

NINE TESTS OF GENUINE FAITH

A Devotional Commentary on the Book of James

by Paul G. Apple, Revised April 2008

(with supplemental notes from Pastor Thomas Leake, Hope Bible Church)

IN THE PRACTICAL REALITIES OF EVERYDAY LIFE, GENUINE FAITH EMBRACES FULLY THE WILL OF GOD

For each section:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

James 2:17 *"Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself."*

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Paul Apple, 304 N. Beechwood Ave., Baltimore MD 21228.

webmaster@bibleoutlines.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul majored in English at Princeton University and graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, IN in 1979. He lives in the Baltimore area with his wife. His family is actively involved in local Christian ministries.



BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF JAMES

Moore: "Jet Tour Through James" -- INTRODUCTION:

James is a call to put faith to work. Mere words will not do. Agreement with a particular creed is not enough. Genuine faith will be displayed in a life that is increasingly maturing in Christ. We are saved by faith alone, but faith that saves is not alone.

I. The Author of the Book.

A. 3 different James' in the N. T.

1. James the son of Zebedee (Matt. 4:21; 10:2; Luke 5:10)
2. James the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3; Acts 1:13)
3. James the son of Joseph & Mary {½ brother of Jesus} (Mat 13:55; Gal 1:19)

B. Author = James the ½ brother of Jesus; He was...

1. the oldest of Jesus' brothers. (Mark 6:3)
2. an unbeliever prior to the resurrection. (John 7:3-10)
3. among those Jesus appeared to after the resurrection, resulting in his conversion. (1 Cor 15:7)
4. with the disciples in the upper room awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. (Acts 1:14)
5. the 1st pastor of the Jerusalem Church. (Acts 12:17, 15:13, 19; Gal 2:1, 9, 10, 12)
6. married. (1 Cor 9:5)
7. humble; referring to himself not as "brother" of Jesus, but rather as a "servant" of Jesus. (Jas 1:1)
8. traditionally regarded as an "unusually good man".
9. given the nickname "the Just".
10. said to have had calluses on his knees from spending so much time in prayer.

II. The Recipients of the Book.

A. The 12 tribes (of Israel) scattered abroad (1:1)

B. Jewish Christians (2:1)

C. A "General Epistle" = circulated among several groups of Believers.

III. The Date & Place of Writing.

A. Date = 45 A. D. ; 1st NT Book written

B. Place = Jerusalem

IV. The Purpose of the Book.

- A. To show that true faith produces good works.
- B. To emphasize the practical aspects of Christian living.

Stedman: "There has been considerable controversy as to whether James, the brother of Jesus, was the one who wrote the letter, but if you look carefully into its background, you can see that it almost certainly must be the Lord's brother who pens this letter. In the early days after the resurrection, he became the acknowledged leader of the church in Jerusalem, and was regarded by all with reverence and respect even by the Jews -- so that he gained the title, "James the just one." Tradition tells us, supported by Eusebius, one of the great church fathers and a respected historian, that James was finally martyred for his faith by being pushed off the pinnacle of the temple. The pinnacle was the point in the wall around the temple that jutted out over the Kidron Valley. There is a drop of about a hundred feet from the height of that wall straight down into the Valley...

Eusebius tells us that in about the year 66 A.D., James the Just, the brother of our Lord, was pushed off this pinnacle by the Jews who had become angered with him for his Christian testimony. Eusebius says that the fall did not kill him, and that he managed to stumble to his knees to pray for his murderers. So they finished the job by stoning him to death, and he joined the band of martyrs.

Now it is very evident that this letter was written during the early part of the life of the church. It comes out of that period reflected in the book of Acts, and may therefore be the earliest Christian document that we have, written perhaps even before the gospels of Mark or Matthew.

You cannot read this letter of James without being struck by its likeness to the teaching of Jesus; in fact, if you take the Sermon on the Mount, and the letter of James, and lay them side by side, you'll see more than a dozen exact parallels. So, it is quite evident that this man James listened to the Lord Jesus and heard these messages, even though perhaps he struggled with them at the time. Also, this letter, more than any other letter in the New Testament, is characterized, like the teaching of the Lord himself, by figures of speech taken from nature. You have the waves of the sea, the animal kingdom, the forests, the fish, and others, all drawn from nature, just as the Lord Jesus himself used to do."

Vaughan: "James is the most intensely practical book of the New Testament. There is, to be sure, a 'compressed theology' in James (cf. 1:1, 18, 21; 2:1, 5; 5:7, 9, etc.), but theological teaching is not the chief contribution of the book. James is 'the epistle of practice,' the Amos of the New Testament. It rebukes all sham and hypocrisy, insisting that conduct must conform to creed, that profession must be matched by performance. From beginning to end it is an urgent demand for 'reality in religion.' James would surely have agreed with Bunyan that 'the soul of religion is the practical part.'"

Wiersbe: "The Epistle of James was written to help us understand and attain spiritual maturity (1:4b)... James used the word *perfect* several times, a word that means '*mature*,

complete' (see 1:4, 17, 25; 2:22; 3:2). By '*a perfect man*' (3:2) James did not mean a sinless man, but rather one who is mature, balanced, grown-up."

Ken Boa: Talk Thru the New Testament:

James is an intensely practical manual on the outworking of true faith in everyday life. It explores Christian conduct from several perspectives and shifts abruptly from topic to topic. Faith perseveres under trials, resists temptation, responds to the Word, overcomes prejudice, produces good works, controls the tongue, manifests wisdom, submits to God rather than worldly pleasures, depends on God rather than wealth, and waits patiently for the return of the Lord. Biblical faith moves from assent to actions, from words to works.

Outline:

I. Character of Faith

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| A. (1:1-12) Persevering under Trials | Will |
| B. (1:13-18) Progress of Temptation | |
| C. (1:19-27) Planting the Word | Word |
| D. (2:1-13) Personal Favoritism | Works |
| E. (2:14-26) Performance of Faith | |

II. Control of Faith

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| A. (3:1-12) Power of the Tongue | Words |
| B. (3:13-18) Portrait of Pure Wisdom | Wisdom |

III. Conflicts of Faith

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| A. (4:1-12) Perversity of Pleasures | Worldliness |
| B. (4:13-5:6) Pride of the Rich | Wealth |

IV. Consummation of Faith

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| A. (5:7-12) Patient Endurance | Wait |
| B. (5:13-20) Prayer and Restoration | Wholeness |

Brian Racer: James = Christian Maturity Manual

Outline: The Faith Building Process

Requires interaction along 2 fronts: both dynamics must be present and active :

- 1) Contact with unbelievers – communicating our faith
- 2) Communion with Christ and His Church

I. Commitment of Faith

II. Confession of Faith – in Baptism

III. Consecration of Faith – Rom. 12:1-2

IV. Character Development of Faith – growing up process; takes longer with some than others; God uses adversity in the form of tests to target those areas that don't look like Christ

V. Completed / Mature Faith – now able to be a model for others; set an example; assume leadership; the more we look like Christ the better hearing we will receive from unbelievers

Character of the Book:

James is called the “Proverbs of the New Testament.” James was obviously influenced by Proverbs of the Old Testament, the exhortative Psalms and the Sermon on the Mount. James writes with terse, pointed exhortations that call his audience to obedience. The Book only references the person of Jesus on a couple occasions and does not develop any deep or new theological ground. That and the fact that James introduces the idea that faith must have works and seems to be an apparent contradiction to Paul’s teaching of justification, caused Martin Luther to declare the book to be “a right strawy epistle.” He did not believe the book to be inspired.

It might be strawy in the sense that it is uncomfortable to sit on very long because it pricks the conscience and the back side at the same time, spurring us to act on our faith.

Audience:

Jewish Christians who were scattered after the persecution associated with the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1).

- They were driven out with zealous spirits as they shared the gospel as they left home, property and kin. (Acts 8:4)
- Probably settled in the region of Syria
- Had the familiarity of synagogue and other Jews – converted and non-converted
- Had to re-establish their homes, work, and circle of friendships.
- The witness of the book is that James knew this audience, was respected by them, and could command them to obey spiritual truth.
- By character, these were not people dealing with overt worldly sin, but were succumbing to impatience, bitterness, materialism, disunity, and spiritual apathy.

OUTLINE OF JAMES

NINE TESTS OF GENUINE FAITH ... FAITH WITHOUT "X" IS DEAD

IN THE PRACTICAL REALITIES OF EVERYDAY LIFE,
GENUINE FAITH EMBRACES FULLY THE WILL OF GOD

1:1 OPENING GREETINGS

I. (1:2-18) FAITH WITHOUT PERSEVERANCE IS DEAD PERSEVERANCE = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH

"the testing of your faith produces endurance"

- A. (:2-12) TRIALS TEST OUR FAITH WITH THE GOAL OF PERSEVERANCE
- B. (:13-16) TEMPTATIONS CANNOT BE BLAMED ON GOD
- C. (:17-18) THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD BLESSES US FROM START TO FINISH

II. (1:19-27) FAITH WITHOUT OBEDIENCE IS DEAD OBEDIENCE = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH

"prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers"

- A. (:19-21) OBEDIENCE REQUIRES A RECEPTIVE HEART
- B. (:22) OBEDIENCE REQUIRES PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRUTHS OF GOD'S WORD
- C. (:23-25) CONTRAST BETWEEN A FORGETFUL HEARER AND AN EFFECTUAL DOER
 - 1. (:23-24) FORGETFUL HEARER
 - 2. (:25) EFFECTUAL DOER
- D. (:26-27) PRACTICAL EVIDENCES OF OBEDIENCE
 - 1. SELF-CONTROL IN THE AREA OF SPEECH

2. MINISTRY OF COMPASSION TO THOSE IN NEED

3. PRACTICAL HOLINESS

**III. (2:1-13) FAITH WITHOUT IMPARTIAL LOVE IS DEAD
IMPARTIAL LOVE = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH**

"do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism"

A. (:1) THESIS STATEMENT

B. (:2-4) SIMPLE ILLUSTRATION

C. (:5-7) PARADOX OF TRUE RICHES AND TRUE POVERTY

D. (:8-11) IMPARTIAL LOVE IS THE ONLY WAY TO FULFILL THE LAW

E. (:12-13) MERCY TRIUMPHS OVER JUDGMENT

**IV. (2:14-26) FAITH WITHOUT GOOD WORKS IS DEAD
GOOD WORKS = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH**

"faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself"

A. (:14) FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

B. (:15-16) SIMPLE ILLUSTRATION

C. (:17) SUMMARY APPLICATION

D. (:18-26) REBUTTAL OF OBJECTIONS

**V. (3:1-18) FAITH WITHOUT PRACTICAL WISDOM IS DEAD
PRACTICAL WISDOM = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH**

"Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom."

A. (:1-12) PRACTICAL WISDOM: THE TAMING OF THE TONGUE

B. (:13-18) PRACTICAL WISDOM: ITS SOURCE AND CHARACTERISTICS

**VI. (4:1-10) FAITH WITHOUT INTIMACY WITH GOD IS DEAD
INTIMACY WITH GOD = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH**

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

A. (:1-2) RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS CAN BE TRACED BACK TO
WORLDLINESS

B. (:3-6) FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD = HOSTILITY TOWARDS GOD
(THE TUG OF WAR BETWEEN FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD AND
FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD)

C. (:7-10) INTIMACY WITH GOD = THE CURE FOR WORLDLINESS
6 STEPS TOWARDS RENEWED INTIMACY WITH GOD
(THE PATHWAY TO TRUE INTIMACY WITH GOD)

**VII. (4:11-17) FAITH WITHOUT SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD IS
DEAD**

SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH

"if the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that"

A. (:11-12) DON'T USURP GOD'S ROLE AS JUDGE

B. (:13-17) DON'T USURP GOD'S ROLE AS MASTER OF OUR DESTINY

**VIII. (5:1-12) FAITH WITHOUT THE FEAR OF GOD IS DEAD
THE FEAR OF GOD = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH**

"behold, the Judge is standing right at the door"

A. (:1-6) THE DANGER OF RICHES

B. (:7-11) THE DANGER OF COMPLAINING

C. (:12) THE DANGER OF SWEARING

**IX. (5:13-18) FAITH WITHOUT FERVENT EFFECTUAL PRAYER IS DEAD
FERVENT EFFECTUAL PRAYER = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH**

"The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

A. (:13-16) PRAYER OF FAITH OFFERED FOR THE SICK

B. (:17-18) EXAMPLE OF ELIJAH

(5:19-20) CLOSING GREETINGS

RESCUE THE PERISHING

TEXT: JAMES 1:1-12

TITLE: FAITH WITHOUT PERSEVERANCE IS DEAD -- PART 1

BIG IDEA:

TRIALS TEST OUR FAITH WITH THE GOAL OF PERSEVERANCE

INTRODUCTION:

James is concerned with the effectiveness of our faith. As we examine our faith, there are two different possible threads of application:

- 1) If we fail the tests of faith that James has provided we need to examine ourselves to see if our heart has deceived us with a mere profession of faith without the reality of genuine saving faith.
- 2) But the major thread since James is writing to professing believers deals with the growth of our faith into maturity. We will all be challenged by the different areas which James chooses to highlight – we will find ourselves somewhere along the spectrum of faith for each topic. James wants to motivate believers to press on in their faith to maturity.

(:1) OPENING GREETINGS

A. Author

1. Identification = *James*

half-brother of Jesus -- Gal. 2:9, 12; Jude 1; Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18;
(Note how this refutes the Catholic notion of the perpetual virginity of Mary)

so prominent that he could be referred to only by his personal name with no other qualifying remarks

Miano: "We're going to look at three phases of James' life. Some of you may be able to relate really well to this. We're going to look at James, the skeptical brother; James, the saved sinner; and James, the servant Leader.

