poor and favoring the rich was wrong and totally unreasonable.

Partiality is contrary to God's plan and threatening to the best interests of believers. James contrasted God's exaltation of the poor with their abuse by his readers. Their practice of discrimination against the poor was contrary to the way God had purposed to treat them.

Verse 5 - James instructs how God views the poor, and presents the contrasting practices of his readers. It is clear: Christians need to adopt God's outlook for the poor.

God chose the poor. Paul used “chose” to describe the election of believers to salvation (Ephesians 1:4). In James 2:5 “chose” describes spiritual blessings God has reserved for the poor. God chose the poor to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him.

The world may look on poverty-stricken people as insignificant and worthless. God sees them as abounding in the riches of faith. Their faith allows them to experience God's wealth—salvation and its accompanying blessings. This does not suggest all the poor are converted, nor does it mean God practices a bias against those who are not poor. The poor God blesses are those whose poverty is primarily to be “poor in spirit” (Matthew. 5:3). Often those who are economically poor are better placed than the wealthy to understand God's purposes. They are more likely than the rich to be prospects for conversion.

The kingdom is the full manifestation of Christ's future kingdom at the end of the age. The poor may appear insignificant in this world, but they have the glorious hope of inheriting the kingdom with Jesus (see Matt. 25:34). God loves the poor more than their treatment by Christians indicates.

Verse 6 - James outlines the church's treatment of the poor. They had insulted the poor by asking them to stand in some uncomfortable location or to sit on the floor as the Christians gathered for worship. Such shabby treatment could convince the poor that Christianity was not for them. The actions of the Christians did not help their own interests. They were pursuing a path of folly. Their treatment of the rich and the poor resembled honoring an executioner while insulting a valued friend. The rich faced three charges.

First, they were exploiting the poor by social and economic mistreatment. James 5:4 accuses the wealthy of failing to pay past-due wages. It was a strange twist of circumstances to honor such abusive masters.

Second, the rich hauled believers into court and practiced judicial persecution. Notice the actions of the wealthy slaveowners who dragged Paul and Silas into court in Acts 16:19–21.

Third, they belittled the Lord Jesus by insulting his person and rejecting his claims. The Jews of Antioch showed this behavior in Acts 13:45. These whom the church welcomed were not

Christians but wealthy, Christ-rejecting Jews. The readers of James belonged to Jesus, and their biased actions dishonored his honorable name.

Can we suggest a better way to respond to the poor? Yes! In the eyes and heart of God, social and community service and volunteering is also part of reaching beyond ourselves to love and serve the poor. It is powerful when Christians tackle the difficult issues of our neighbors and our community around us with the love of Jesus, but with secular ingenuity.

6.11.17

Expository James

Chapter 2 - Verses 8-13

James 2:8-13

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law, but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Introduction

James designated the command to love your neighbor as yourself as the *royal law*. Maybe he used the term royal because

Christ, the one and true king, set forth the law (Matthew 22:39). Or, he used the term because of the personal value he had for obeying the law.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) Jesus defined a neighbor and discussed the demands and expectations of loving a neighbor. Jesus defined a neighbor as *anyone* in need. He urged us to show our love to neighbors by responding to their needs.

Some of James's readers felt they had been obedient to God in the matter of showing love for the poor and needy. Wherever that was true, James gave credit. If they were really putting God's law into practice, this was noble and commendable. The command to love our neighbor as we love ourselves is an unrealistic standard and expectation without the power of the living Christ (John 13:34–35). Whenever Christians have applied this standard, it has remade communities, societies, and homes. Whoever follows this life of service will receive the Lord's commendation and favor at the final judgment (Matthew. 25:21).

We know that James was great leader in the New Testament Christian Church, both to the scattered believing Jews as well as to the believing Jews in Jerusalem. Yet we also know that James, (though understanding the fulfillment of the law in Jesus the Messiah), was still deeply connected to the Old Testament law and its virtues. James will instruct that the unity of the Law (old and new) lies in its origin in God through Christ Jesus. The commandments prohibiting both adultery and murder originated with the word of God. To resist one requirement of the Law is to resist God and reject Christ the Word, and the authority beneath its requirements. So it is not surprising when we hear him say... that a single violation of any of the commandments made a person a lawbreaker. When we are tempted to give ourselves credit for obedience in one point of our life while neglecting to consider the points where we grievously disobey God's teachings, we are not getting done what God wants from us. We can do better. It takes only a single sin to make a person a sinner. No act of obedience can compensate for acts of disobedience.

Finally James will remind his readers of the law of liberty and how God uses it to move us forward in faith and faithfulness.

In John 8:32–36 Jesus had described the gospel as a truth which sets people free. James echoed these words in verse 12. Those who obey God by faith in Jesus Christ find freedom to serve God and escape from fear of future judgment. Faith in Jesus Christ provides freedom to escape hatred and self-love and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

James alluded to the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:7 to warn that those who show no mercy will receive none in the final judgment. Stated positively, this means mercy triumphs over judgment. This does not mean we receive mercy from God only when we show mercy to others. If that were true, it would make salvation a matter of God's payment for our good deeds. For those who have given themselves in faith to Christ, God's mercy triumphs over our guilt and judgment. If we have received God's grace, we will stand in the coming judgment. Mercy can rejoice in its victory over condemnation.

Christianity grew and developed in confrontation with an environment that breathed hostility to its doctrines and practices. A chief reason for its triumph and rapid growth was the inspiring value system of the moral practices of Christians.

The lives of early Christians showed that accusations against them were lies (check out 1 Peter 2:15). They fed the needy, accepted outcasts, buried the poor, cared for orphans and the aged, encouraged prisoners and victims of disasters, and showered compassion on the persecuted. Their lives proved that Christianity produced a better way to live and love - high character. This is still the best evidence of the reality of our faith. May God enable us today to make a bold demonstration of our mercy to others!

Verses 8-9 - If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

The alternatives are clear. Love is right - favoritism is sin. Despite the direct approach, James was optimistic; the "if-clause," when he said, "*if you really keep the royal law*", was written in Greek in such a way that an obedient response was anticipated. The "royal law" was given in *Leviticus 19:18* and affirmed by Christ (Matthew 22:39, "**LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS**

YOURSELF" The law is royal or regal (*basilikon*, from *basileus*, "king") because it is decreed by the King of kings, is fit for a king, and is considered the king of laws. The phrase reflects the Latin *lex regia* known throughout the Roman Empire. Obedience to this law, non-preferential love, is the answer to the evident disobedience to God's Law, prejudicial favoritism.

Verses 10-11 - For whoever keeps the whole law, but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

James was aware there would be some who would tend to dismiss their offense of prejudice as a trivial fault. They would hardly consider themselves as lawbreakers. James went on to make it clear that this was no small offense. Whoever keeps the whole Law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. There are no special indulgences. Utilizing the extreme instances of adultery and murder, James showed the absurdity of inconsistent obedience.

Verses 12-13 - So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Total obedience is the key. One must both habitually speak and act as those to be judged by the Law. God's Law, because of its wise constraints, brings true freedom. Disobedience to God's Law brings bondage; and to those who have not been merciful, God's judgment is without mercy. Just as love triumphs over prejudice, mercy triumphs over judgment. The verb "triumphs" or "exults over" (*katakauchatai*) appears only here, in *3:14*, and in *Romans 11:18*. God has ordained unalterable laws. Complete and consistent obedience is required if spiritual maturity is to be attained. The believer is commanded to accept his brother with courtesy, compassion, and consistency.

Conclusion

Moving forward from here James says requires not only a commitment to one self, and self-interest, but a commitment to the needs of others who cannot help themselves. This is the

heart of God, this is the command of Jesus, and this is our path to true freedom and peace.