2. Life Calling = *bond-servant*

"of God"

"and of the Lord Jesus Christ"

James writes as one who is totally sold out to the will of God; quite a change from his lack of belief in John 7:5

Expression of humility -- striking in the life of a brother!

Commitment to serving Christ

Barclay: "Yet, at the back of it, this word implies a certain pride. So far from being a title of dishonor it was the title by which the greatest ones of the Old Testament were known. Moses was the *doulos* of God ... By taking the title

doulos James sets himself in the great succession of those who found their freedom and their peace and their glory in perfect submission to the will of God. The only greatness to which the Christian can ever aspire is the greatness of being the slave of God."

B. Recipients

1. Identification = "*to the twelve tribes*"

James, as the initial leader of the church in Jerusalem, bore a special relationship and responsibility to these Jewish believers; note that Jews still have a special status in the program of God -- it is still valid to maintain the ethnic distinction between Jew and Gentile despite the areas of identity among true believers

2. Location = "*who are dispersed abroad*" -- Acts 8:1; 11:19

Try to imagine the unique pressures on these Jewish believers who had every expectation of victory and the kingdom of God on earth and yet found themselves pressured and persecuted on every side

Vaughan: "'Dispersion' was a technical term used for the Jews who were scattered over the Gentile world outside of Palestine. (The word occurs in only two other places in the New Testament -- John 7:35 and I Peter 1:1)."

C. "Greetings"

root meaning of the word is "joy"

I. (:2-4) TRIALS SHOULD BE VIEWED AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Trials from without covered here; Temptations from within covered in next section

A. (:2) Opportunity for Greater Joy

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials"

1. Trials are Inevitable (but Unpredictable -- **Allen**) and Unexpected as to when and what
2. Trials are Varied -- come in all shapes and sizes
 - as to their severity
 - as to their natureAll of us face different trials, uniquely tailored for us
3. Trials bind us together in the family of God
4. Our Response Should be a Perspective of Joy Rather than Depression
 - not just look for a silver lining, but consider it all joy (your perspective towards the experience as a whole)

Vaughan: "Christians can triumph in trials."

Racer: Examples of responding out of the flesh = grumbling, anxiety, stress. Instead we are commanded to adopt an extraordinary attitude toward trials. Requires thinking of the outcomes of the trial = what God is trying to accomplish; Requires mental discipline; the pain and the pressure are all part of a larger process. Not saying that we are to rejoice in just the circumstances alone.

B. (:3) Opportunity for Greater Endurance

"knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance"

shows us how genuine is our faith
produces endurance

Adversity builds toughness; Prosperity makes us soft.

Barclay: "*Hypomone* is not simply the ability to bear things; it is the ability to turn them to greatness and glory."

Allen: "Problems Purify my Faith..."

James uses the word 'testing' - as in testing gold and silver. You would heat them up very hot until the impurities were burned off. Job said, 'But God knows the way that I take, and when he has tested me, I will come out like gold.' Job 23:10 (NCV)

God is not interested in watching our faith get torpedoed. God desires that our faith would be 'approved.' A student who is accepted by the admissions office of a college can say, 'I am a student.' But until that person takes tests and exams, no one can actually affirm that he is worthy of the name 'student.' The only way to determine the validity of a student's work is to see the performance on exams.

Christians are a lot like tea bags. You don't know what's inside of them until you drop them in hot water. Your faith develops when things don't go as planned. It purifies your faith."

Racer: Importance of finishing strong. It is said to see believers who failed the test and didn't finish well; or who ran away from the test and didn't stay under the pressure and allow it to accomplish God's purposes in the process of character building. God doesn't want us to bail out of the relationship or out of the commitment. Endurance is needed to squeeze everything out of the trial; but endurance is not an end in itself. Some trials last a long time; as you get more mature it takes longer to reach your pressure point. We can take illustrations from the realm of sports to easily see the value in stressful training. The suicide sprints are not fun in themselves, but they produce greater endurance and an ability to accomplish more as a team. When the championship result is attained, the training seems very worthwhile! Athletes learn to visualize that reward ahead of time to help them through the process.

C. (:4) Opportunity for Greater Maturity

"And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing"

Barclay: Perfect in the sense of "fit for the task in the world which he was sent into the world to do, and which God meant him to do."

Racer: Proven character produces Hope (Rom. 5:1-5). Author implies that each test has a specific ending point, with the ultimate finish line being the passing out of this life to the next. We need to keep on Keeping On until we hear God say, "Well done."

II. (:5-8) TRIALS TEST OUR FAITH AS WE ASK GOD FOR WISDOM

A. (:5) Ask God for Wisdom

1. Trials Expose our Need for Wisdom

"But if any of you lacks wisdom"

2. Trials Drive us to God for Answers and for the Grace to Endure

"let him ask of God"

3. God Loves to Help Us -- this encourages us to ask Him for wisdom

a. Impartial

"who gives to all men"

b. Generous

"generously"

c. Accepting

"without reproach"

d. Faithful

"and it will be given to him"

B. (:6-8) Ask God in Faith Without any Doubting

1. What does it mean to *Ask in Faith*?

2. What does it mean to *Doubt*?

a. Analogy: *"like the surf of the sea"*

Unstable: *"driven and tossed by the wind"*

b. Failure -- *"for let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord"*

c. Description

1) *"being a double-minded man"*

2) *"unstable in all his ways"*

Chromy: "The double-minded man has reservations about being completely yielded to God. You are double-minded when you want your own will and God's will at the same time. God wants you to trust him completely and allow him to take care of you throughout difficulties."

III. (:9-12) PERSEVERANCE UNDER TRIAL BRINGS BLESSING FOR ETERNITY

A. (:9-11) This Present Life is Transitory

(Dealing with believers in both categories)

1. (:9) Easier Understood by the Poor -- the test of Poverty

"But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position"

2. (:10) Harder for the Rich to Understand -- the test of Prosperity (**Vaughan**)

"and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away"

Tasker: "Similarly, the rich brother is to rejoice that in Christ he has been brought down to a level where *'the deceitfulness of riches'* (Mk. iv. 19) and the anxiety to amass and retain them are no longer primary or even relevant considerations; for in Christ he has learned to make a totally different evaluation of material prosperity. The new factor in his situation is that he has come to see that real wealth lies in the things that abide because they are eternal, and that it is the unseen things that have this characteristic... In comparison with these unshakable possessions material riches are recognized by him to be what in fact they are, transitory and uncertain."

Barclay: "If life is so uncertain, if man is so vulnerable, if the externals of life are so perishable, then calamity and disaster may come at any moment. Since that is so, a man is a fool to put all his trust in things --like wealth--which he may lose at any moment. He is only wise if he puts his trust in things which he cannot lose.

So then, James urges the rich to cease to put their trust in that which their own power can amass. He urges them to realize and to admit their own essential human helplessness, and humbly to put their trust in God, who alone can give us the things which abide for ever. He is pleading with men to glory in that new humility which realizes its utter dependence on God."

3. (:11) Proven by Nature

"For the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away"

B. (:12) Living for Eternity Makes Trials Bearable

1. Enduring Trials Brings Blessing
"Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial"

2. Passing the Test of Faith Brings God's Approval
"for once he has been approved"

3. The Reward = *"the Crown of Life"*
the crown which consists of life

Racer: Since multiple trials are referred, which each have an ending point, it would seem as if the reward is realized in this life rather than in eternity, since successful perseverance gains immediate approval.

4. The Requirement
"which the Lord has promised to those who love Him "

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we appreciate our freedoms in worship and evangelism and the preciousness of our fellowship together? What special pressures did the early Jewish believers face as they were *"dispersed abroad"*. What Christian groups around the world are experiencing similar persecution?

- 2) When have we chosen to remain under a trial vs. when have we tried to escape from the trial and circumvent the will of God for our life? What did we learn in each instance?

- 3) Why does God not provide shortcuts to maturity? Why is the process so important to God?

- 4) What is the *"high position"* that the poorer brother should be glorying in? What is the *"humiliation"* that corresponds to the state of the rich man? How has God designed a program that provides a level ground for both groups in terms of their relationship with Him?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Tasker: "The Greek word translated *temptations*, *peirasmoi*, has the double sense of outward trials, and inward temptations. Outward trials very often become occasions of temptation to sin. In this verse the translation *'trials'* (R.S.V.) is preferable."

Allen: "When Troubles Go Away ... How to Profit from your Problems..."

Today, there are numerous ideas being tossed around regarding trials and hardships. Some believe they're a form of punishment from God. Others dangle before us the promise that if we can just reach a certain level of maturity, trials will disappear and we'll live happily every after. Life will be one big Disneyland. And still others are out there trying to convince us that there's really not such thing as adversity. Trials such as death, pain, sickness, emotional hurt, are a figment of our imagination.

James – the most practical letter in the New Testament - has something quite different to say about trials. It is the 'How To' manual for the Christian life."

Wiersbe: "Our values determine our evaluations. If we value comfort more than character, then trials will upset us. If we value the material and physical more than the spiritual, we will not be able to 'count it all joy!' If we live only for the present and forget about the future, the trials will make us bitter, not better."

Mooney: "Learn to Grow Through Adversity ... When faced with adversity we will also discover some things about ourselves.

We will discover what our view of God really is.

We will discover what our weaknesses and our strengths are.

We will discover how mature we are.

We will discover what our priorities really are. God's command or my comfort."

Chromy: "Now, wait a minute. Isn't it enough for me to claim that I have faith in Christ without having it be tested? What if I don't want my faith to be tested, especially when I have to go through the misery of trials? The reason why God uses the trials of life to test your faith is to prove that your faith is real. Let me give you an illustration. In football, we have a drill called 'eye-openers.' In eye-openers, two boys stand 3 yards apart. On command, they run into each other at full speed and collide, then they back away and run into each other again and again and again. The purpose of eye-openers is for them to prove that they can play football, because in a football game they have to hit and be hit. The point is they look like football players, they call themselves football players, but until they prove that they will hit they really aren't football players.

The same is true for us. The trials of life are spiritual eye-openers. You can say that you're a Christian. You can claim to have faith in Jesus Christ. But until that faith is proven to be real, it is meaningless. You prove that your faith is real when you trust God in the face of trials, when you recognize that God is the ultimate authority for your life and that you're going to rely on his wisdom, and the truth of his Word to get you through. And God will honor your faithfulness by giving you a sense of security, and peace of mind, and the knowledge that he will be with you every step of the way...

In this letter, then, the Apostle James is telling us several things about faith. In chapter one you have a wonderful answer to the question, 'What makes faith grow?'... There are

two things, James tells us, that make faith grow.

The first is trials...

Second, the instrument that makes us grow is the word...

Vaughan: "The Purpose of the Epistle ... There may, however, be significance in the fact that the letter opens with a discussion concerning trials and closes with an appeal to render compassionate help to the brother who wanders from the truth. It would appear, then, that under the pressures of poverty and persecution some of the readers had become depressed, bitter, and impatient, and were accommodating their lives to the life of the world. Specifically then, the book is intended to give comfort, rebuke, and counsel to Christians passing through a period of severe trial -- comfort for their sorrows, rebuke for their worldliness, and counsel for redirecting their lives."

Luck: "Patience is usually thought of as calm resignation to God's will in face of the inevitable. But Christian patience, as spoken of in the New Testament, is more than this. It is true that calm submission is a part of it, but this is only the negative side. On the positive side there is a steady and determined perseverance, in spite of difficulties, toward the right--toward the goal of God's will for our lives."

Vaughan: "The burden of verses 2-12 is encouragement in face of the afflictions and trials of life -- encouragement to patient endurance, encouragement to believe that trials can be turned to our good, encouragement to prayer, encouragement to joyful acceptance of one's lot in life, encouragement to look hopefully to the future.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

-- William Cowper"

Racer:

(1:1-4) The Power of Pressures to Perfect Us

Introduction: Plumbing Illustration – when you attempt to fix a plumbing problem, the real test comes when you turn the water back on and put pressure on the system ... then you find out whether the system can hold up. Trials pinpoint the weaknesses in our system that still need to be addressed. Life might appear all well and good until God sends just enough pressure so that we can't handle things on our own; then we blow a gasket and need to turn to Him for help. Opportunity in this passage to examine how we respond to pressure – different options: being built up, blown up by the pressure, or blowing up at the pressure.

(1:5-8) Wisdom: The Way Through our Trials

I. Wisdom is a Perspective to Gain (:2-4)

ability to see life's situations from God's perspective

- A. Trials bring joy outcomes – knowing that I did the right thing; knowing that I am on the same page as God
- B. Trials endured produce maturity

II. Wisdom is a Petition to Request (:5)

- A. Knowing we are asking someone who both wants to help and has capability to help
- B. Knowing the nature of our God – expectancy that God will respond

III. Wisdom is a Pursuit to Strive After (:6-8)

- A. Faith seeks God and His Ways
- B. Faith is single-souled in its response to God
- C. Faith is a Sure Foundation when facing trials

(1:9-12) How to Boast About the Blessedness of Trials

The great leveler in life = trials experienced together as a church; brings unity
Trial = whatever is difficult for you

I. (:9) If Poor: Boast about Your Exalted Position

- A. The Principle of the Last Being First (Matt. 19:16-30)
- B. The Privilege of Suffering for Christ (Acts 5:41-42)
persecution did not cause them to modify their message

II. (:10-11) If Rich: Boast about Your Enduring Possession

Rich people need to experience a sense of loss so that they will be more dependent upon God. Talking about believers here, not unbelievers.

- A. A Picture of a Quickly Fading Life
- B. Pursuing True Riches and an Unshakable Fortune

III. (:12) If Approved: Boast about Your Enjoyed Prize

Doesn't matter if rich or poor; what matters is finishing well!