6.18.17

Expository James

Chapter 2 - Verses 14 - 26

James 2:14-26

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed

by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also *Rahab* the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. ESV

Context

Intellectual faith without deeds is an empty claim. Intellectual faith consists of giving assent or mental agreement to a series of propositions or doctrinal truths about Christianity. Any individual can claim to have the right beliefs about God, about Jesus, and about salvation and eternal life, but still lack real Christianity. Works, not intellectual statements, are the only acceptable demonstrations and ultimate proof of your claim to have real faith. Good wishes, warm sentiment, feel good words are empty of all reality, and do not generate a real and good life. Offering only good wishes to the hot, hungry and dehydrated only serves

to increase hopelessness further for those who are living hungry and living in miserable conditions. They need more than good wishes and your hard earned money. They need practical help - that doesn't always mean money. If a man is drowning, all the encouragement and instruction from the shore in the world cannot save his life. Eventually someone will have to jump in and rescue him or he will drown to death. For James this is not about guilt to God, this is all about faith in God. How it works and how it does not.

A faith not accompanied by action, that is faith alone, having no works to distinguish it, is dead. Anything with life produces fruit. The living are the acting, creating things that reveal their nature and character. Faith in Jesus produces actions revealing the nature and character of Jesus. The dead lie still doing nothing. So faith that lies still, inactive, proves it is dead. True faith brings salvation and life, not death.

James wrote to people whose barren lives distorted the doctrine of salvation by faith. James contrasted two types of faith. One was genuine and showed itself by works of compassion and obedience. Another was false, emphasizing correct belief but

denying that belief by a life empty of good works. James insisted that saving faith must show itself in deeds. He denounced a partiality which favors the rich while abusing the poor. He condemned a profession of faith which emphasizes right belief but fails to care for and minister to the needy and obey the commands of God.

James also appealed for a faith which demonstrates its righteousness (right living) before others. Faith which never produces additional evidence is simply not credible. Faith can show its reality before others only by unselfish deeds of commitment and helpfulness.

We live in an age when many people limit faith to the mere verbal affirmation of "I believe in God", but, "I don't live for God." This is intellectual faith - it is dead, and not alive or active. James's intentional warnings remind us that people who have correct intellectual belief and an empty-handed life with nothing virtuous to show for it are regrettably deceived. They must have a faith which produces visible evidence of commitment to Jesus Christ.

Verse 14 - What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

Another shift in the argument of the epistle can be seen by James' use of my brothers. He introduced this paragraph with a rhetorical question, What good is it, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? The emphasis is not on the true nature of faith but on the false claim of faith. It is the spurious boast of faith that James condemned. Such "faith" does no "good"; there is no "profit" (*ophelos*). It is worthless because it is all talk with no walk. It is only a habitual empty boast ("*claims" is in the present tense*). Can such faith save him? A negative answer is anticipated in the Greek. Merely claiming to have faith is not enough. Genuine faith is evidenced by works.

Verses 15-16 - If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

The rhetorical question is followed by a hypothetical but realistic illustration: Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and

daily food. (James frequently wrote about the poor - that was his primary ministry). For one in need of the basics of life, sentimental good wishes do little good, like the common Jewish farewell, *Go, I wish you well* or "*Go in peace.*" If nothing is done to fill the pressing need for warm clothes and satisfying food, what good is it? With James this is a repeated for emphasis.

Verse 17 - So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

The vain boast, faith by itself, or faith in and of itself with no evidence of action, is dead. Workless faith is worthless faith; it is unproductive, sterile, barren, dead! Great claims may be made about a corpse that is supposed to have come to life, but if it does not move, if there are no vital signs, no heartbeat, no perceptible pulse, it is still dead. The false claims are silenced by the evidence.

Verse 18 - But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

This may be one of the most misunderstood sections of the entire epistle. But someone will say, You have faith; I have deeds. An imaginary respondent, "someone," was introduced. He did not object to James' conclusion. He agreed that faith without works is dead. But he wrongly disparaged faith while stressing works (re-check verse 19).

What follows, Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do, may be the continuation of the respondent's words. If so, they should be included within quotation marks. (If this were James' response to a contender's "I have deeds," James would have written, "Show me your deeds without faith.") Though recent translations do not include the second half of verse 18 in the quotation of the respondent (e.g., NEB, NIV, RSV), the NASB correctly considers this entire verse part of his remarks. The Greek, of course, does not include quotation marks, which accounts for the variations in English. It seems, however, that the respondent is throwing down the challenge, "Show me your faith apart from (*choris*, 'without') works, and I will show you my faith by (*ek*, 'emerging from') my works."

Verse 19 - You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

It may be well to include even verse 19 as part of the respondent's argument: You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that - and shudder. If so, he may be a typical Gentile believer who attacked the creedal belief of monotheism accepted by all Jews. He was saying, to "believe" in one God may be good so far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. The demons do that. In fact not only do they believe (*pisteuo*); they even "shudder," or "bristle up" (*phrissousi*, an *onomatopoeic verb used only here in the NT*). The "belief" in one God may not be "trust" in that God. Unless it is "trust," it is not true faith and will not be evidenced in good works. In other words the respondent is saying, "Faith is not the key; what counts is works." Thus the respondent has gone too far. James did not say that works are essential to faith, or that faith is unimportant. His argument was that works are evidence of faith. Other writers understand this passage to mean that James challenged the "someone" to show his faith without deeds - the point being that it cannot be done! James, however, said that faith can be demonstrated (only) by what one does. The demons' "belief" in

God is inadequate. Such a so-called but unreal faith is obviously unaccompanied by deeds on their parts.

Verse 20 - Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

James did not launch into a lengthy refutation of the respondent. The apostle simply addressed him forcefully, You foolish man, and returned to his original argument that faith without deeds is useless (*arge "lazy, idle, negligent"*). The adjective "foolish" (*kene*) is usually translated "*vain,....empty," or "hollow"* (*mataios, "worthless, fruitless, useless,"* in 1:26). Flimsy faith is dead; so are empty, faithless works. James' argument is not pro-works/anti-faith or pro-faith/anti-works. He has simply said that genuine faith is accompanied by good works. Spiritual works are the evidence, not the energizer, of sincere faith.

Verse 21 - Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?

Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? This question is

often held to be directly opposed to Paul's statement that Abraham's faith, not his works, caused God to declare him righteous (Romans 4:1-5). Paul, however, was arguing for the priority of faith. James argued for the proof of faith. Paul declared that Abraham had faith, and was therefore justified, or declared righteous (Genesis 15:6), prior to circumcision (Genesis 17:11; Romans 4:9). James explained that Abraham's faith was evident in his practice of Isaac's sacrifice (Genesis 22:12), and he was therefore justified, or declared righteous. Works serve as the barometer of justification, while faith is the basis for justification.

Verses 22-24 - You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

James emphasized the joint role of faith and.., actions...working together. Faith is the force behind the deed. The deed is the finality of the faith. The verb translated was made complete (*eteleiothe*) means to "*carry to the end.*" Faith finds fulfillment in

action. So it was with Abraham. James and Paul quoted the same passage - Genesis 15:6 - to prove their points (Romans 4:3). Paul said that Abraham was justified by faith, and James said that Abraham was justified by faith evidenced by what he did.

Verse 25 - And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

In the same way (*"and likewise also"; homoios de kai*) was not even Rahab declared righteous for her actions in welcoming the spies (angelous, "messengers") and helping them escape?
(Joshua 2; 6)

Verse 26 - For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

The conclusion is most clear. Faith and deeds are as essential to each other as the body and the spirit. Apart from (choris) the spirit, or the "breath" (pneumatosis) of life, the body is dead. Apart from (choris) the evidence of works, faith may be deemed dead.

It is not the real thing. True faith continually contributes to spiritual growth and development. Not only is a believer to stand confidently on God's Word even in the midst of trials and temptations, but also he must serve his brothers and sisters in Christ. He is to accept all members of God's family without favoritism and to aid the family with a working faith. To gain spiritual maturity a believer must be what God wants him to be and do what God wants him to do.

Those James Moments - Chapter 2

- **God expects obedience to all of His teachings, not just acceptance or acknowledgement of a part of them.**
- **Those who hope to receive mercy from God must in turn show mercy to others.**
- **Saving faith produces works of compassion and obedience.**
- **Works of unselfishness and sacrifice for others prove the reality of our faith before a watching world.**
- **Do not displease God by favoring the rich or abusing the poor.**
- **Treat people from all backgrounds as God does.**
- **Check your faith by your works.**
- **Draw closer to God through obedience.**

Conclusion

James ended chapter 1 with an appeal for his readers to practice a pure religion. In chapter 2 he presented two examples of the practice of this pure religion.

First, he showed that real religion did not cater to the rich and powerful but showed a concern for the poor and needy (2:1–13). He warned that real faith in Jesus excluded the practice of favoritism (2:1–4). He showed that favoritism was contrary to God's plan and a threat to the best interests of Christians (2:5–7). He appealed to his readers to love their neighbors and to lavish mercy on all (2:8–13).

Second, James called for his readers to produce good works as a demonstration of their faith (2:14–26). He warned that faith without deeds becomes a meaningless claim and only involves giving mental assent to right doctrine (2:14–20). True faith involves a commitment of the will to Jesus, not merely assenting to correct doctrines.

7.23.17

Expository James

Chapter 3 - Verses 1 - 12

James 3:1-12

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human

being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

Introduction

After James pushes his Spirit-led assertion that faith must find real and practical expression in our lifestyle as well as in our beliefs, he shifts focus to the confronting the real problems that each of us deal with. These are, in essence, problems that challenge the real life expectations that obedient faith in Christ creates.

What should be no surprise is that these are common, "oh yeah that's me" ordinary problems. James gives no demand here that our faith move mountains, produce miracles, or send us to Africa

without support to carry the Gospel to distant tribes and cultures. Rather than the supernatural and extraordinary things we sometimes associate with great faith, James pushes our attention to the unspectacular (but very real) business of the common person's ordinary daily life. He hits home.

The 2017, version of jealousy and selfish ambition are much more subtle and disguised, but still very real, controlling the attitudes of our heart and the poison of our tongues. When we are in love with our own ideas more than the ideas of Jesus, we spend far too much time and waste too many opportunities promoting ourselves and our twisted ideas of success, rather than honoring and promoting the God of our faith. You and I know that we can easily slide into the bad behavior of using our tongues to hate, berate, and devalue others. Or we can use it to push our own agenda, create unnecessary conflict, and impose our own will (control). Lost in that whole narcissistic and self-centric process are the critical opportunities to love, to make peace, to respond gently, to show the goodness of God, and to share His incomparable mercy.

The open and blunt message of James on the use and misuse of the tongue provides information about the power, rebelliousness, and double-mindedness when we do not manage our emotion and guard our heart with goodness and mercy. He warns us of the potential for evil outcomes that often become irreversible. Though we are believers in Jesus, we do not automatically develop regenerated tongues. The potential for speaking evil with our tongues encourage us to let God's Spirit search out our words and allow him to develop in us attitudes of goodness, grace and mercy.

James's attaches instruction about the role of wisdom when using our words as an offensive or defensive response - wisdom is far better than misplaced zeal, hurtful words, and godless ambition. Where is our heart in those critical and defining moments? Listen to James... Contentious words produce disorder and evil. God places a high value and premium on peace.

James 3-Pack

One - Those who misuse their tongue (words and attitudes of the heart) receive God's condemnation.

Two - The tongue is a small part of our physical design, but it can control and influence the outcomes of major events and defining moments of our life.

Three - We show our moral inconsistency lack of self-control by using the same tongue both to bless God, and then to hate, berate, and devalue his creatures.

Context

Verse 1 - Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

James warns not to presume to be teachers because of the higher level of accountability God demands of those who teach (pastors, elders, etc.). His instruction is that we be more concerned about our spiritual fitness for teaching than with the benefits and status we might receive from the title - "teacher." Bottom line here - those who teach will be judged more strictly. A teacher receives added prominence from the position, but also

accepts open accountability and higher expectation from God. Teachers provide instruction (equipping) in the practical duties of life, and to help build solid foundations for their hearers from the teachings and commandments of Jesus.

God's Word does not discourage people from assuming or pursuing the position of a teacher. It raises the dignity and significance of the position by pointing out the dangers and responsibilities of the office for those who might "otherwise neglect these requirements. It seeks to enlighten and relate the responsibility of folks who should not be teaching because they lack the calling, conviction, and the spiritual qualifications for it.

Verse 2 - For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.

Perfect is used to describe both God and "human beings. It pictured God's moral perfection and completeness (Matthew 5:48). It describes maturity or complete development in people (1 Corinthians 14:20; Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 1:28).

The word (*teleios*) does not describe sinless perfection, for no believer will reach that goal in this life. Rather, it presents someone who has moved toward spiritual maturity in the control of the tongue. James sought a maturity which showed the result of consistent growth in likeness to Christ. James even suggested that he himself had not reached the level in which he was never at fault in what he said. Such humility indicated growth toward maturity. That everyone sinned was standard Jewish doctrine; that one of the most common instruments of sin and harm was the human mouth was also a Jewish commonplace (as early as Proverbs, 11:9; 12:18; 18:21).

Verses 3-4 - If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.

Controlling horses with bits and ships with rudders were common illustrations in the ancient Mediterranean, because everyone except the most illiterate peasants (who would also miss many of the other allusions if they heard James read)

understood them. Jewish texts often cast wisdom, reason, and God in the role of ideal narratives, but James's point here is not what should control or have power. His point is simply the unrecognized and overlooked power of a comparatively small physical part like the human tongue and the content and intent of the heart behind it.

Verses 5-6 - So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

Others also compared the spread of rumors to the igniting of what would rapidly become a forest fire. Here the image is that of a tongue that incites the whole body to violence. This phrase (*trochon tes geneseos*) is part of a longer sentence reading, "*It ... sets the whole course of his life on fire.*" Both the word course and the word life have multiple meanings, and it is difficult to know exactly what James intended to communicate. Course may mean "wheel" or some sort of cycle of existence. Life may refer

to "birth," "existence," or "nature." Some scholars have suggested that James was thinking of life as a wheel which began turning at birth and rolled along until death. They "would place the tongue at the axle of this wheel and suggest that James was describing the tongue as an organ setting the entire wheel afire.

James probably intended his expression to show the broad social and domestic impact of an unruly tongue. His expression here seems to show that an undisciplined tongue can light a destructive fire all of our important relationships in life. A tongue out of control can keep an entire household in conflict and chaos, or an neighborhood, community, or nation for that matter. James's very real expression describes the potential of the tongue to inflame and destroy all of our existence.

Ps 52:1-5

Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man? The steadfast love of God endures all the day. Your tongue plots destruction, like a sharp razor, you worker of deceit. You love evil more than good, and lying more than speaking what is right. You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue. But God will

break you down forever; he will snatch and tear you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living.

Verses 7-8 - For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

Made in God's image (verse 9), people were appointed over all creatures (Genesis 1:26). But although other creatures could be subdued as God commanded (Genesis 1:28; 9:2), the tongue was like the deadliest snake, full of toxic venom. The tongue is not only like an uncontrolled fire. It is also like an untamed beast. Every kind, or all nature (*physis*), of wild beasts – birds of the air, reptiles on land, and creatures of the sea – all are being tamed and have been tamed by man (*"human nature," physis; thus "beastly nature" is tamed by "human nature"*). But no human seems able to tame the tongue! No one can tame the tongue because it is guided by a restless evil - the jealousy, hatred, anger, contempt, hostility of the deceived attitudes and emotions of the human heart. Worse yet, the tongue is full of deadly poison

(Psalm 140:3). Like the poison of a serpent, the tongue is loaded with the venom of hate and death-dealing gossip.