- A. Approval based on Finishing the Trial
- B. Approval Awarded with an Abundant Life here and now; a quality of life

Conclusion:

- Pray for our persecuted brethren (Heb. 13:3)
- Be content; stop complaining
- Glory in what we have in common – God gives all of us the grace to finish the trial; encourage others not to give up

Pastor Thomas Leake: Help in the Midst of Adversity

Introduction: cf. adversities faced by OT saints; all received God's help; still trials are tough; involve real struggle; experience of groaning instead of joy; but God is right there even at the lowest point of the trial – “How long, O Lord?”

You must first take the step of faith and put your life on the line; God specializes in last minute rescue; that is God's method; He is our Deliverer; our Savior; we must learn who God is

Review: 2 Previous Messages:

- Consider it pure joy when you encounter Trials
- Through Endurance we get Maturity

God wants to mature our character; accomplishes this through trials as we exercise faith; He wants to help us in the midst of adversity

4 Ways to Obtain God's Help in the Midst of Adversity

I. (:5) Ask for Wisdom – a Command

A. Need for Wisdom

Our degree of need for wisdom varies; but we all need it; it is obvious we need wisdom; we fire off questions:

- Why are you taking me through this trial?
- Why now?
- Why this particular trial?
- Is this really necessary?
- What am I supposed to do in the midst of this trial?

We need a Christ-like attitude to benefit us and glorify God;

B. Nature of This Wisdom

Hebrew concept of wisdom – not a trivia buff of accumulating knowledge but a lived-out type of wisdom; not a theoretical abstraction (3:13-17); national political leaders need this type of wisdom; we tend to think that we know a lot more than we do; youth especially think this way; but God wants to teach us; we need to benefit from the trial; Proverbs teaches that wisdom is an important commodity; we don't always know what God is trying to accomplish – cf. Job; it is easy for us to see the character weaknesses of others; sometimes God will press the trial harder against us; God puts weights on our shoulders to push us down to our knees; Luke 10:21 – those who refuse to seek wisdom from God will remain in the dark (1 Cor. 2:9)

C. Source of this Wisdom

this wisdom comes from a supernatural source outside of us; not from human philosophy – Where do you turn for wisdom? The very act of asking acknowledges that you do not know and need God's input; He does have the wisdom; Progressive sense = keep asking; God gives generously; easy, unconditionally, directly, without reproach

Rom. 11:33 – never a lack of wisdom to dispense; a virtual pipeline of wisdom; John 16:24; Ps. 84 – “it shall be given him” = a promise

Matt. 5 – look at promises here

How does God bring that wisdom to me? Prov. 2:6 from His mouth = the Scriptures; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21; God is talking; are we listening and receiving? Ps. 119:18; we need wisdom now! Solomon needed instant wisdom to rule the kingdom – 1 Kings 3:7-9; Answer received in vs. 12 – he got the wisdom he needed because he asked the right person and listened;

Caution: Next thought you get may not be from God; don't just assume every thought comes directly from God and is consistent with His wisdom

II. (:6-8) Maintain Unmixed Faith

A. Faith is Essential

Heb. 11:6 – Faith is never optional; God demands faith – Matt. 13:58; Heb. 3:19

B. What is Faith

1. Negatively -- Not just agreeing something is true (James 2:19);
2. Positively -- Heb. 11:1 = Assurance of things hoped for; you don't see it yet; taking God at His Word;

C. Proper Object of Faith

Religion of today = Faith in Self; but we are mere dust; nothing there to believe in; faith must be placed in the right object; God is good to me and generous and loves me; so I will trust you – Matt. 17:17; Unbelief vexed Christ

D. How do you get Faith?

Matt. 21:22 – tied to effectiveness in prayer; God is in control, not our prayers

E. Nature of Doubting

Disputing – middle voice – with yourself; mistrust; acting like a Yo-Yo; opposite of faith; our thinking must not be divided; Rom. 4:20 – example of Abraham – he did not waver; Mark 9:24 – divided in his thinking and he knew it; Heb. 10:23 – stand on the rock of God's Faithfulness; keep asking, keep seeking; keep knocking – Pres. Tense; this is not meaningless repetition; adding more information and gaining wisdom; we need fervency in our prayers; Lord wants us actively dependent on Him; Why doesn't God respond quicker? We get impatient, demanding, whining – cf. Peter walking on the water – Why did you Doubt? He certainly did better than the other disciples who remained in the boat; but still rebuked for his doubt; Doubt is unreasonable to God; The more desperate we are, the more humble, the more willing to give up our own devices; Faith arises from Need; send the doubting soldiers on home; God may press the trial harder against us to purify our faith; the one who doubts is on the wild ride to nowhere; cf. incident of Elijah and Baal – you can't sit on the fence; make a decision; YHWH or Baal? People on the fence like an oscillating fan blowing back and forth; Doubt brings confusion, stagnation, unfruitfulness; Rev. 21:8 – Why should God give anything to people who doubt His generosity? He is wishy-washy, unstable, occasionally believes God but refuses to rest on God; just keep praying and never lose heart – Ps. 56 – When I am afraid, I will put my trust in Thee

III. (:9-11) Keep the Right Perspective

James examines the two contrasting perspectives: that of the wealthy and that of the poor; most of us lean towards the side of the rich man in our culture; If you can learn happiness and contentment in either of these extremes, you should have no problem anywhere on the spectrum

A. Perspective of the Poor

Principles of Phil. 4 are the same no matter what your circumstances; there were many poor believers in the early church; Advice of James: not to pursue the American Dream; not to pick up weapons and instigate a revolt against the wealthy class; not rely on the government to bail you out and solve all your ills; but “*Glory in your high position*”;

you enjoy Sonship with the Living God; unbelievable privileges in the coming kingdom; but these can only be grasped now by faith – but that doesn't make it less real; cf. Eph. 1 = listing of all of our spiritual blessings in Christ; no higher position than being seated at the right hand of God in heavenly places; Are you in Christ? Then Boast of your high position; you may be hungry physically but you have the bread of life; you may be rejected by men but you are accepted by the God of the universe; Jer. 9:23-24; 1 Cor. 1:31 – boasting is required; Is Jesus the Boast of your life?; Faith give you a glimpse of coming glory; unsaved will be begging to be like us; we're going to have a home in a pretty good neighborhood; You're not as rich as you want to be ... So what!

B. Perspective of the Rich

Don't build your house on sinking sand; will find it all to be a mirage; blessing will not come through their riches;

think of other Scriptural paradoxes ...

Generally speaking the rich are poor in faith; they try to avoid trials by hiring others to do their work; their money buys them out of many situations; leads to a deceptive security regarding their deficiencies; but God uses trials to expose their deep need for Him; cf. 1 Tim. 6 – they think their education or business savvy has made them secure; these won't profit in the day of wrath; they have the same need for Righteousness – Prov. 11:28; Luke 6 – Woe to you who are rich; possible to be both rich and righteous; but riches can be a snare choking out the Word; one of the best things that can happen to a rich person is to lose his riches; find out who they really are trusting in; God is the best insurance policy; Trials are a good teacher to the rich; they need to consider the reality of their spiritual position; they need to lower their view of the value of their riches; the rich man will physically die also; Ps. 49:16-17 – transitory, temporal nature of this life; it is wrong to glory in riches, trust in them, boast in them;

Where is your heart? Here are some practical tests:

- Are you not giving abundantly, significantly?
- Do you buy more expensive items than you need?
- Does your anxiety level go way up when you don't have insurance?
- Are you overly consumed with your job and work?
- Do your thoughts focus on how to make and preserve and multiply money?
- Do you choose your place to live based on expediency and comfort?
- Are you unwilling to give to the poor?
- Do you argue with your spouse about financial matters?

Recognize where materialism has grabbed your heart and repent

Brevity of Life – 4 Verbs applying to the flowers:

*Like flowering grass he will **pass away***

***Withers** the grass*

*Its flower **falls off***

*Beauty of its appearance **is destroyed***

Analogy applied to people spending inordinate attention on trying to maintain their

youth = futile – just patching up that quickly fading flower; we need to establish our identity around spiritual standards, not physical; maintain eternal and spiritual perspective

IV. (:12) Persevere to the End = “*Blessed Man*”

Jewish concept of blessedness = Psalm 1:1; 34:8

Richer and broader than mere happiness; privileged recipient of divine favor; particularly looking at the future life here – Someone who wins out in the end; perseverance is the requirement – thru all trials; not just this one particular trial; life is filled with trials

What is the Blessing promised? *Crown of life* – *dokimos* – [cf. 1 Cor. 9 and the opposite – *adokimos*] -- Genuine, real faith; those who turn back never had saving faith; 2 Tim. 4:8 – Crown is life itself – eternal, spiritual life; we must Hold Fast; description of a believer = one who loves Christ – Rom. 8:28; Rev. 2:10 – no quitting, no turning back – James 5:7-8; 1 Pet. 1:13; Rom.8

TEXT: JAMES 1:13-16

TITLE: FAITH WITHOUT PERSEVERANCE IS DEAD -- PART 2

BIG IDEA:
TEMPTATIONS CANNOT BE BLAMED ON GOD

James switches his focus from Trials sourced in our external circumstances to Temptations arising from sin within. These two can easily be related since our response to external Trials can unleash inner bitterness and rebellion that are problems of the heart.

Miano: "we're going to talk about how we can recognize the opportunity for failure before the situation gets to the point that we're left disappointed, looking back at our mistakes. That opportunity for failure begins with temptation.

I. (:13A) THE NATURAL EXCUSE (THE EASY WAY OUT) IS TO BLAME GOD

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God.'"

Man's natural tendency is to try to shift the blame off on someone else. Cf. Adam in the garden blaming the woman "*whom thou gavest to be with me*"

- "God, you expect too much from me"
- "God, you have made things too difficult for me"
- "God, you have not given me the same grace and power to resist temptation that you have given others; this is just my temperament; I can't help myself"
- "God, you created me this way"

II. (:13B) WHY CAN'T YOU BLAME GOD?

THESIS: His Righteous and Holy Character Sets Him Apart from Temptation

A. *"God cannot be tempted by evil"*

Problem: How do you reconcile the temptations of Christ with this statement? He was fully God and yet perfect man. The temptations were real ... and yet Christ could not sin ...

Vaughan:

- 1) God's sufficiency means He "has no needs to be supplied" = the main way temptation gets a foothold
- 2) In God's character there is no "weakness or bias on which evil may lay hold and act"

B. *"He Himself does not tempt anyone."*

Problem: What about the Lord's prayer: *'Lead us not into temptation ...'?*

Miano: "God cannot do or be that which is contrary to His character. Likewise, His actions are always consistent with His character. Since He is an untemptable God, He will not tempt anyone.

What we see here is one of God's characteristics that set the one true God, the God of the Bible, apart from every other god. If we look at the gods of other religions, whether ancient or present, the character of these gods, in many ways, resembles the character of their followers. Take for instance the gods of Greek mythology. They were certainly an unseemly lot. They were prone to all of the sins and vices of common man. They were jealous in an unholy sense of the word. They were vindictive, lustful, and deceitful.

These false gods were temptable and evil."

III. (:14) WHOM SHOULD YOU BLAME?

THE SOURCE OF TEMPTATION = OUR OWN POWERFUL, SEDUCING LUST

A. Universal Problem / Personal Problem

"But each one"

Attacks each of us in different ways

B. Reality of Temptation

"is tempted"

Expect temptation and be prepared to combat it.

C. Power and Seductive Nature of Temptation

"when he is carried away and enticed"

Wiersbe: "No temptation appears as temptation; it always seems more alluring than it really is. James used two illustrations from the world of sports to prove his point. *Drawn away* carries with it the idea of the baiting of a trap; and *enticed* in the original Greek means 'to bait a hook.' The hunter and the fisherman have to use bait to attract and catch their prey. No animal is deliberately going to step into a trap and no fish will knowingly bite at a naked hook. The idea is to hide the trap and the hook."

Vaughan: "The suggestion is that man's *lust*, like a harlot, entices and seduces him. Man surrenders his will to lust, conception takes place, and lust gives birth to *sin*."

D. Ultimate Culprit

"by his own lust"

IV. (:15) LUST INITIATES A DEADLY CAUSE AND EFFECT SCENARIO -- LUST HAS THE POWER TO DRAG US DOWN INTO SIN AND DEATH

James develops the entire process of temptation and sin -- showing how each stage bears a cause and effect relationship to the next stage

Holwick: "The lifecycle of sin"

A. Lust is only the Starting Point

"Then when lust has conceived"

B. Sin is its Natural Offspring

"it gives birth to sin"

C. Death is the Inevitable Outcome

"and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death"

V. (:16) DON'T BE FOOLED IN THIS MATTER

"Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren."

Don't let the temptation entice and defeat you.

Remember God's harvest principle: "As we sow, so shall we also reap."

Remember that the Judge is watching all that we do and He is standing at the door ready to return and render judgment.

The foolish think that they can get away with something.

Live life with a healthy fear of the Lord.

Which way does this warning point ... to the preceding verses or following verses?

Vaughan: "Applying it to the discussion of verses 13-15, the words may be understood as a warning against trying to excuse ourselves from responsibility for sin. If we see the words as pointing forward to verses 17, 18, they may be understood as a warning against casting suspicion upon the character of God... as the source of all good."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What are some of the popular modern day excuses for sin? How are these excuses highlighted by the terminology used for sin today? Why doesn't James point to Satan as the one to blame for sin?

2) Why are we so quick to blame God? Are we careful to make a distinction between trials from without and temptations from within? How is perseverance key in both cases?

3) What are some of the enticing, seductive, deceptive arguments and emotions that are associated with our selfish cravings?