Verses 9-10 - With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

Some other Jewish teachers also noted the incongruity of blessing God while cursing other people, who were made in his image; even more often, they recognized that whatever one did to other humans, it was as if one did it to God himself, because they were made in his image. It's very hard to miss James's point here - **antagonistic, insensitive, and inappropriate speech**. James goes on to put this truth right out there to deal with... Whether its rude, angry and unkind responses, contentious and controversial rhetoric, or cursing mortal enemies under the name of a just cause - they all are incompatible with worshiping God and honoring His name, no matter how embedded it had become in Jewish patriotic tradition. Fast forward to us today... whether its sarcastic and hurtful words with husband, wife, sons, daughters, mothers and fathers, or hostile and hateful social media inuendo,

or sloppy agape at church, and gossipy community chit-chat - all of it is unacceptable to God as worship and unworthy of blessing.

Verse 11-12 - Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

James produces two other common examples of impossible inconsistency. Figs, olives and grapes were the three most common agricultural products of the Judean hills, and alongside wheat they would have been the most common crops of the Mediterranean region as a whole. These two verses show the consistency of nature. Both verses ask questions to which the expected answer is "no." The illustrations from nature would have been familiar to inhabitants of Palestine. Areas around the Dead Sea contained many salty springs. Farther north of the Dead Sea travelers could find springs emitting fresh water. One spring could produce only one type of water.

The farmers of Palestine produced figs, olives, and grapes in abundance. James emphasized that a tree produced its own kind of fruit. Teaching moment... **We don't go to grapevines to find figs. We do not pluck olives from fig trees. We don't go to contaminated springs to find fresh water. Nature is consistent, but our tongues have never provided the template of consistency needed to honor God and the people we love. The consistency we seek is found in the moral and ethical disciplines of God's Word and His commands and expectations for our life and behavior. Go there for help - not the same old places we've gone forever.**

Words Reflect the Attitude and Attitude Reveals the Heart

24 Zero Challenge

7.30.17, 8.6.17

Expository James

Chapter 4 - Verses 1-6

James 4:1-6

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Introduction

Hard Truth... God demands complete loyalty from his people, and he provides the grace to achieve it. God wants his people to live with a conscious commitment to follow His divine will for their lives, and not their own. The recipients of James letter all claimed to be Christians, but many of them were living with the same spirit and appetite as their unconverted and unbelieving neighbors and friends. They were dominated by a self-will which pursued pleasure, power, and prominence rather than the will of God. James unapologetically rebuked their sinful behavior and pushed his readers to turn to God with repentance and purity. The strong warnings of James applied to those spiritually hostile who used "hit lists" in prayer as a way to eliminate those who had religious and political viewpoints different from their own. Clearly, people who make their own selfish desires the chief goal of their lives should not expect answers to prayer.

Chapter four of James is by far the most direct and challenging to the not only the recipients but for those of us who seek to obey God's Word and follow the commands of Jesus. This is not for the spiritually faint-hearted, or the overly sensitive. Be

advised, James does not practice religious or political correctness.

Context and Content

Verse 1 - Two rhetorical questions try to locate the source of struggles and fights among Christians. Such fights and quarrels come from desires that battle within you.

The fights and quarrels involved conflicts among Christians. The plural form of both words indicates the conflicts were chronic rather than a onetime incident. The disputes could have taken the form of arguments and controversies between teachers and factions in the churches. It could also have involved struggles about secular and social issues such as personal influence and financial gain.

The Greek word translated "*desires*" is related etymologically to the English word, *hedonism*, the philosophy that the chief purpose of living is to satisfy self. In our day the word "*narcissism*" would better describe what James is challenging in them.

- An obvious self-focus in interpersonal exchanges
- Problems in sustaining satisfying relationships
- A lack of psychological awareness and emotional intelligence (egosyntonic)
- Difficulty with empathy
- Problems distinguishing the self from others (personal boundaries)
- Hypersensitivity to any insults or imagined insults (criticism and narcissists, narcissistic rage and narcissistic injury)
- Vulnerability to shame rather than guilt
- Haughty body language
- Flattery towards people who admire and affirm them (narcissistic supply)
- Detesting those who do not admire them (narcissistic abuse)
- Using other people without considering the cost of doing so
- Pretending to be more important than they actually are
- Bragging (subtly but persistently) and exaggerating their achievements
- Claiming to be an "expert" at many things
- Inability to view the world from the perspective of other people

- Denial of remorse and gratitude

Jesus used the similar wording to describe people “*choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and... do not mature*” (Luke 8:14). There “*pleasures*” described any personal goal such as money, reputation, or success, which contributes to personal accomplishment rather than God's will.

These sinful desires lay within each Christian. Even believers find in themselves an alien army which seeks self rather than God. These desires more accurately represent and express our pre-Christian nature still seeking to control our lives (check out Romans 7:14–25). Christians will never be completely free from the evil influence of these subtle desires, but by God's grace we can escape their domination and control of our lives.

Verse 2 - This verse is difficult to interpret because punctuation was not an original part of Scripture. We must use our best interpretive skills to decide how to punctuate this verse.

Compare the punctuation in NIV and NASB. The NIV lists three sentences before it concludes that You do not have, because you do not ask God. The NASB uses two sentences before it makes

the same conclusion. Because it seems unduly harsh to join together “killing” and “coveting,” we will use the NASB translation: *“You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.”*

This translation suggests that murder is the result of desiring something and not getting it. It points out that fighting and quarreling are the results of having envy and being unable to obtain what you want.

“**Lust**” is a frequently used word in the New Testament in a bad sense to describe the act of coveting something belonging to someone else (see Matthew 5:28). “**Envious**” in this context refers to a quest for position, rank, or fame—an evil expression of personal ambition.

What type of “killing” did James have in mind? James was probably not thinking of physical murder. The Roman government would have executed murderers as criminals. Jesus linked an attitude of hatred and contempt with murder (Matthew 5:21–22).

You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

Hatred and jealousy produced by greed and godlessness are potential acts of murder because they can lead to actual murder. The inner attitude is wrong just as is the outward act of murder. Thus, James was not likely accusing his Christian readers of actual murder, but was showing them that their fights and disagreements were as offensive to God as killing.

At the conclusion of verse 2 James outlined the startling truth that his readers lacked what they sought because they failed to ask God. They hankered after satisfaction, but they looked in the wrong places. They did not ask God as Jesus had taught (Matthew 7:7).

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

They allowed their lives to be governed by pleasure, selfishness, and greed. Consider this truth... *"There is, to be sure, no prayer that we all need to pray so much as the prayer that we may love what God commands and desire what He promises."*

Verse 3 - James gives additional reasons in verse three as to why these believers failed to gain their prayerful desires. When they asked, they asked with wrong motives - dark heart. The requests may have been legit, but their purpose and motive in praying was illegitimate. They only wanted to pursue their personal pleasures.

Scripture is clear that God listens to the prayers of the righteous and the faithful (Psalm 34:15; 1 John 3:21–22).

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive

from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

Those who have a right heart and righteous behavior will voice their requests in accord with God's will - those who don't. will not (1 John 5:14–15).

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

We will not receive prayer answers from the Lord unless we ask with the right motives in accord with God's will.

A cancer victim who had experienced healing wrote the following words to a denominational paper: "My family and I have become keenly aware of the value of prayer in the past few months. As a result of the prayers of people all over the country, God healed my body from cancer.... I am grateful to have been included in the prayers of so many people and grateful to the Lord for His healing power."

Experimental treatment removed all signs of the cancer in a few weeks, and the individual was able to return to an active ministry of pastoring. It is a legitimate prayer request to ask God for healing from sickness. Even that request may not be answered affirmatively or in the way we want because God may have an alternate plan for an individual or circumstance (check out 2 Corinthians 12:7–10).

So to keep me from being too elated by the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Be certain, our prayers of faith can be a dynamic factor in bringing the power of God's blessings to ourselves and to others.

Verse 4 - James firmly called out his readers, *You adulterous people*. This is the part where everyone says... oooh! The Bible describes the act of turning away from God as spiritual adultery (check out Isaiah 57:3; Matthew 12:39). Some say a believer can't turn away from God. Obviously, James has a different take on that as he confronted his Jesus believing readers with the idea of spiritual adultery - we should probably listen.

Frequent and cozy BFF relationship with the anti-Christ ways of the world describes a deliberate personal choice to follow the ways of the world and not the ways of God. In the eyes of God it is an act of defiance and rebellion against God. For a Christian, this type of response resembles entering the camp of the enemy and joining his army.

The general usage of the term "*world*" can refer to the human race, the universe God made, or to a system of values separated from God (godless). In this context it describes a society and culture severed from God and pursuing its own godless or anti-Christ agenda (check out 1 John 2:15–17).

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world— the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

A person cannot be loyal to God and controlled by the godless ways of the world at the same time. Christians cannot peacefully and rightfully coexist with evil.

Verse 5 - This verse confirms that friendship with the world and with God are incompatible. Two problems for interpretation appear in the text.

First, no other verse in the Bible exactly states the words of the verse. Perhaps James was not quoting Scripture but was giving the general sense of a verse like Exodus 34:14 which pictures God as a jealous God.

...because you are not to bow down to any other god; since Adonai – whose very name is Jealous – is a jealous God.

CJB

Second, we must determine whether James was talking about the Holy Spirit (Spirit of God) or the spirit of a human being. The NIV translation sees James as referring to the human spirit, whereas the Holy Spirit is the interpretation of the Weymouth translation: ***“The Spirit which He has caused to dwell in us yearns jealously over us.”***

Galatians 5:16 describes the Holy Spirit as the opponent of This picture is consistent with the translation of the Weymouth version. James was saying that God’s Spirit earnestly desired our undivided loyalty to the Lord.

James was asserting that God had placed his Holy Spirit within believers (theological point). The Spirit was intensely concerned about any rival in the Christian’s heart. Envy intensely translates a strong word describing an intense longing or desire. It underscores the idea that God is a jealous God neither expects and nor allows rivals. God refuses to share our commitment with

any other so-called god. He wants our complete loyalty and devotion. It is vitally important for us to remember that God makes great demands of his people.

Verse 6 - If God makes hard and difficult demands of his people, He will always supply the grace and wisdom to comply with the commands as the quotation from Proverbs 3:34 (quoted also in 1 Peter 5:5) shows.

Toward the scorers he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor. The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace.

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

The proud are those who turn their hearts away from God to another rival. *The humble* understand and practice complete

trust and dependence on God. James assumed that believers, even though they might fall into temporary sinful behavior, are basically humble in that they recognize that salvation comes from God alone. Believers are recipients of the grace that God is willing and able to give.

God resists the proud by opposing the life and daily practices and behaviors of those who fail to follow him. He foils their plans and frustrates their dreams. God does not want our lives to be dominated by possessions, quests for prestige, selfish ambition, or deliberate forgetfulness of God. His aim is that we *“seek first his kingdom and his righteousness”* (Matthew 6:33).

8.20.17

Expository James

Chapter 4 - Verses 7-10

James 4:7-10

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Introduction

In these few verses James is going to put before us a ten-step plan to overcome what seeks to destroy each of us. It does not matter **what it is**, nor does it matter **which one of us**. The important truth that we must hear and receive today is that there **IS** a way for you. That our life matters to God. Our life matters so much so that He gave us the resource and the instruction to

overcome the "who's who" of evil that has crippled and paralyzed our lives. Let's start with a reality that James wants us to acknowledge but intends for us to overcome. Satan is real, evil is real, sin is real, the curse, condemnation, and consequence of all of those are indeed real. But before you push the panic button - rest in this truth. Jesus said, *"in this world you will have trouble - but, do not be afraid for I have overcome the world."* It is from this premise that James writes to his readers these four critically important verses.

"Devil" (diabolos) literally means "slanderer." The word pictures the devil as one who misrepresents God to human beings (Genesis 3:1) and human beings to God (Job 1:9–11). The devil refuses (has always) to submit to God and is determined to prevent believers from obeying God. We must resist the devil incessantly and unrelentingly.

How do we resist the devil? We must surround ourselves with God's strength. Paul urged the Ephesians to "put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Ephesians 6:11). The act of resistance includes our making a commitment to practice righteousness, live in truth,

demonstrate faith, use God's Word, and exercise assurance of salvation. As we live in conflict with Satan, we must pray strongly for one another (Ephesians 6:18).

The act of resisting the devil requires determined opposition to him. We must also submit to God and draw near to him. As we submit to God and live in obedience to him, we will experience his guidance, strength, and protection as we face temptations. James bluntly says to his readers that if they resist the devil their enemy will flee from them. As you and I resist and oppose Satan's strategic plan against us (the struggle), it is important that we do not doubt our decision or why we made it, but we should remain determined and confident in the Lord and His care, concern, and commitment to the victorious outcome of our life. **In Him we win.** What James tell us is that we are in a "with Him - without Him" proposition. Our lives and future are what is at stake. As we confront our demons, darkness, and difficulty with a determined will and unflinching confidence in God, we will expose Satan as a coward. Remember, Jesus' death on the cross made the devil a defeated foe (Hebrews 2:14). As long we faithfully seek to find our strength from God and refuse to

consent to Satan's temptations, we can conquer the evil that seeks to overcome and devour us, and those we love.

Context and Content

Verse 7 - Submit to God these verses reflect the vigor of an Old Testament prophet as they express ten appeals to return to God. Submit ... to God calls us to subject our wills to his control. We can submit ourselves to the Lord only when we recognize that he is greater and worthy of more honor than we. The negative side of this command urges us to resist the devil. Resist is a military metaphor urging Christians to stand our ground against Satan's attacks. We **resist the devil** when we refuse to surrender to the impulse of sin.

If we obey these commandments, God promises that the devil will flee from us. Christ's resistance of Satan in his wilderness temptations provided the devil no foothold in his life and eventually forced the devil to flee (Matthew 4:1–11).

Verse 8 - Come near to God involves approaching God in worship and commitment. Those who approach God in the obedience of

worship find that he comes near to them. As our knowledge of the Lord deepens, we learn more fully his strength, power, and guidance for godly living.

Wash your hands uses the language of religious ceremony in a moral sense (Exodus 30:19–21). We cleanse our hands by withdrawing them from all evil actions and compromises. Perhaps obedience to this command called more for cleansing the outward life, while purify your hearts called for an inner purification (1 John 3:3). The language here is soaked with words from Psalm 24:3–4 calling for believers to have *“clean hands and a pure heart.”*

Double-minded people follow the practices of the world while they pretend to hold to God. Such people lack the purity of heart and focused purpose which the Lord wants in his disciples. The solution for this serious condition is a commitment of the entire personality to Christ and a fresh seeking of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 9 - This verse calls for **open repentance**. To grieve our sin means to experience a deep sense and understanding of true

biblical shame (not condemnation) as the result of our own disobedience. Mourning and weeping are the outward evidences of this sense of wretchedness. To change **laughter and joy** to **mourning and gloom** demands that we recognize and respond with honesty and humility to the ridiculousness of our actions. The use of the term laughter seems to describe what in our day would be the obsessive party mentality of god-less people. Their delusional existence will become gloomy and hopeless when they recognize their foolish choices have devastating consequences. Laughter and joy are not evil - not even close. However, the particular moments when we meet God as sinners demand a serious repentance rather than hilarious celebration. Christians face times for serious repentance. Such times must not be cynically laughed off.