4) How can we break the chain of lust, temptation, sin, and death?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Wiersbe: Re "*lusts*" -- "Some people try to become 'spiritual' by denying these normal desires, or by seeking to suppress them; but this only makes them less than human. These fundamental desires of life are the steam in the boiler that makes the machinery go. Turn off the steam and you have no power. Let the steam go its own way and you have destruction. The secret is in constant control. These desires must be our servants and not our masters and this we can do through Jesus Christ."

Barclay: "Now desire is something which can be nourished or stifled. A man can check and control his discipline ... But a man can allow his thoughts to follow certain tracks ... He can use mind and heart and eyes and feet and lips to nourish desire. He can so hand himself over to Christ and to the Spirit of Christ that he is cleansed of evil desire. He can be so engaged on good things that there is not time or place left for desire. It is idle hands for which Satan finds mischief to do; and it is an unexercised mind which plays with desire, and an uncommitted heart which is vulnerable to the appeal of lust."

Tasker: "Thus Jesus in the wilderness is tempted by the devil to pursue courses of action contrary to God's will, but in the end the devil retreats, having failed to deflect his would-be victim from His divine vocation."

Ross: "The mere fact of our being tempted does not involve in itself anything sinful. It is when the desire of man goes out to meet and embrace the forbidden thing and an unholy marriage takes place between these two, that sin is born. Once sin is born, it grows, and, unless it be counteracted and mastered by the grace of God, when it is full-grown, it brings forth death, death in all the breadth of the meaning of that dread word, death spiritual and death eternal, the death that lies beyond physical death for the ungodly. Thus, we have here the two destinies of man, in v. 12 the fullness of life that is to be the portion of those who love God and the death that is to be the inevitable doom of the persistent haters of God."

MacPhail: Re fighting Temptation: "We should avoid evil attractions. Don't expose yourself to activities, images, or conversation that provoke evil thoughts. If watching certain television programs stir up improper images, don't watch them. This is what Jesus meant figuratively when He said, 'If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown in hell'(Matt.5:29)"

Racer:

Introduction: Giving in to temptation and falling prey to some major sin doesn't just come out of the blue. (cf. a man who runs off with another woman in an adulterous relationship; that did not just happen out of the blue) It might seem like a sexual fall happened in just an instant of weakness, but actually it is the predictable result of neglected relationships and lack of purity in one's thought life over time. There are numerous tiny indulgences and wrong decisions that build to such a catastrophic breaking point. The battle is a constant one in the heart and mind.

What to Do When You are Tempted? 5 Commands

I. STOP Playing the Blame Game (:13)

Honestly admit that you made a choice to do X. Believers are not in bondage to sin as unbelievers are.

A. It is as old as the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8-13)

- Adam: The woman that you gave to me is the problem
- Eve: The serpent deceived me; I couldn't help it

B. As Recent as your last excuse

You can't argue: "I couldn't help myself; I couldn't take X any longer"

C. God is in the Clear – when you blame God you don't really understand His character

- He takes no pleasure in our fall
- He is not out to tempt us to sin at our point of weakness

II. SEE Where Temptations Lead You (:14-16)

When we do X, we can expect that Y will follow. Simple cause and effect relationship. God has designed us with certain powerful drives (appetite, sex, desire to accomplish, desire to be significant, etc.). Key: are we fulfilling these drives righteously or in a sinful fashion? Sin is subtle. The consequences might not show up immediately.

A. We're Built to Bite the Bait (:14)

Our desires are God-Designed, but our Solutions are not.

1. Lust of flesh / Desire for Provision / Desire for Security
2. Lust of eyes / Desire for Pleasure / Desire for Satisfaction
3. Pride of life / Desire for Purpose / Desire for Significance

B. We're to Wait because God's not Late

(might seem like it takes a long time from our perspective)

We have need of endurance. At the end God will say "Well done."

People every day are buying into Satan's plan of Instant Gratification.

III. SPIT OUT the Lie and the Lure

Satan likes to set the hook and reel us in.

A. Not Wrong to be Tempted – Christ was (Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 4:15)

B. It is Wrong to Yield

IV. FLEE Temptations

Involves being sensitive to circumstances, places and people that cause us problems; will be different for everyone; need to keep our guard up; cf. Vanity Fair in Pilgrim's Progress

A. Joseph – Gen. 39:1-18

God had ordained that he work in Potiphar's house. God is sovereignly responsible for everything that comes into my life. Day after day she enticed him until finally she upped the ante.

B. Youthful Desires – 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Cor. 10:13

What to flee to? get a new crowd; a posse of pure people; doesn't mean you cast off your old friends – still maintain contact with unbelievers and seek to win them to the Lord

You can't be carrying a bunch of garbage; cf. sinking ship where you throw everything overboard to lighten the load; dumping those things that would hinder you from being successful so you can run the race of holiness (Heb. 12:1-2).

V. GIVE THANKS for Deliverance

A. To a Giving, Generous God

The gifts given by God are an expression of Who He is; consistent; never changes

B. To a Life-Giving God

"He brought us forth by the Word of truth"

Song: "God will make a way when it seems there is no way"

Conclusion:

Victory doesn't just come from passively praying; must aggressively use the Sword of the Spirit. Our New Birth restored the pre-Fall opportunity to be successful and to choose the right.

cf. The Applause of Heaven by Max Lucado

Pastor Thomas Leake: 4 Reasons that God is Not the Source of Evil in Our Lives (Not Responsible for Evil)

Introduction:

James gives us insight into the source of Sin and Evil so that we won't be deceived; we tend to be wimps in combating sin; Temptation lurks behind every Trial; we ask: Have I been set up by God? Who is to blame for the evil that we do?

Theodicy = defense of God; God is right and good and glorious; Man is wrong; God is in control of all things – even evil; but never the source of evil or responsible for advancing evil; Evil is not a thing created by God; instead it is the twisting and warping and perversion by angels and man of that which is good

I. (:13a) God Does Not Tempt Anyone

Such a thought is intolerable to a godly mind; Same word = *test* and *tempt*

Intent makes all the difference; the Lord is trying us but never tempting us; we cannot

blame our sinful habits on what the Lord has given to us = our bodies, genes, chemical makeup; the relationship between the spirit and body cannot be determined by science; you can't get drunk unless you choose to drink; It is impossible to walk with God if we doubt His goodness; people want to make excuses, pass the buck, blame shifting; spin zone is not just used by politicians

II. (:13b) God Cannot Be Tempted By Evil Himself

Evil does not influence God; He is not controlled by evil so He would never advance evil; He is impeccable, untemptable; Evil and God are mutually exclusive; He is aware of evil but untouched by it; has no personal experience with evil; like a sunbeam that is untouched by the trash pile it shines on; cf. pagan gods with their sinful blemishes – Concept of the true God is very different from pagan gods
Nevertheless temptations real – so where does it come from?

III. (:14-15) Man Tempts Himself

Process of temptation is very individualistic – specific and personal; we don't need any help tempting ourselves; we have darkness and sin inside of us;
“I am the one to blame” = the foundation truth to nail home here;
1 Pet. 2:11 – fleshly lusts waging war inside of us – usually word has evil connotation, although used for good desire in Phil. 1:23; 1 John 2:16; 2 Pet. 2:18; Jude 16; Eph 4:22;
Are we resisting God's Will?

Lust = singular – indwelling principle that tempts you –
2 examples of how man tempts himself through lust:

- 1) like a fish dragged out of the water
- 2) lured by bait – surprised by the concealed hook

Enticement fools us with the mirage of pleasure; no one is immune from this; “I just didn't think I was capable of that”

- For lust Esau gave up his inheritance for a pot of stew
- For lust David threw his family into turmoil

The problem is right there inside of you

2 Images:

A. Image of Fishing – drawing out and enticing

What about the Devil's role in temptation? James does not even raise that issue; doesn't mean that the devil is inactive (4:7); he runs the entire world system; main power he uses is deceit; but he can't actually generate an evil desire within us; he flourishes in a context of deceit and manipulation; Eph. 6:11 – we are not ignorant of the schemes of the devil; father of lies; cunning ploys designed to catch us off guard; devil worked in David, Peter, Ananias and Sapphira; he is deceiving the whole world; 1 John 5:19; not just a principle of evil but a person; he tempted Christ in the wilderness; he impersonates angel of light; he is a lion prowling about that we need to be concerned about; not presently bound like he will be in millennium; good churches will attract the attention of Satan; he wants to bring us down and discourage us; Power of tempter – 2 Cor. 11:3 – be alert; but the blame is primarily ours; we have choice to say Yes or No to Satan; we are not responsible for the trial we fall into . . . but we are responsible not to

sin; no one got the short straw in life in terms of being unable to stand up against temptation; My enemy = my lusts

B. Image of Child Birth – 3 Sequential Events

- a. lust
- b. sin
- c. death

Lust = I have to have this; a desire that controls; that gets in the way of seeing God; cf. fixation on food or pleasure; overindulgence; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Pet. 2:11 – battle for your soul; Gal. 5:24 – Victory through Jesus; Rom. 13:14 – need to nip it in the bud; evil lusts can only produce ugly sin; where there is lust, sin is inevitable; damage done already; matter of time before it is born; inner desire results in outward sin; James 4:1-2; cf. passion for self comfort; sin of laziness; gluttony; etc. Lust just waits for the right time before it is expressed

IV. (:16-18) God Only Gives Good Things

List everything in your life that is Good = all came from God as the source;

Word means useful, beneficial

All came from the heavenly sphere – so Thank God! Not “thank our lucky stars”;
Father of lights – originator of goodness, holiness, purity – unchanging in His Holiness;
no variation; absolutely constant – Great is Thy Faithfulness – no shadow of turning with Thee; Mal. 3:6

Gives specific example of the best gift He has given us = our New Nature – we have been completely and fundamentally changed; He birthed us; regeneration = something that God did; He exercised His will; sovereign in salvation – Eph. 2:4-5 – He must initiate the process; yet we are not robots; does not do this apart from our wills; are you deceived thinking God has not been good to you?

Ps. 34:8; Ps. 106:1 – He is Good

TEXT: JAMES 1:17-18

TITLE: FAITH WITHOUT PERSEVERANCE IS DEAD -- PART 3

BIG IDEA:

THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD BLESSES US FROM START TO FINISH

INTRODUCTION:

Rather than God being the source of tempting us to evil, He must be recognized as the giver of every good gift and the one who has sovereignly granted us spiritual life.

I. (:17) GENERAL GRACE: EVERY GOOD GIFT COMES FROM GOD (WHO IS GOOD AND IMMUTABLE)

A. Nature of General Grace

1. Look at Grace from the perspective of the act of giving
"Every good thing bestowed"

2. Look at Grace from the perspective of the result of that act, the gift itself
"and every perfect gift"

Zodhiates: "All of God's gifts have as their end the accomplishment of God's purpose in our lives, and that is perfection."

B. Source of General Grace

1. Lofty Heaven -- *"is from above"*

2. Majestic God -- *"coming down from the Father of lights"*
reference to His creative activity over all of nature

C. Immutable Nature of God

1. *"with whom there is no variation"*
completely consistent; never changes; can be counted on

2. *"or shifting shadow"*

Zodhiates: "The heavenly bodies change, they move about in space, and their benevolence to us varies, but not so with the One who is light, who is space, who is time, who is the Creator of them all, and no one can cast a shadow on Him... There is no night so dark that His light cannot shine upon you. *'I am the Lord, I change not'* (Mal. 3:6). *'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all'* (I John 1:5)."

Luck: "But these physical lights are subject to alternations of light and darkness. Even the shining sun has its 'spots.' But there are no spots--no variableness--within the perfect light of the great Creator."

Baltz: "And so we are encouraged by these words, because we understand that God will not change. He will continue to give us good gifts. He will never take back what He has given us. His rules will never change. His promise will never be forsaken. Our salvation through Christ can never be revoked or pulled out from under us. God is our benevolent Father, our unchanging Creator, and our anchor, which is firm and secure, even in a world that is changing so quickly."

II. (:18) SOVEREIGN SAVING GRACE: SPIRITUAL LIFE COMES FROM THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD (WHO IS GOOD AND POWERFUL)

A. His Sovereign Decree

"In the exercise of His will"

Manton: "That which engaged God to the work of regeneration was merely his own will and good pleasure: 'Of his own will begat he us;' Rom. ix. 18, 'He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.' God's will is the reason of all his actions; you will find the highest cause to be will, love, and mercy. God can have no higher motive, nothing without himself, no foresight of faith and works; he was merely inclined by his own pleasure: John xv. 16, 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;' "

B. His Creative Power

"He brought us forth"

C. His Instrument of Regeneration

"by the Word of Truth"

D. His Goal of Spiritual Life and Ownership

"that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures"

Zodhiates: "In the Old Testament the first fruits, therefore, were the peculiar possession of God. Among His entire creation we are peculiarly His possession, for we were not only created by Him, but also re-created. A little boy who had lost his toy boat found it for sale in a store, and when he bought it, he took it in his hands and hugged it, saying 'My little precious boat, you are now twice mine; once I made you and once I bought you.'"

Tasker: "The Christians living in James' day are described as *a kind of first fruits* of this new creation, probably because there would be a greater harvest to come as a result of subsequent Christian missions."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do these verses keep us humble and prevent us from boasting in our own achievements or comparing what we have in terms of gifts and abilities and possessions with what others have? Certainly there is no room for boasting or for envy or for self-pity when the giving of God is properly understood.
- 2) Are we doing our part to walk as "children of the light" and to reflect the goodness and graciousness of our God? Are we shining brightly in the midst of this dark and perverted world?
- 3) Why is it that man complains so much about the sovereign exercise of the will of God in determining our salvation, when that is the supreme example of the goodness of God? Why does man want to hang on to some rationalistic notion of "free will" and "independence" from God's decrees when by so doing he would be doomed to the inevitable destructiveness of his own sinful bent?
- 4) What other Scriptures refer to the power of the Word of God in conjunction with the Holy Spirit in accomplishing our regeneration?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Zodhiates: "God's giving is good, is noble, is gentle in its generation, in its origin, in its birth. All things that God created are good in themselves. Good can, however, become evil, as it reaches the hands of sinful man and is misused. That, nevertheless, does not rob it of its goodness of origin."