Paul could write from a Roman prison cell for the Philippians always "to rejoice in the Lord" (Philippians 4:4). Under the burden of recognizing his disobedience, he could also cry out, "*What a wretched man I am!*" (Romans 7:24). There is a right time to rejoice and a right time to mourn. James called his double-minded readers to recognize their moral unworthiness.

Verse 10 - Hatred and hostility originates in pride; the wise Christian sows seed of peace through humility. Pride puts us at a distance from God; pride defiles our hearts and our works. It is the sin of double-mindedness again, and this is basically lack of surrender. "Purify your hearts" carries the idea of having a chaste and faithful heart, not loving the world or grieving the Spirit. These believers were living in pleasure, surrounded with laughter and worldly joy. They needed to be sober and serious, putting sin out of their lives. James promises that if they humble themselves, God will lift them up.

James makes a final command and a promise in verse 10. To become **humble** before God demands a contrite, reverent, and voluntary turning to God (Matthew 23:12). The image is that of a person who falls prostrate (on their face) before a powerful ruler, seeking mercy.

If we look at ourselves from our own perspective, we will invariably be either overly optimistic, or hopelessly pessimistic about ourselves. But when we look closely at ourselves through the lens of the Holy Spirit, it is easy to see our unworthiness; also see God's desire and ability to forgive us, receive us, and restore

us. This is victory. Those who truly humble themselves before the Lord will experience his exaltation and elevation. This “lifting up” involves both moral and spiritual power to live this life. It also provides the hope and encouragement for our place in the eternal world to come. (1 Peter 5:6)

Conclusion

Submit to God - Surrender

Resist the Devil - Choice

Come Close to God - Intimacy

Clean Your Hands - Goodness

Purify Your Hearts - Sincerity

Eliminate Double-Mindedness - Decisive

Close Off Denial and Delusion - Clarity

Open Up to Honesty and Honor - Freedom

Commit to Change and Growth - Purpose

Humble Yourself Daily - Worship

9.3.17 – 9.10.17

Expository James

Chapter 4 - Verses 13-17

James 4:13-17

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Introduction

James 4:13–17 centers on the arrogance and pride involved in planning life without dependence on God, denouncing the worldliness of the self-centered culture and the Christian believing people who become lost in it. This self-centeredness James challenges in his readers is rooted in the struggle between the will of God and the will of the believer - the

sovereignty of God versus the autonomy of man. This is the struggle, there is no other.

Doing and being in will of God does lead directly to God's plan for our lives, actions, and accomplishments. The two cannot be separated – there is not one without the other. Christians must actively seek God's will, and then do it. James will argue that to know God's will is one thing - to do it is another. We must not merely mouth our obedience to the God's will as a "smoke screen" to hide our own plans. It is essential for Christians to sincerely seek God's desires for their plans, goals, and actions. Paul wished farewell to the Ephesian Christians with the words, "*I will come back if it is God's will*" (Acts 18:21). He indicated to the Corinthians that he would visit them "*if the Lord is willing*" (1 Corinthians 4:19).

To early Christians the sovereignty of God was a deeply personal reality. We who live today must make the seeking and doing of God's will our chief aim in life. We must not allow our advocacy of doing God's will to degenerate into a glib, formal expression empty of all spiritual reality.

Our recognition of our dependence on God for the future should not lead to inactivity, nor should it discourage future planning. *Plan like there is no tomorrow - live like today is the last.* We must plan our future with a hopeful seeking of God's will. When we commit our plans to him and seek his will, we can move confidently into the future with a conviction that God's grace sustains and empowers us. He will show us where His Spirit is actively at work, and will pull us in close to join Him in that work. In the earlier verses of chapter four, James strongly enforces the reality that God holds our future in his hands. That is a big thought. Here is the truth James will ask his readers to embrace - **our life and prosperity are dependent on God and his grace.** If we continue planning our lives without demonstration of dependence on God, we fail to know the goodness of God and the greatness of His plans for us. In rejecting His will and His plans we become guilty of sin. James will say that failing to seek God's will and plans for our life is wrong behavior that must be corrected.

These words introduce the possibility of a broader application. Whenever we fail or choose to follow a conscious commitment to Christ, we have omitted a deed of obedience and are involved in

disobedience. Any action in which we reduce or omit obedience is not acceptable in God's sight. This is not God's best for us - there is indeed something better. It is in His will and plans that we will find it.

Our failures to seek God by prayer, Bible reading, and worship are in all reality sins of omission. Our omission of helpful acts of service to other human beings constitutes an act of disobedience. We must be people who confess to God our overt acts of disobedience and turn them into humble acts of obedience that proclaim the greatness and goodness of God in our lives. We must also ask him to show us those things we have forgotten to do. This is what James presents as obedience and love for the will and plans of God over our lives. It is a better way to live, love, and flourish, not only in this life but in the life and kingdom to come.

Expository Context

Verse 13 - "Come now, you who say, today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit."

James' "**call out**" was direct. "Come now" is literally, "Go now." It is the same construction found in 5:1, a colloquial (conversational or popular) phrase used only by James in the New Testament. The interjection both pushes the reader, as well as gaining their undivided attention. In effect, James says, *here is the challenge – do I have your attention now?* The apparent offender **called out** by James is a fairly typical businessman who makes his plans apart from God. He is self-assertive in his travel plans: we will go to this or that city; self-confident in his time schedule, spend a year there; and self-centered in his trade relationships, carry on business and make money. "Carry on business" is from a compound verb (*emporeusometha*, from "in" and *poreuomai*, "to go out") from which the English word "*emporium*" has come. It is related to the noun (*emporos*) which could be translated "merchant," "trader," "drummer," or "one who goes in and gets the trade." A vivid picture of the Jewish merchant James tried to correct is an aggressive (commission) salesman out drumming up business only for the bottom-line

objective: "Make money!" Making money of course is not a "bad thing," but, in this context it is presented as the salesman's "only thing."

Verse 14 - "yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes."

To the selfish hustlers James directly stated, *Why? What are you doing? You do not even know what will happen tomorrow.* The point – in reality man's plans are always tentative. His plans are not his own. Time is not his own. In fact, life is not his own. James then fired off another of his famous questions: *What is your life?* The answer is a mist - "vapor, a puff of steam." Believers need this godly perspective on their earthly journey. Among other things, it exposes boasting and arrogance for the selfish, prideful behaviors that they truly are.

Verse 15 - "Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.'"

The key to avoiding arrogance and boasting is to maintain a godly perspective. See life through the lens of God and his goodness and love. Instead of devising outcomes and plans reflecting only the human perspective and desires, one must expand his or her view to include God's will and plans for our future. In place of self-centered boasting one should say, *If, it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.* These are not so much words to be used like some formula, system, or charm, but a realistic attitude that affects all of one's being and behavior.

Verse 16 - "As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil."

To make sure his readers understood, James reiterated that to boast and self-promote... is evil.

Proverbs 27:2

"Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips."

Self-centered bragging must be replaced by God-honoring trust. The cure for boasting is belief not simply in one's self - but, the greatness of God in one's self.

Verse 17 - "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."

It is likely this concluding sentence is related not only to the matter of boasting and arrogance, but also to all the good and godly advice given so far in this letter. James' readers could not plead ignorance - his letter was filled with truth and challenge. His Spirit-inspired words are an exhortation to do better, to do good. To fail to respond to this expectation is clearly sinful behavior to James. His word... to attain spiritual maturity, a believer must do the good they now know to do. They (we) must stand confidently on God's Word even in trials and temptations. They (we) must compassionately serve others without prejudice or favoritism but with practical and obedient faith - and must speak carefully with a controlled tongue and wise, cultivated thought. Finally, believers in Jesus Christ, must submit in contrition to our all-powerful Father, Life-giving, Lawgiver, and just Judge with a humble spirit, righteous action, and a trusting

heart. We must be what God wants us to be, do what God wants us to do, speak as God wants us to speak, and sense what God wants him to sense.