Zodhiates: "God willed your salvation and mine after considerable thought about the cost it would involve for Himself. On the one side of the scale God put the cost that man's redemption would involve and on the other side the misery, the unhappiness, the eternal separation between man's spirit and His Spirit, and the fires of hell; and the decision, the considered decision, I repeat, was to provide His sovereign grace. Yes, indeed, God counted the cost of restoration of man to Himself. He knew it would mean the sacrifice of His own Son. He knew that it would mean the forsaking of His heavenly glory to come down to earth, so that man would have the possibility of being a partaker of the heavenly glory."

Barclay: "So James insists that, so far from ever tempting man, God's gifts are invariably good. In all the changes ... of a changing world they never vary. And God's

supreme object is to re-create life through the truth of the gospel, so that men should know that they belong by right to Him."

Wiersbe: "One of the enemy's tricks is to convince us that our Father is holding out on us, that He does not really love us and care for us. When Satan approached Eve, he suggested that if God really loved her, He would permit her to eat of the forbidden tree. When Satan tempted Jesus, he raised the question of hunger. 'If your Father loves You, why are You hungry?'

The goodness of God is a great barrier against yielding to temptation. Since God is good, we do not need any other person (including Satan) to meet our needs. It is better to be hungry *in* the will of God than full *outside* the will of God. Once we start to doubt God's goodness, we will be attracted to Satan's offers; and the natural desires within will reach out for his bait."

Mitton: "The powers of evil, if they cannot force their way into human life by a frontal attack, are subtle enough to be able to deceive the Christian by turning his thoughts from his rich store of blessings, and inducing him to brood on his real or imagined hardships. In this way discontent becomes the seed-bed of all kinds of evil."

Mitton: "The verse, therefore, declares that the new life offered to us in Christ is God's intention for us, and God's free offer to our need. It reaches us and becomes effective in us through the proclamation by others of God's truth, as it has first of all become clear to them. It is as Paul wrote in Rom. 10:17: '*Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.*'

God's purposes designed for mankind a renewal of their human nature through the offer of the Gospel, and the end which this was intended to achieve is that *we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.*"

Thomas: Re General Grace -- "But what of the rest of you who as yet do not belong to the family of faith ? Hasn't God been good to you ? Where is the source of all that you have enjoyed ? The blue skies above and the views from the cliff tops. The song of the birds, and the bark of the fox. Eyes and ears to appreciate such beauty. The Father of the heavenly lights made it all and gave it to you. Health and energy, dear parents who love you, family and friends, an education, a sense of right and wrong, and a vocation - "my job." These things did not come to you by chance. Kismet did not bring them into your life, but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And have not some of you received more than these blessings ? You have been enlightened by the gospel, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age ? Aren't these the most extraordinary good and perfect gifts ? They too have come down to you from above, from the Father of lights. He has personally and lovingly granted them to you. Then why is there no doxology ? Why the absence of the thankfulness of grace ? Why, when God has blessed you so greatly are you not lost in wonder, love and praise ? Multitudes in the world have had nothing like the gifts you have enjoyed, then why are you not saved ? Is it lack of clarity ? Ignorance of the great Giver himself ? I cannot believe it. Is it not ingratitude ? Yes, that is the reason. Like the nine lepers visited by the Saviour

and given the perfect gift - cleansing of that wretched disease - you go on your way through life without a word of thanks. You take all his good gifts and give him in return the silence of unbelief. You are without excuse, and for that he will put you in hell, left to the agony of your own ingratitude for ever, and all the holy beings will say, "Righteous oh Lord art Thou when thou judgest." There is not one person in the place of woe who has not received from God's hands an abundance of good and perfect gifts, bestowed upon him because God loved him. The Lord is unfailingly generous."

TEXT: JAMES 1:19-25

TITLE: FAITH WITHOUT OBEDIENCE IS DEAD -- PART 1

BIG IDEA:

PROVE YOURSELVES DOERS OF THE WORD, AND NOT MERELY HEARERS

I. (:19-21) OBEDIENCE REQUIRES A RECEPTIVE HEART

A. (:19A) No New Truth Here (No Surprises)

"This you know, my beloved brethren."

Knowledge is not the end all. We need to be reminded; we need to be encouraged; but ultimately the only thing that matters is whether we implement God's truth.

B. (:19B-20) Make Calm Listening a Priority -- An Attentive Heart is a Receptive Heart

1. *"But let everyone be quick to hear"*

Be objective about God's truth; not emotional in your evaluation;
Listening is a valuable skill that we should all work to improve

2. *"slow to speak"*

Prov. 10:19; 17:27

God gave you two ears and only one mouth so that you would listen twice as much as you talk. Some people just babble on; hard to get a word in; they are thinking only of their response instead of listening. (Zeno quoted by **Barclay**)

Zodhiates: "Once a young man came to that great philosopher Socrates to be instructed in oratory. The moment the young man was introduced, he began to talk, and there was an incessant stream for some time. When Socrates could get in a word, he said, 'Young man, I will have to charge you a double fee.' 'A double fee, why is that?' The old sage replied, 'I will have to teach you two sciences. First, how to hold your tongue, and then, how to use it.' What an art for all of us to learn, especially for Christians."

Barclay: "The tribute was once paid to a great linguist that he could be silent in seven different languages. Many of us would do well to wait and listen more, and to rush in and speak less."

3. *"slow to anger"* -- Why? To accomplish God's goal of establishing you in His righteousness

"For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."

If we respond to God's Word in anger we miss the opportunity to humbly receive the conviction we need in order to repent and grow.

C. (:21A) Put Aside Sinful Distractions -- A Clean Heart is a Receptive Heart

1. "*Therefore putting aside all filthiness*"
2. "*and all that remains of wickedness*"

Zodhiates: "Sin in our lives is like having wax in our ears; it prevents the Word of truth from reaching our hearts; for if it cannot penetrate through the ear, it will not come down to the heart."

D. (:21B) Receive the Word of God in Humility -- A Humble Heart is a Receptive Heart

1. Attitude: "*in humility*"

Mitton: "In general it may be said to mean a full consecration to an unselfish purpose to the complete exclusion of self-seeking and self-assertion, and of any spirit of resentment and retaliation. It is a spirit which enables a man to learn from others and to accept with glad contentment whatever the pursuit of God's will brings to him. Here it means primarily a readiness to learn, to accept correction, to submit one's life uncomplainingly to the total control of God. It stands in contrast to 'anger' and 'malice' both of which come into existence only when the human will is exerted in defiance of God's."

2. Action: "*receive the word implanted*"
cf. the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:1-9); only one type of soil bears any fruit; requires a receptive heart

cf. football analogy of a receiver: what causes dropped passes?

- not looking the ball into the hands
- taking eyes off the ball; looking at circumstances around me
- getting distracted
- running the wrong route; not prepared to receive the ball
- requires good hands

Barclay: "The teachable spirit is *docile* and *tractable*, and therefore humble enough to learn. The teachable spirit is *without resentment* and *without anger*, and is, therefore, able to face the truth, even when the truth hurts and condemns. The teachable spirit is not blinded by its own overmastering *prejudices*, but is clear-eyed to the truth. The teachable spirit is not seduced by *laziness*, but is so self-controlled that it can willingly and faithfully accept the discipline of learning. *Prautes* describes the perfect conquest and control of everything in a man's nature which would be a hindrance to his seeing, learning and obeying the truth."

3. Anticipation: *"which is able to save your souls"*

Vaughan: "(Compare Acts 20:32, where it is stated that the word of God's grace is 'able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance.')

The reference is to the Christian's final and complete salvation. The Word of God, welcomed and rooted in the Christian's heart, is used by the Spirit to promote holiness, stimulate spiritual growth, develop character, and generally produce the things that accompany salvation. In this way it is *'able to save.'*"

II. (:22) OBEDIENCE REQUIRES PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRUTHS OF GOD'S WORD

A. The Proof is in the Doing

"But prove yourselves doers of the word"

B. The Deception is in the Hearing without Implementation

"and not merely hearers who delude themselves"

Wiersbe: "It is not enough to hear the Word; we must do it. Many people have the mistaken idea that hearing a good sermon or Bible study is what makes them grow and get God's blessing. It is not the hearing but the doing that brings the blessing. Too many Christians mark their Bibles, but their Bibles never mark them! If you think you are spiritual because you hear the Word, then you are only kidding yourself."

Mitton: "This section is an emphatic warning against sentimental and unpractical religion. There is a kind of religious man who can enjoy listening to a preacher, and being present at a public act of prayer, but fails to translate his faith into effective action in daily life, fails to make obedience to Christ in the common acts of life the essential feature of his religion which it ought to be."

III. (:23-25) CONTRAST BETWEEN A FORGETFUL HEARER AND AN EFFECTUAL DOER

A. (:23-24) Forgetful Hearer -- Inspection Without Correction

"For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was."

Ross: "The mirror of the Word of God never flatters; that is why some do not like to gaze too long or too often into it."

B. (:25) Effectual Doer -- Implementation (Obedient Activity) Yields Productivity

"But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does."

There is great freedom in obeying the Word of God -- Ps. 119:45; John 8:31-34

Tasker: "It is not therefore something imposed upon the believer from without in the form of a code of external rules and regulations. It is not for him a dead letter but a living power. It would seem to be called the *law of liberty* partly because it enables men to find their true freedom in the service of God's will, and partly because the believer accepts it without any compulsion. The Christian loves God's commandments and is eager to obey them."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What practical steps can we take to make us more attentive listeners and more cautious speakers? How do we accept constructive criticism from others? How prepared are we to receive the Word when it is taught?
- 2) How can we put aside anger in how we nurture and disciple our children so that we can achieve our goal of accomplishing in them "*the righteousness of God*"? How does anger manifest itself in our lives? What things typically make us angry?
- 3) What level of imperfection and sin and blemish are we willing to tolerate when we look at our life through the light of the Word of God? Do we truly hate sin and long for the righteousness of God to be manifested in our life?
- 4) What is our game plan for looking "*intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty*" and obeying it? Do we persevere in our efforts to understand and implement the Word of God?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Wiersbe: "The emphasis in this section is on the dangers of self-deception: '*deceiving your own selves*' (v. 22); '*deceiveth his own heart*' (v. 26)... Many people are deceiving themselves into thinking they are saved when they are not... But there are true believers who are fooling themselves concerning their Christian walk. they think they are spiritual when they are not... Spiritual reality results from the proper relationship to God through His Word. God's Word is truth (John 17:17), and if we are rightly related to God's truth, we cannot be dishonest or hypocritical."

Barclay: "So long as a man has to obey his own passions and emotions and desires, he is nothing less than a slave. It is when a man accepts the will of God that he becomes really free--for then he is free to be good, and free to be what he ought to be. His service is perfect freedom, and in doing His will is our peace."

Vaughan: "Three figures are used in describing the Word of God. It is likened to a seed planted in the heart (verse 21), a mirror into which one looks (verse 24), and a law by which one's life is guided (verse 25). The thought of the passage may be developed around the three imperative verbs which are used. These three verbs speak of the demands of God's Word upon the believer's life. They have to do with (1) hearing the Word (verses 19, 20), (2) receiving the Word (verse 21), and (3) doing the Word (verse 22-27)."

Mooney: "We must read God's Word (Focus your attention on the Word of God) ... We must review God's Word (meditation)... We must remember God's Word (memorization)."

Williams: "Many of us want to audit the Christian life, that means you want the information but you don't want the work."

People audit the a course when the want the data with out the responsibility of the test or the maintaining of the Grade.../

But understand when you audit a course you don't get credit for it."

Hoke: "If we just hear the Word, we are like somebody who glances in the mirror and shaves himself, or powders her nose, and walks away and doesn't really remember what they look like. I have this idealized image of myself. I think I am still the good-looking guy I was twenty years ago. But the mirror pops my bubble. Most of you probably think you look differently than you really look. Some of you might remember when cassette recorders were first introduced. When we heard ourselves on tape we said, 'I don't sound like that!' But you do. The tape is precisely how you sound. Somebody takes a home movie and says, 'I don't look like that!' Yes you do! That's precisely how you look. We have an idea of what we really want to be and what we want to look like. Sometimes that is true for our Christian lives. Sometimes we deceive ourselves into believing we are something we are not simply because we know the facts of the Word of God."

Racer: How the Word Becomes Flesh – Again

Introduction: John 1:14 – The Word still needs to become flesh today; people need to see Christ and His character is us

I. (:19-20) Preparing to Hear the Word

If the Word is ever going to come out of you, it must first get into you; If the Word is ever to get into your heart, you must first prepare your heart properly

A. Listen Up – “*quick to hear*”

Attitude of Lord, speak to me; I want to hear what you have to say in order to do it; God knows when we mean business; need to have a bent to hear; leaning forward to catch God's every Word; not being distracted by what we disagree with

B. Zip the Lip – “*slow to speak*” – not ready with quick rebuttal; not applying the passage to someone else first but letting it sink home personally; Remember, God might

Speak to us by other than His Word – He might use our wife, our children, our employer – do not be defensive or reject these communications; sometimes when it gets uncomfortable we tend to tune God out

C. Settle Down – “*slooooooow to become angry*” – Calm your spirit; listen quietly; take it all in; anger and resentment are hindrances to change; you won’t have victory this way

D. Decision: Do I accept God’s Authority to Direct My Life
we are not in charge

II. (:21-22) Preparing to Do the Word

Truth is meant to be applied

A. Throw Down Filthiness – Can’t come to the Word with dirty clothes on; cf. the dirty, nasty clothes of coal miners; requires confession before the Lord

B. Receive the Word Deep Down – in gentleness, humility
like welcoming someone into your house

Word need to get implanted deep down where it can develop strong roots

C. Nike-size Your Walk = Just Do It!

look at the Nike commercials; people disciplined to run every day in the rain and snow; do you think they feel like doing this?? No! But they do it because they desire the results.