9.17.17

Expository James - Philanthropy, Patience, and Prayer

Chapter 5 - Verses 1-6

James 5:1-6

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

Introduction

Too often the obsessive or unhealthy quest for wealth and pursuit of power can consume all our energies and damage our desire and the priority to love God and those whom we love the most. Many of those who have lost their balance and priorities while pursuing and achieving great wealth and power face the difficult temptations of pride, greed, and an attitude of self-sufficiency. The non-surrendered (to Christ) wealthy can also take advantage of their misguided power to practice injustice and dishonest manipulation toward the poor, the needy, and the disenfranchised of a society or culture. This is true of our own culture today - this is not a social or political concern - it is a moral and ethical breach. As James calls his readers to a pursuit motivated by righteousness tempered by the moral and ethical discipline of biblical truth and the goodness of God.

James saw wealthy and powerful people (political and religious) who were confronting these temptations and being overtaken by them. He warned both the rich and poor—the majority of his Christian readers—of the numbing and intoxicating effects of wealth generated by greed, and the pursuit of power motivated

by pride and contempt. Christians must flee the ungodly pursuit of wealth and power, moving past the greed, pride, and contempt to demonstrate patience and stamina in trials. And finally, to faithfully practice prayer at all times and all circumstances in our lives.

Here is where we begin with James in chapter five.

Expository Context

Verses 1-3 - Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days.

Looking back to James 4:13–17, he centers on the arrogance and pride involved in planning life without dependence on God, denouncing the worldliness of the self-centered businessman. James 5:1–6 indicts wealthy landowners and civil leaders for abusing the power of their wealth and for oppressing the poor.

These landlords probably belonged to the same group whom James had mentioned in 2:6–7 as the rich. Clearly he has a message with specific intent for them to hear.

Most agree that these landowners and leaders were probably not believers, but were making life miserable and difficult for Christians, whom they were victimizing. Notice that James spoke to some readers as brothers (verses 7, 10), but he did not use this term in verses 1–6. Hopefully we do not expect Christians to use their wealth, power, or influence to promote injustice or exploit the pain and poverty of others as did the wealthy leaders and landowners in verses 1–6.

Important to remember - the possession of wealth is **not** evil - the obsession to possess wealth is. In the state of obsession all other priorities (faith, family, friends) are misplaced, neglected, and oftentimes abused. James says, Abusing wealth by selfish living and by harming people dependent on you, is evil in the eyes of God. Obviously these people seem to have used their wealth only for themselves and not others.

Weep and wail represents the emotional outburst of those who ignore God's demands and are overwhelmed when they recognize what they will lose and suffer at God's final judgment. The same Greek verb appears in 4:9, calling sinful believers to repentance. Here the rich are not called to repent. Too late for that. They must cry out in fear and pain in view of the end.

Misery points to hardship, wretchedness, and difficult times which stood poised to strike at the powerful and wealthy people who had abused their financial power and influence. This direct address to the wealthy oppressors represents a momentary shift of audience, yet James still wanted his oppressed people to hear what would happen to their oppressors. Rich non-Christian landowners who were oppressing poor believers probably would not hear or read the letter of James. Christian readers would learn from the experience of the rich not to set too high a value on wealth.

James spoke with the passion of an Old Testament prophet (*read Amos 5:11–27*) as he sought to help oppressed Christians avoid the deceitful ways of wealth.

In the ancient world wealth took three primary forms: food (Luke 12:18), expensive clothing, and precious metals (Acts 20:33).

When owners carelessly stored clothing, moths could cause extensive damage. Gold does not actually rust, but it can become corroded. James may have been using the corrosion of gold and silver as a symbol of the corrosive effects of greed on the human soul. James did not specifically mention food, but the wealth which had rotted could include food which had spoiled and wasted away.

The verb tenses create an image of destruction that had already taken place, another element of prophetic forcefulness, indicating that the events of divine judgment were so certain to occur that they could be pictured as fact.

The corrosion of gold and silver affects the wealthy and powerful in two different ways. *First*, it testifies against them, producing evidence of their greed and lack of concern. *Second*, it will consume their flesh as fire, a terrible image of divine judgment on those who had made money their chief aim in life.

Verse 3 concludes with the warning that the wealthy landlords had hoarded wealth in the last days. Instead of depending on God, these greedy power brokers collected wealth when they should have prepared for "eternity. They resembled people in a burning house trying to save precious personal objects when they should flee for safety.

Last days could refer to the approaching death of the landowners or to the period of time preceding Jesus' return in judgment (Acts 2:17). In a sense Christians have been living in the last days since the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (check out Acts 2:17).

Jesus warned about the misuse of wealth (Matthew 6:19–21). Wealth can be destroyed by moths or rust or it can be stolen. So readily we place our affections on material items instead of trusting in God. Wanting to keep money for our own use is natural. The Bible does not discourage wise planning, but does denounce selfish, greedy living. God wanted money to be used to relieve the suffering of the needy (Ephesians 4:28).

Basil the Great, a Christian leader in Caesarea of Asia Minor in A.D. 368, saw his country suffer first from natural disasters such as floods and then from devastating droughts. Many people starved to death. Basil aggressively called out wealthy hoarders of grain *"who let their wheat rot, while men die of hunger."* He sold property which he had inherited and used the money to feed the hungry. He interceded with the rich to give to the poor and with the poor to share with the poorer. He literally washed the feet of the poor and fed the starving with his own hands.

He wrote, *"If you are reduced to your last loaf of bread and a beggar appears at your door, then take that loaf from your closet and lift your hands to Heaven, and say this prayer: 'O Lord, I have but this one loaf, which you see before you: Hunger lies in wait for me, but I worship your commandments more than all other things, and therefore this little I have I give to my brother, who suffers from hunger.'"*

James shot out warnings of judgment on the stingy, greedy landlords who preferred to collect money rather than help the poor and needy. The generosity and unselfishness of early

Christians provided visible solutions to the problems of hunger, need, and greed which they confronted (check out Acts 4:32–37).

Verse 4 - Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

The sin of injustice occupies center stage here. The wealthy had failed to pay wages to their workers. In New Testament Palestine rich farmers hired day laborers to work their fields. Deuteronomy 24:14–15 demanded that an employer pay an employee his wages on a daily basis. The laborers lived a hand-to-mouth existence. They needed wages each day “to purchase life’s necessities. A wealthy employer might retain wages until the end of the harvest to prevent the workman from leaving him. If the worker protested, the rich man could blacklist him. If the poor went before judges, the rich had better legal representation. James’s readers had mowed or reaped the fields, but the wealthy landowners withheld their pay. This injustice displeased God. James personalized the withheld wages. These unpaid wages screamed out *the injustice* to God against the wealthy. Although

the greedy landowners might not hear the pleas of the poor, God would hear their prayers. One of the most majestic Old Testament names describes the God who hears prayers. He is termed the ***Lord Almighty or the Lord of Hosts***. This is an image of God as the head of Israel's armies (check out 1 Samuel 17:45). It presents a powerful visual of God's mighty resources available for his people when facing evil and powerful forces.

As we face hardship in daily living, we have the full and complete resources of almighty God protecting us. Ultimately, at the end of the day, none of our hardships can vanquish or destroy us. If we are faith to God, whatever needs we face, we can expect the *Lord of Hosts* to be our helper and source of strength in the time of trouble in our lives.

Verse 5 - You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

The wealthy landowners lived in selfish luxury and waste as did the "rich man" in *Luke 16:19*. "Self-indulgence" visualizes a

pleasure-loving widow in *1 Timothy 5:6*. These wealthy landowners “lived in “high style.”