D. Decision: Will I obey God’s Voice? Will I act even when I don’t feel like it?

cf. our makeup: Body, Soul (mind, will, emotions) and Spirit –

- the Word is implanted into our Spirit and we are converted and given a new Nature; but our soul still needs transforming = process of sanctification

- mind – needs to be transformed so we think God’s thoughts

- will – What will I decide to do about what I know?

- emotions – these will follow; not the leading indicator

Word should bring us to a crisis of Choice = what will I do about it?

III. (:22b-25) Two Portraits

Problems:

- I know what I look like and I’m OK with that (sin and all)

- I know what I look like and would like to change but not willing to make effort

A. Hearer-Non-Doer

Fool themselves into thinking they are making spiritual progress:

Glad I know just a little bit more than I did before ...

Glad I figured out that chapter ...

B. Hearer-Doer (cf. Psalm 1)

C. Decision: What kind of Hearer will you be?

Conclusion:

Am I regularly having Transforming Encounters with the Word of God?

TEXT: JAMES 1:26-27

TITLE: FAITH WITHOUT OBEDIENCE IS DEAD -- PART 2

BIG IDEA:
THREE PRACTICAL EVIDENCES OF OBEDIENCE

These are 3 areas which James introduces here, but which he will develop in more detail in the rest of the epistle

I. (:26) SELF-CONTROL IN THE AREA OF SPEECH -- CONTROLLING OUR TONGUE
NEGATIVE EXAMPLE -- WORTHLESS RELIGION

A. Inflated Opinion of Self

"If anyone thinks himself to be religious"

Piper: "'Religious' Means 'Faith in Jesus' --

The reason I think he means "faith in Jesus" when he uses the word 'religious' (in verse 26), or talks about '*pure and undefiled religion*' (in verse 27), is that this is what he continues with in the next verse (2:1): '*My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.*' There is no break in the flow between 1:27 and 2:1; so there is good reason to think that 'pure religion' is 'faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' That is James' religion."

Zodhiates: "James does not speak here of the estimate others have about us, but of the subjective estimate which we form of ourselves. It is not what we appear to be to others, but what we think we are. Our mental estimate of our own spiritual condition is extremely important. After all, we are affected more by what we think of ourselves than by what others think of us."

B. Obvious Lack of Self-Control

"yet does not bridle his tongue"

This failure is visible to all; no mystery here

Vaughan: "James was thinking of the man who may be punctilious in religious activity but careless about everyday speech. All of his religious activity is vain if he does not bridle his tongue... To bridle the tongue is to discipline it, restrain it, curb it, keep it under control. The imagery suggests that the tongue is like an unruly horse that needs bit and bridle to check its wild tendencies."

Not what we do on Sunday, but what we do on Monday to Saturday shows the reality of our religion.

C. Ignorant Persistence in Self-Deception

"but deceives his own heart"

He still does not get it!

D. Ultimate Futility of Hypocrisy

"this man's religion is worthless"

What's the point of fooling yourself and trying to fool others?

II. (:27) MINISTRY OF COMPASSION TO THOSE IN NEED -- CARING FOR THE NEEDY

POSITIVE EXAMPLE -- WORTHWHILE RELIGION

A. Essence of Worthwhile Religion

1. *"pure"*

2. *"undefiled"*

B. Evaluator of Worthwhile Religion -- only God's opinion really matters

"in the sight of our God and Father"

C. Example of Worthwhile Religion

"to visit orphans and widows in their distress"

Marsaw: "And what about the orphans? The dictionary tells us that an orphan is one bereaved of his or her parents. Doesn't this definition apply to a child who comes from a broken home?! I certainly think so. I would go so far as to argue that a child whose parent has died is likely to be emotionally better-off than the one who has been abandoned. In the latter situation, the child experiences rejection and often is overcome with feelings of guilt. In many instances, these poor kids believe that they are responsible for the whole mess while those orphaned through the death of a parent view the loss as being a tragic yet unwillful act. Had the parent not died, he or she would still be by the child's side."

Piper: "So orphans are children whose parents have died and left them at the mercy of others to take care of, lest they die. How does abortion relate to that? Well, abortion puts the child in a worse situation. The parents are not dead, but they have turned on the child and choose to have the child dead. This is worse than being an orphan. To have Mommy and Daddy choose to have you dead is worse than Mommy and Daddy being dead."

So it seems to me that if God wants us to care about the orphan whose life is endangered because his parents are dead, he would want all the more that we care about the child whose life is endangered because his parents choose to make him dead."

Miano: "Sometimes it is difficult to do that. Sometimes we tend to shy away from the less fortunate as if their misfortune may rub off on us. Sometimes we distance ourselves from those in need because we don't want to be forced to look at our own pressing needs, or we consider our own needs to important to put those less fortunate first. Regardless of whatever hang-ups we may have about serving those in need, if our hearts don't break for them to the point that we extend to them more than just a smile and a kind word, we are just playing church."

III. (:27B) PERSONAL / PRACTICAL PURITY -- KEEPING CLEAN PERSONAL PREREQUISITE

"and to keep oneself unstained by the world"

No amount of ministry to others can make up for a failure to guard your own purity or character

Ross: "There must be no selfish isolation of himself from all contact with the woes of humanity, but, at the same time, he must seek earnestly to maintain personal purity in all his intercourse with others."

Mitton: Re "*world*" -- "it means the world of men as it is in its alienation from God and rebellion against Him. It is almost synonymous with 'evil', because the 'world' is now in the power of evil. This 'world' is also the environment in which the Christian must live. Its customs and habits are tainted with evil. Therefore the pressures which come to the Christian from the social life about him are in the direction of evil. He has constantly to be on the alert against this pressure, sometimes direct and threatening, more often insidious and unnoticed."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What does the world think makes someone a "religious" person? how do we counteract the tendency to be perceived as "self-righteous"? How do we show the world that our focus is on internal character produced by God in us and that good works are an expression of our thankful service to a gracious God rather than an attempt to earn salvation?
- 2) When was the last time we said something that we wish we could take back? What makes us so quick to pull the trigger and blurt out something harmful rather than exercise self-control?
- 3) When we are giving help to the less fortunate, how do we make sure that our motives are correct? Think of examples of people who emphasize works of compassion but err greatly in the area of personal purity and then examples of people who put a lot of emphasis on purity but evidence very little compassion towards others. What type of example do we see in Christ?

4) How do we balance reaching out to the world in friendship evangelism with a need for separation from the defilement of the world?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Lenski: "Rationalists have pointed to this passage as being one that supports their idea of genuine religion: Just do works of charity and lead a clean moral life; all the rest does not matter!"

Vaughan: Re fatherless and widows -- "There are indications in Scripture that their helplessness made them at times victims of oppression (Psalm 94:6; Isaiah 10:2; Jeremiah 7:6; 22:3; Ezekiel 22:7; Zechariah 7:10; Malachi 3:5). The Pharisees, for instance, who made a boast of religion, devoured widows' houses (Matthew 23:14). Both are mentioned in the Bible as the objects of God's special care and compassion. He is 'father of the fatherless, and a judge [protector] of the widows' (Psalm 68:5)."

Barclay: "All through history men have tried to make ritual and liturgy a substitute for sacrifice and service. They have made religion splendid within the Church at the expense of neglecting it outside the Church."

Ross: "It is painfully easy to degenerate into one like Mr. Talkative, whose portrait is painted with such biting satire by John Bunyan. He was 'the son of one Saywell, who dwelt in Prating Row, and notwithstanding his fine tongue, he is but a sorry fellow.'"

Wiersbe: "There are many references to speech in this letter, giving the impression that the tongue was a serious problem in the assembly... It is the tongue that reveals the heart (Matt. 12: 34-35); if the heart is right, the speech will be right. A controlled tongue means a controlled body (3:1ff)."

Mitton: "In this passage, therefore, '*religion*' means the outward forms of religion. If they are used as God meant them to be used, as means of grace to enable us to submit our lives in obedience to the whole will of God, they are a valuable, even necessary part of the religious life. One of the commonest faults, however, into which religious people are prone to fall, is to come to regard these outward forms as of value in themselves. Observance of them is felt to be of the very essence of religion, in comparison with which purity of life and compassion for the distresses of others are of small importance. It is this attitude which earns for religious people the reputation of hypocrisy. It was this that Jesus deplored so deeply in the Pharisees, and led Him to rebuke them as 'hypocrites'. The real outward marks of a religious man are honesty and personal integrity in all his dealings, and fairness and kindness in all his treatment of others, and it is very sad when religious people themselves forget it."

Miano: "How to Avoid Playing Church ... Sometimes we, as evangelical Christians, can be very quick to dismiss the word "religion" as always being a negative, manmade thing. It's not—and that's one of the points James is making in these verses. As believers, we should not be so quick to throw out the baby with the bath water. What we need to do is discern between false and superficial religion from that religion which is based solely on an authentic, genuine relationship with Jesus..."

Who we really are can often be determined by what we say. Our speech will do more to make or break our reputations than just about any other character trait. More types of sin can likely be attributed to the tongue than any other part of the body....

The fact that James doesn't give us specific areas in which we should control our tongue, we can conclude that he is telling us that we should control our tongues in every form of speech. Areas in which we should be controlling our speech include sarcasm, anger, slander, bitterness, and boasting. There are many others...."

AuBuchon: "If our religion is not taking on the dimensions of . . .

words . . . bridling the tongue
hands . . . taking care of the helpless
hearts . . . keeping un-spotted by the world's ways ...

Then our religion is not practical and therefore useless.

Religious? Or Irreligious? Which might you be?"

Racer: Three Previews of True Religion

(you can outline the rest of the book of James around these three areas)

These areas will determine whether people regard you as authentic; whether your religion really counts for anything

I. (3:1-12) Controlled Speech

- not just bridling your tongue, but speaking out at the appropriate time

II. (2:1-13) Compassionate Service to the Poor who are in Distress

Do you feel their needs?

Are you involved in meeting their needs?

III. (4:1-10) Cleanse Self

God will give the necessary grace.

TEXT: JAMES 2:1-13

TITLE: FAITH WITHOUT IMPARTIAL LOVE IS DEAD

BIG IDEA:

DO NOT HOLD YOUR FAITH IN OUR GLORIOUS LORD JESUS CHRIST WITH AN ATTITUDE OF PERSONAL FAVORITISM

I. (:1) THESIS

"My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism."

Look at other Scriptures: Lev. 19:15; Mal. 2:9; Luke 20:21; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Ephes 6:9; Col. 3:25

A. Addressed to Professing Believers

"My brethren"

Ross: He begins his exhortation by using once again his favorite form of address... and it is very appropriate here, as he is about to deal with a glaring example of the lack of Christian love and brotherhood."

B. Issue = Genuineness of Faith and Conduct Consistent with that Faith

C. Proper View of Christ Leads to a Proper View of Others

Once we truly see how "*glorious*" Christ is, there will be no room for distinctions on the human plane because we all pale in comparison to the glory of Christ. Look at how our Lord (in all of His Majesty) treated others and we will see that there is no room for "*personal favoritism*" on our part. Surely the disciples are not above the Master when it comes to showing compassion to all men without distinction.

Atkins: "Partiality is treating a person better or worse than he deserves for selfish reasons."

II. (:2-3) SIMPLE ILLUSTRATION

A. Favoritism towards the Rich Man in your assembly

B. Prejudice towards the Poor Man in your assembly

- We tend to judge people on the basis of external appearance and stereotype groupings

- We are impressed by riches and professional success and social standing

Mitton: "Apparently there was a shortage of seats, and some of the congregation had to stand or sit on the floor, so that to have a seat at all was a privilege."

III. (:4) CONDEMNATION

"have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?"

IV. (:5-11) APPLICATION

A. (:5-7) Our Thinking is Upside Down

1. Look at Election -- God more often has chosen the poor

a. Pay Special Attention

"Listen, my beloved brethren"

b. Look at God's Choice -- 1 Cor. 1:26

"did not God choose the poor of this world"

1) *"to be rich in faith"*

2) *"and heirs of the kingdom"*

Barclay (quoting Abraham Lincoln): "God must love the common people because He made so many of them."

c. Consistent with God's Promise

"which He promised"

d. Key = a person's relationship to God (not their social or economic status) -- *"to those who love Him"*

2. Look at Your Own Failure

"But you have dishonored the poor man."

3. Look at Personal Experience -- The Rich more often mistreat and persecute you

a. The Rich Mistreat You and Show No Mercy

1) *"oppress you"*

2) *"personally drag you into court"*

Barclay: "in the society which James inhabited the rich oppressed the poor. They dragged them to the law courts. No doubt this was for debt. At the bottom end of the social scale men were so poor that they could hardly live, and moneylenders were

plentiful and extortionate. In the ancient world there was a custom of summary arrest. If a creditor met a debtor on the street, he could seize him by the neck of his robe, nearly throttling him and literally drag him to the law courts. That is what the rich did to the poor. They had no sympathy; all they wanted was the uttermost farthing. It is not riches that James is condemning. It is the conduct of riches without sympathy."

b. The Rich Persecute You and Blaspheme God

"Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called"

B. (:8-11) Our Evaluation of the Seriousness of this Conduct is Warped

1. (:8) At Stake is Obedience to the Law

"If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well."

a. This is a good law -- *"royal law"*

Wiersbe: "Why is *'love thy neighbor'* called the royal law?

- For one thing, it was given by the King. ...
- for a second reason: it rules all the other laws. "Love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:10). There would be no need for the thousands of complex laws if each citizen truly loved his neighbors.
- But the main reason why this is the royal law is that obeying it makes you a king. Hatred makes a person a slave, but love sets us free from selfishness and enables us to reign like kings."

Mitton: "that which describes the mode of life expected of those who have entered into the Kingdom of God (Matt. 5:20; 7:21, Mark 9:47, etc.)."

b. This is consistent with the Old Testament Scriptures

2. (:9) Showing Partiality = Breaking the Law

a. *"you are committing sin"*

No way to sugarcoat the offense

b. *"you are convicted by the law as transgressors"*

No way to escape the penalty

3. (:10-11) The Law is a Cohesive Unity

a. Any Infraction (whether perceived as small or great in your mind)

Renders one Totally Guilty Before God

"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all"

Mitton: "The extent of guilt may vary, but the reality of it is the same."

Barclay: "The Jew was very apt to regard the law as a series of detached injunctions. To keep one of these injunctions was to gain credit; to break one was to incur debt. Therefore, a man could add up the ones he kept and subtract the ones he broke, and, as it were emerge with a credit or a debit balance."

b. Each Command was Issued by the Same God

"For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not commit murder.'"

c. Breaking Any Part of the Law Makes You a Transgressor of the Law

"Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law."

V. (:12-13) WARNING AGAINST A JUDGMENTAL SPIRIT TOWARDS OTHERS

A. (:12) We Will All Be Judged by the Same Standard

"So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty."

Mitton: "This is the law which operates, not by outward enforcement, but when the love of Christ inwardly constrains. It is part of the freedom of the children of God, which issues in glad and spontaneous obedience to Him, for the sake of pleasing Him who has done so much for them, and in the glad assurance that what He commands is life's surest guide to deep and lasting happiness."

Ross: "We shall be judged... not so much by the observance or neglect of this or that external rule as by the degree in which our heart and life have been dominated by the spirit of love."

Vaughan: "Those who make a habit of judging others are inclined to forget that they themselves face a day when God will judge them."

B. (:13A) What Goes Around Comes Around

"For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy."

Vaughan: "We should be very careful in interpreting this statement. James surely does not mean that by showing mercy to man we procure mercy from God. That would make salvation a matter of human merit and would contradict the whole tenor of Scripture. What James means is that by failing to show compassion on our fellow men we prove ourselves to be utterly destitute of Christian character. Christian people are the children of God. They bear his image; they copy His example. It is therefore impossible for them to fail to share in his compassion, to fail to reflect His spirit of mercy. If one does not show mercy, he thereby shows that he has no vital connection with God."

C. (:13B) *"Mercy Triumphs Over Judgment"*

Mitton: "It may, however, well be that though James has felt it necessary to stress the reality of God's judgment, yet he feels compelled to conclude with a glad acknowledgement that in the end it is God's mercy which has the last word: It triumphs over judgment."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we minister to others based on how gracious God has been to us or based on what we think we will receive in return from the other individual? Is our selection of church officers ever influenced by the person's professional or economic status? Do we refrain from preaching on certain controversial topics so as not to offend the rich and powerful in the church?
- 2) What type of prejudices do we have based on judging others on external appearance? We all are guilty of this from time to time. How can we work at viewing others from God's perspective?
- 3) What can the wealthy do to improve the vitality of their faith and protect against the danger of trusting in their own resources? How can they stay humble and not let their money or power affect how they relate to others?
- 4) Why should we be overly impressed with the rich and powerful since we are ourselves children of the King of Kings? Does our concept of church family brotherhood make for a level playing field as we relate to one another?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

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

Wiersbe: "The religious experts in Christ's day judged Him by their human standards, and they rejected Him. He came from the wrong city, Nazareth of Galilee. He was not a graduate of their accepted schools. He did not have the official approval of the people in power. He had no wealth. His followers were a nondescript mob and included publicans and sinners. *Yet He was the very glory of God!* No wonder Jesus warned the religious leaders, '*Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment*' (John 7:24, NIV)."

Vaughan: "Faith transcends Social Distinctions (2:1b-13)

1. Partiality is inconsistent with faith in Christ (1b-4).
2. Partiality is contrary to the purpose of God (5, 6a).
3. Partiality is not in the best interests of the Christian (6b, 7).
4. Partiality is a violation of the royal law (8-13)."

Atkins: "It is generally true that those who are poor are more likely to be rich in faith. The fact is that they have less to distract them from their faith. That does not mean that the wealthy are incapable of faith. The existence of the church in America is living proof of that fact. We are the wealthiest nation on the earth. It stands to reason that the faith of believers in the Third World is by far greater than our own. Remember, though, that this statement is a general principle and not a law. It is possible for you and I to have a remarkable faith, but it is not generally as likely. Remember the story of the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16-25. The fewer the distractions, the greater the faith."

Roper: "The word translated 'show . . . partiality' is a Greek word that means 'to receive by face,' i.e., to judge on the basis of some external or superficial factor--to judge a man by the color of his skin, or the length of his hair, or the kind of clothes he wears, or the sort of academic credentials he carries, or his economic status. This is what James is talking about when he says, 'Do not show partiality.' 'Do not receive a man by face.' We cannot judge on the basis of externals. This word is used a number of other times in the New Testament. But in every other case God is the subject of the sentence and it is expressed negatively. 'God does not show partiality.' 'God is not a respecter of persons.' 'God does not receive people by face.' God doesn't judge by externals; he judges the heart.

Racer: Passing the Test of Partiality

Introduction:

Recent movie Radio has them of partiality in it; how do we recognize in each person the value God sees as someone made in His image?

Need to examine our culture and our church and our personal lives for instances of showing partiality

I. (:1-4) Partiality Damages the Testimony of Christians

A. Stop showing Partiality

Command of Prohibition; apparently some level of failure that James needs to correct; does not mean that certain people are not worthy of special honor; deals with the condition of our heart more than with our actions

B. A Hypothetical Example Will Illustrate

C. Your Actions Betray Your Heart

II. (:5-7) Partiality Damages Your Ability to Respond Appropriately to Each Person

Five Rhetorical Questions:

A. Didn't God choose the Poor to be Rich in Faith?

B. Didn't God choose the Poor to be Heirs of His Kingdom?

cf. Matt. 5 “poor in spirit”

- C. Don't the Rich Exploit and “Lord it Over” You?
- D. Don't the Rich Use the Courts to Bring Trouble to You?
- E. Don't the Rich Slander the Name of Your Lord”

F. Partiality Renders You Incapable of Significant Ministry in Either Class’
Life

The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor

The wicked does not understand such concern (Prov. 29:7)

III. (:8-13) Partiality Shows a Lack of Discernment about God’s Law

- A. (:8-9) The Royal Law is Either Kept or Broken to the Extent We Love Our neighbor or Not (see Prov. 29:14; 20:28)
- B. (:10-11) Partiality isn't a “Little Sin”
- C. (:12-13) Recognize that to Break God’s Law is to be Broken by it
Law of God is a cohesive whole; cf. a vase – if it is cracked at all, it is not the same

Conclusion:

- People are all the same; some good, some bad ... etc.
- Don't rush to partial judgment;
- Are we marked by kindness and mercy towards all?
- Our heart must be open to each person God brings into our lives;
- Goal: how can I minister appropriately to that person?

TEXT: JAMES 2:14-26

TITLE: FAITH WITHOUT OBEDIENT DEEDS IS WORTHLESS

BIG IDEA:

OBEDIENT DEEDS (GOOD WORKS) = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH

**I. (:14) FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION = THEME OF THE BOOK
WHAT USE IS FAITH ALONE?**

Simple Equation: Professing Faith - Works Not = Saving Faith

"What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?"

**II. (:15-17) SIMPLE ILLUSTRATION = HELPING A NEEDY BROTHER
FAITH ALONE NEVER FED ANYONE / FAITH ALONE IS WORTHLESS**

A. Immediate Pressing Need

1. Involves a Close Family Member

"If a brother or sister"

not talking about the masses in China here

2. Involves Basic Daily Needs for Existence

a. *"is without clothing"*

b. *"and in need of daily food"*

Not talking about wants or desires, but basic needs; the things which God says He will provide and with which we should be content

B. Empty Words Without Practical Help Are Worthless

1. Empty Words

"and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled'"

2. Without Practical Help

"and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body"

3. Worthless

"what use is that?"

C. Obvious Conclusion / Refrain

"Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself."

John Calvin: "It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone."

Mitton: "A profession of sympathy which is no more than polite talk, and which does not lead to helpful action, when such action is in our power, is mere sentimentalism."

III. (:18-20) SHOW AND TELL -- FAITH ALONE SHOULD NOT EVEN IMPRESS DEMONS OR FOOLS / FAITH ALONE IS WORTHLESS

Barclay: "Here James is meeting a possible objection. He is thinking of an objector who says, 'Faith is a fine thing; and works are fine things. They are both perfectly real and genuine manifestations of real religion. But the one man does not necessarily possess both. One man will have faith and another man will have works....'"

A. (:18) Show is Necessary -- Only Works Make Faith Visible

"But someone may well say, 'You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'"

B. (:19) Tell is Not Sufficient -- Even Demons Agree Intellectually with the Truth

"You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder."

Barclay: "What James is arguing against is, in fact, the first kind of belief, the acceptance of a fact without allowing the fact to have any influence upon life. The devils are intellectually convinced of the existence of God; they, in fact, tremble before God; for all that they are none the less devils; their belief has not in the least altered them."

"But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow":

C. (:20) Conclusion / Refrain

"faith without works is useless"

IV. (:21-26) TWO OT PROOF CASES -- WORKS VINDICATE THE REALITY OF OUR FAITH / FAITH ALONE IS WORTHLESS

A. (:21-24) Case of Abraham

1. (:21) Sacrifice of Isaac Vindicated the Faith of Abraham

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?"

2. (:22) Works Complement and Perfect our Faith

"You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected"

3. (:23) Role of Faith in Justification

"and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,' and he was called the friend of God."

4. (:24) Conclusion / Refrain

"You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone."

B. (:25-26) Case of Rahab

1. (:25) Rahab also was Justified by Works

"And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?"

2. (:26) Conclusion / Refrain

"For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."

Wiersbe: "You could not find two more different persons! Abraham was a Jew; Rahab was a Gentile. Abraham was a godly man, but Rahab was a sinful woman, a harlot. Abraham was the friend of God, while Rahab belonged to the enemies of God. What did they have in common? Both exercised saving faith in God."

Ross: "James concludes his argument here by making use of this figure of the body and the soul. When body and spirit are separated, death and putrefaction result: so, if faith be separated from works, it is a dead faith; it is '*dead in itself*' (v. 17). Faith of that kind indicates the absence of all real spiritual life, and shows that spiritual death and corruption still reign."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can the Apostle Paul write that a man is justified by faith apart from works while James emphasizes that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone? Where do you find the same emphasis of James in the preaching of John the Baptist and of Christ? Do Paul and James use words like "justify" in exactly the same way or with a slightly different emphasis?

2) Since much of our benevolent giving is to organizations which help the poor and the needy rather than directly to the needy individuals themselves, what do we lose as a result of this disconnect and this lack of personal involvement?

3) What acts of obedience and what good works can we point to in our lives as having helped to perfect our faith? As we examine our own lives, how can we be sure that we have exercised saving faith and not just an intellectual or emotional response?

4) Why do evangelicals spend so little time discussing the reality and significance of the role of angels and demons?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Wiersbe: "Someone has said that faith is not 'believing in spite of evidence, but obeying in spite of consequence.' When you read Hebrews 11, you meet men and women who acted upon God's Word, no matter what price they had to pay. Faith is not some kind of nebulous feeling that we work up; faith is confidence that God's Word is true, and conviction that acting upon that Word will bring His blessing...

there are three kinds of faith, only one of which is true saving faith:

- 1) Dead Faith (:14-17) -- the intellect alone
- 2) Demonic Faith (:18-19) -- intellect plus emotions
- 3) Dynamic Faith (:20-26) (also must involve the will)"

Barclay: "These two examples show fully and finally that faith and deeds are not opposites; they are, in fact, inseparables. No man will ever be moved to action without faith; and no man's faith is real until it moves him to action. Faith and deeds are opposite sides of a man's experience of God."

Tasker: "Faith is a practical response to the divine initiative. It is an answer to a heavenly call, and the call is always a call to obedience. Therefore obedience, expressing itself in action, is the inevitable and immediate issue of faith. *Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.* In other words, the life of sanctification dates from the moment a man is justified by faith, when he surrenders himself to Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, through whose saving death apart from any merit of his own he is counted righteous in the sight of God; but the life of sanctification is not a life of faith only; it is a life of what might be called faith-obedience."

Vaughan: Re differences between Paul and James --

1) "First, the situations faced by the two writers were entirely different. Paul had in mind those who denied the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith; he was refuting their insistence that one must observe the ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic law in order to be saved. James, on the other hand, had in mind those who, by the barrenness of their lives, distorted the doctrine of salvation by faith; he was insisting that any faith worthy of the name must express itself in deeds...

2) Second, by '*justified*' Paul means acquitted, declared to be righteous, treated as righteous. As used by James the word means having a just claim to one's profession, shown to be righteous, vindicated. Paul means the initial justification (acquittal) before God that brings one into a saving relationship with God. James means justification

(vindication) of one's profession at any after-moment in the Christian life, and finally before the throne of judgment.

3) Third, the intention of James was not to contrast two opposing methods of salvation ... but two kinds of faith -- one genuine, the other spurious; one alive, the other dead; one that saves, another that does not save. What he says may be summed up in three statements:

- (1) Genuine faith is not an empty claim (verses 14-17);
- (2) Genuine faith is not mere acceptance of a creed (verses 18-20); and
- (3) Genuine faith is faith that produces an obedient life (verses 21-26)."