Fattening themselves in the day of slaughter describes oxen being fed ample food in preparation for the kill. The oxen ate greedily, unaware of what awaited them. The wealthy should have known better, but they acted like senseless animals unaware. They were pampering themselves with their wealth while the day of slaughter or the day of divine judgment for their evil actions stood around the corner.

Verse 6 - You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

The final charge against the wealthy accuses them of violence against the poor or murdering innocent men. Jewish tradition taught that a person could murder another either by judicial murder or by depriving his neighbor of his living. The apocryphal book of Jesus ben Sirach or Ecclesiasticus declared, *“He that taketh away his neighbour's living slayeth him; and he that defraudeth the labourer of his hire is a blood shedder”* (34:22). The wealthy landowners could have been guilty of murder in

either sense. Probably the acts of violence were not limited to a single event but involved multiple occurrences.

The poor man made a subdued response to the injustice he suffered. As a committed Christian, he refused to respond with violence.

10.1.17

Expository James - Conclusion

Chapter 5 - Verses 7-20

James 5:7-20

Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes

and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Introduction

James, in verses 7–12 calls for the development of patience and reverence toward God. Patience is restraint marked by willingness to bear insult and injury without retaliation. The coming return of Jesus provides us an incentive for this patience. Personal preference can hinder the development of the right attitude (verse 9). The prophets, Job, and industrious farmers are examples of people who showed restraint in face of hardship (verses 7, 10–11).

In verse 12, James calls us to avoid an irreverent use of God's name to excuse our dishonesty. We are to practice verbal integrity so that we need not use God's name in oaths.

The Book of James concludes with a discussion of the uses of prayer (*verses 13–20*). Believers should pray in times of joy as well as sorrow. Sickness calls for special prayer. We also need to practice confession of sin, prayer for accomplishing God's will, and prayer to reclaim wandering believers. James leaves us with the conviction that God will use all prayers to accomplish good

both in the life of the intercessor and in the life of the one who receives prayer.

Expository Context

Verses 7-11 - Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

This section uses words with similar meanings to show the need for restraint and stamina in the face of persecution. Patient

(*makrothumeo*) and patience (*makrothumia*) both come from the same Greek root. Patience is sometimes translated as “long-suffering.” Paul demanded this “patience” as a distinctive trait of believers (**Colossians 3:12**). They must show it toward all (**1 Thessalonians 5:14**). Believers need the self-control which enables persecuted people to submit to insult and injury without using vindictive behavior.

Perseverance (*hupomone*) denotes a consistent obedience to the Lord under trial. It calls for believers to show endurance in commitment and obedience as they face hardship. We cannot say that Job was free of complaint about his treatment. In Job 6:2–3; 7:11–16; and 10:1–2 he lamented his bitter treatment. Still, Job persevered in that he never gave up his obedience to God. He remained unswervingly loyal to God. James encouraged his readers by pointing out the encouraging outcome of Job's trials. He finally came to an experience of God's compassion and mercy.

Job's behavior becomes an example to us as we face trials, afflictions, and hardships. God's grace can develop a steadfastness which shows restraint under provocation and

endures in commitment. Christians must not indulge in resentment against their persecutors. They must put aside all thoughts of retaliation and revenge.

To call for patience and perseverance does not rule out protesting a wrong. Christians must oppose evil in any form, but they must not be surprised by the hostile response of the world. They need a willingness to be a martyr without being recognized as one.

Until the return of Jesus, all believers are called to demonstrate our patience and restraint not impatience and impulsiveness. This event will put to an end all forced subjection to injustice, hatred and hostility.

The term used to describe Jesus' coming (*parousia*), refers to a visit made by royalty to a city or geographical area. Usually in the New Testament it describes Jesus' return to bless and strengthen his people (**1 Thessalonians 3:13**). Here it describes our hope for the personal return of Jesus Christ. James gave few details about the chronology or effect of this return. His chief

emphasis was that the hope of the Lord's return must promote holiness in each believer.

Verse 12 - But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

The biblical prohibition of oaths does not ban their use to prove truthfulness. The frivolous use of an oath to be evasive or untruthful is wrong. Christians cannot follow the Jewish practice of taking a flippant oath and basing it on something other than God's name. Jews who did this felt that the only binding oaths were based on God's name. Oaths based on something other than God's name were not seen as binding. Thus, some Jews in Jesus' time used careless oaths to justify deception. The Bible prohibits this practice.

Christians today need not feel obliged to avoid an oath in a courtroom or in other legal procedures. Christians are to be known for their rugged commitment to truthfulness, and a

courtroom oath is meant to establish this. They must not use an oath, however, to conceal deceit or to mislead others.

Verse 14 -15 - Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

These verses contain great encouragement for offering prayer for the sick, troubled and ill. However, we should not take his statements as a promise of sure healing if we pray with enough faith. John's statements in **1 John 5:14–15** remind us that all prayer is subject to the reservation that God's will be done. Sometimes God intends to leave the sickness with the ill person and allow that person to trust more deeply in God's grace (**2 Corinthians 12:7–10**).

1 John 3:22, teaches us that the obedience of the intercessor (faithful prayer for someone or something) is a factor in receiving answers to prayer. Those who thoughtlessly enter into prayer

from a disobedient or sinful lifestyle should probably not expect miraculous and amazing answers to prayer for healing the sick.

As difficult as it may seem, sometimes enduring in sickness is in God's plan for a person. Important to realize that it does not mean that God is angry or displeased with that person.

Sometimes it just means that an illness has come, and that illness must be endured. Paul advised Timothy about how to deal with his "frequent illnesses" (1 Timothy 5:23). The advice did not hold out hope for immediate healing, but contained information for treating the illness. In 2 Timothy 4:20, Paul announced that he had left "*Trophimus sick in Miletus.*" Paul did not feel encouraged to expect immediate healing for his friend.

James's words encourage Christians to pray in all instances of sickness. In some instances God will provide the assurance that he intends to heal. As we pray, we must recognize that ultimate healing depends on God's will. This is an implied but unstated condition in the absolute promise for healing in verse 15. We can be assured that God uses all prayer for healing to accomplish good in the life of the sick person. Sometimes the good which

God does will provide immediate strength and an experience of divine grace, but not instant healing.

Verse 19-20 - My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

James promised his readers that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death. Some interpret death as a reference to physical death, but it seems better to understand the reference as a discussion of eternal death, separation from God for eternity.

The Bible uses "death" in at least three different ways. *First*, it uses the term in the way we normally do to talk of physical death. This is the condition of a person who is not breathing and has no heartbeat. *Second*, the Bible sometimes uses "death" in reference to spiritual death. This is the condition of being physically alive but without the life of God in the individual's personality. You are "*dead in your transgressions and sins*" until you accept Christ as Savior and are converted (**Ephesians 2:11**).

Those who die physically in the condition of spiritual death pass into eternal death. This is the third usage of "death" in Scripture. It describes the condition of living in eternity without God. This is what the Bible calls existence in hell. James 5:20 warns against this eternal death.

James wrote persons who professed to know Christ. If they wandered from Christ, they would experience devastation and spiritual harm. Believers, however, cannot lose their salvation. They will not experience eternal death. "Through faith," God keeps them "until the coming of salvation" (**1 Peter 1:5**). Though they wander, God will bring them back to himself.

Those who experience eternal death are those who have never confessed Christ in faith as their Lord and Savior and those who profess faith in Christ but have never truly come under the power of the gospel. With an empty profession devoid of saving experience with Christ, they continue in their waywardness and enter into eternity without a true relationship with Jesus Christ. They then experience eternal death.

Those who experience rescue from sin through faith in Jesus spend eternity in the presence of God. Those who succumb to sin's enticements remain eternally separated from God. This condition is eternal death.