TEXT: JAMES 3:1-12

TITLE: FAITH WITHOUT PRACTICAL WISDOM IS DEAD -- PART 1

BIG IDEA:

THE TAMING OF THE TONGUE IS NO SMALL MATTER -- BUT IT WILL PREVENT BIG-TIME TROUBLE

I. (:1-2) THE TAMING OF THE TONGUE IS A MEASURE OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

A. The Responsibility of Teaching Carries with it Greater Accountability

1. Don't Rush into the Spiritual Spotlight

"Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren"

2. Consider the Greater Accountability

"knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment"

Vaughan: "The office of teacher offered a respect, a prominence, and an authority which made some men hanker after it. Don't, says James. Think not so much of its outward privileges as of its immense responsibilities under God. Be more concerned about your fitness for teaching than with the external trappings of the office."

B. There are Many Pitfalls on the Road to Spiritual Maturity

1. Universal Traps

"For we all"

2. Harmful Snares

"stumble"

3. Diverse Obstacles

"in many ways"

We all sin repeatedly in many ways ... but especially in the area of our speech.

C. Control of the Tongue is a True Indicator of Overall Self-Control

1. Passing the Test of Taming the Tongue

"If anyone does not stumble in what he says"

2. Grading the Results

"he is a perfect man"

not sinless, but a man of maturity

3. Extrapolating the Same Ability

"able to bridle the whole body as well"

II. (:3-4) TWO ILLUSTRATIONS TO PROVE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TAMING OF THE SMALL TONGUE AND SELF-CONTROL ON A LARGER SCALE

A. (:3) Powerful Horses Can be Controlled by a Small Bit

"Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they may obey us, we direct their entire body as well"

B. (:4) Large Ships Can be Controlled by a Small Rudder

"Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires."

Wiersbe: "Both the bit and the rudder must overcome contrary forces. The bit must overcome the wild nature of the horse, and the rudder must fight the winds and currents that would drive the ship off its course. The human tongue also must overcome contrary forces. We have an old nature that wants to control us and make us sin."

III. (:5-8) THE SMALL TONGUE CAN CAUSE BIG-TIME TROUBLE

A. Characterization -- Small in Size but Huge in Potential

1. Small in Size

"So also the tongue is a small part of the body"

2. Huge in Potential

"and yet it boasts of great things"

B. Cause and Effect -- Illustration of an Innocent Small Match and a Huge Destructive Forest Fire

"Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire"

C. Comparison -- The Tongue Compared to a Defiling Fire

(chiastic structure: A B B A)

1. Nature of the tongue

a. *"And the tongue is a fire"*

Barclay: "wide-ranging and quite uncontrollable"

b. *"the very world of iniquity"*

2. Function of the tongue

a. *"the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body"*

Vaughan: "This means that the tongue, wrongly used, pollutes man's whole personality, soils his whole nature, leaves a deadly stain upon him (cf. Matthew 15:11). It does this by permitting itself to be used as an organ for sin."

b. *"and sets on fire the course of our life"*

3. Curse of the tongue -- *"and is set on fire by hell"*

D. Contrast -- Man's Ability to Tame Wild Animals Contrasted with His Inability to Tame His Own Tongue

1. Man's ability to tame wild animals

"For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed by the human race."

2. Man's inability to tame his own tongue

"But no one can tame the tongue"

this ability can only come from God

E. Conclusion -- The Natural Tongue Reveals our Total Depravity"

1. *"it is a restless evil"*

2. *"and full of deadly poison"*

IV. (9-12) USING THE TONGUE FOR BOTH BLESSING AND CURSING IS A CONTRADICTION BY DEFINITION

A. Unnatural by Definition -- from Personal Experience

1. Blessing the Creator While Cursing His Creation

"With it we bless our Lord and Father"

"and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God"

2. Using the Same Mouth for Contradictory Actions

"from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing"

3. Unnatural and Just Plain Wrong

"My brethren, these things ought not to be this way"

B. Unnatural by Illustration -- from the World of Nature

1. Fountain

"Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?"

2. Fig Tree

"Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives"

3. Vine

"or a vine produce figs?"

4. Salt Water

"Neither can salt water produce fresh"

Mitton: "A fresh water lake can be relied on to contain fresh water, and a salt lake salt water (like the Dead Sea). But with the human tongue, fickle and unreliable, it is now one thing, now another."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do churches and Christian training institutions push people too quickly into positions of teaching and spiritual leadership without observing the cautionary tone of this passage?

2) Think of instances where you did not control your tongue. How harmful was your speech? How much did you later regret what you had said? What steps did you take to try to correct the situation? How difficult is it to make amends once the damage has been done?

3) What are some of the different types of harmful speech? What does the Book of Proverbs have to say about each different type? (study out some passages)
When we are under pressure and squeezed the hardest, what type of speech pops out of our mouth?

4) Do we treat even unbelievers as those who have been *"made in the likeness of God"* or do we treat them with contempt?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Wiersbe: "The power of speech is one of the greatest powers God has given us... The ability to speak words is the ability to influence others and accomplish tremendous tasks; and yet we take this ability for granted.

Outline:

- Power to Direct: the Bit and Rudder (3:1-4)
- Power to Destroy: the Fire and Animal (3:5-8)
- Power to Delight: the Fountain and Tree (3:9-12)"

Tasker: "Teachers are continually engaged in passing judgments, both moral and intellectual. The very nature of their work makes them critical, sometimes severely critical. James warns them that all who have professed to point out to others the way in

which they should live, will receive greater condemnation than the rest of men if they have failed to walk in that way themselves."

Criswell: "Do you remember those three little monkeys? One has his eyes covered--see no evil. One has his mouth covered--speak no evil. And one has his ears covered--hear no evil. The whole body.

A gossip tongue is a dangerous thing
If its owner is evil at heart.
He can give whom he chooses many a sting
That will woefully linger and smart.
But the gossip tongue would be balked in its plan
For causing heartburning and tears,
If it weren't helped out by the misguided man
Who possesses two gossip ears...

If I am not to be a talebearer and a whisperer and a defamer and a slanderer then what am I to do? This is what I am to do. I am to speak beautifully, graciously, and kindly. The apostle Paul writes, 'Speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another ... Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.'

Luck: "Remember, as indicated earlier, that no man can tame the tongue, but there is One who can. Bitter waters were made sweet at Marah when a divinely revealed tree was cast into them (Exod. 15:23-26). So as the tree--the cross of Christ--becomes real in our lives, as we trust in the Lord Jesus and walk in faith with Him, the bitter waters of Marah will become sweet, and our tongues instead of producing evil will be a blessing to all about us."

Barclay: "In the Early Church the teachers were of first rate importance. Wherever they are mentioned they are mentioned with honor..."

In the New Testament itself we get glimpses of teachers who failed in their responsibility and their task, and who become false teachers. There were teachers who tried to turn Christianity into another kind of Judaism, and who tried to introduce circumcision and the keeping of the law (Acts 15:24). There were teachers who taught others, but who themselves lived out nothing of the truth which they taught, teachers whose whole life was a contradiction of their instruction, and who did nothing but bring dishonor on the faith they represented (Romans 2:17-29). There were some who tried to teach before they themselves knew anything (1 Timothy 1:6,7). There were false teachers who would pander to the false desires of the crowd (2 Timothy 4:3).

But apart altogether from the false teachers, it is James's conviction that teaching is a dangerous occupation for any man. His instrument is speech and his agent the tongue...

We may find in this passage four characteristics of the wrong kind of teaching.

(i) It is *fanatical*. The truth it holds is held with unbalanced violence rather than with reasoned conviction.

- (ii) It is *bitter*. It regards its opponents as enemies to be annihilated rather than as friends to be persuaded.
- (iii) It is *selfishly ambitious*. It is, in the end, more eager to display itself than to display the truth, and it is interested more in the victory of its own opinions than in the victory of the truth.
- (iv) It is *arrogant*. Its whole attitude is pride in its own knowledge rather than humility in its own ignorance. The real scholar will be far more aware of what he does not know than of what he knows."

Brian Racer: The Test of the Tongue –
 Harnessing the Pint-Sized Power Between Your Teeth

Introduction:

Start off on the light side looking at all types of verbal bloopers before getting to the serious side of this important topic; Imagine some artistic images as well where we picture ourselves all tangled up in our tongues:

- tongue shaped like a lariat tied around our feet and tripping us up
- tongue like a noose around our neck

I. (:1-2) Two Measures of Maturity – Contrast between:

- A. Those who are too quick to Teach – a warning against rushing into this role
- B. Those who are Mature because they understand their heavy accountability

List of 15 sinful uses of the tongue: “*We all stumble in many ways:*”

1. lying
2. deceit – shading the truth
3. cursing – pronouncing damning outcome on somebody else
4. false oaths/swearing – trying to authenticate your authority at the expense of God’s Name
5. name calling
6. backbiting
7. slander – sharing truth with a design to hurt someone else
8. gossip – sharing intimate negative details with someone who is neither part of the problem or part of the solution
9. false accusation
10. harsh speech
11. impulsive speech
12. profanity/vulgarity
13. flattery – trying to gain an advantage by saying something nice that others want to hear
14. seduction
15. clamor – loud, abusive speech; raising a ruckus

II. (:3-5) The Tongue Has the Power to Direct

“pound for pound the tongue is the strongest Muscle in the body”

3 Illustrations: Small, but powerfully influential

A. Like a Bit to a Horse

1.5 lb bit vs. 1200 lb horse

Application: work on the mouth first in counseling session; then you can make progress at controlling the rest of behavior (as opposed to those who advocate venting); control the tongue; then control the whole body; then control the whole environment

B. Like a Rudder to a Ship

C. Like a Spark to a Forest Fire

III. (:6-8) The Tongue Has the Power to Destroy

A. A Fire

1. Defiles our Body
2. Desires a Full Destruction
3. Its Destructive Source is Hell

A fire reportedly started in the O'Leary barn in Chicago at 8:30 P.M., October 8, 1871; and because that fire spread, over 100,000 people were left homeless, 17,500 buildings were destroyed, and 300 people died. It cost the city over \$400 million. Tradition has it that a cow kicked over a lantern to set it off.

B. An Unruly Beast

1. Untamed – no one can tame it (of mankind)
2. Poisonous – Picture the serpent back in the Garden – demonstrates all the wrong uses of the tongue listed above

IV. (:9-12) The Tongue Has Contradictory Power to Delight

A. The Blessing Should Persist (Prov. 18:21)

B. The Cursing and Contradictions Should Desist (Bite your tongue)

Conclusion: How Your Tongue Can Be Controlled:

1. Let someone Stronger Direct it
2. Ask someone Wiser what to say – Is. 50 speaking of the Messiah:
awakens My ear to listen as a disciple ...
3. Let someone Purer cleanse it – Is. 6
4. Practice teaching Your Mouth Before you teach someone else --
Prov. 15:28 *“the heart of the righteous thinks about what he will say”*
Prov. 16:23-24 *“the heart of the wise teaches his mouth”*

TEXT: JAMES 3:13-18

TITLE: FAITH WITHOUT PRACTICAL WISDOM IS DEAD -- PART 2

BIG IDEA:
THE ROOT AND FRUIT OF PRACTICAL WISDOM

I. (:13-14) ANY CLAIM TO PRACTICAL WISDOM MUST BE VINDICATED BY THE GENUINENESS OF ITS FRUIT

A. Anyone Can Claim to be Wise

"Who among you is wise and understanding?"

B. The Proof is in the Behavior

"Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom."

C. Selfish Motives Produce Proud Hypocrites

1. The Root = Selfish Motives

a. *"But if you have bitter jealousy"*

b. *"and selfish ambition in your heart"*

2. The Fruit = Proud Hypocrites

a. *"do not be arrogant"*

b. *"and so lie against the truth"*

II. (:15-18) THE ROOT OF WISDOM WILL PRODUCE CORRESPONDING FRUIT

A. (:15-16) Wisdom Not From Above Stirs Up Strife and Trouble

1. Source

"This wisdom is not that which comes down from above"

2. Characteristics

a. *"earthly"*

Barclay: "Its standards are earthly standards; its sources are earthly sources. It measures success in worldly terms; and its aims are worldly aims."

b. *"natural"*

c. *"demonic"*

3. Motivation

- a. *"For where jealousy"*
- b. *"and selfish ambition exist"*

4. Fruit

- a. *"there is disorder"*
- b. *"and every evil thing"*

B. (:17-18) Wisdom From Above Promotes Peace and Blessing

1. Source

"But the wisdom from above"

2. Characteristics

- a. *"is first pure"*
- b. *"then peaceable"*

Barclay: "The true wisdom is the wisdom which produces right relationships. There is a kind of clever and arrogant wisdom which separates man from man, and which makes a man look with a superior contempt on his fellow-men. There is a kind of cruel wisdom which takes a delight in hurting others with clever, but cutting, words. There is a kind of depraved and wicked wisdom which seduces men away from purity and from their loyalty to God. But the true wisdom is the wisdom which at all times brings men closer to one another and closer to God."

- c. *"gentle"*
- d. *"reasonable"*
- e. *"full of mercy and good fruits"*
- f. *"unwavering"*
- g. *"without hypocrisy"*

3. Fruit

"and the seed whose fruit is righteousness"

4. Motivation

"is sown in peace by those who make peace"

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why do people have such an inflated opinion of their own sense of wisdom and understanding? Are they really fooling anyone with their false claims?
- 2) Are we training our children to make the necessary connection between practical wisdom and good deeds? ... to make the necessary connection between the proper attitude and good deeds?
- 3) Towards what individuals do we tend to struggle with problems of jealousy and selfish ambition? How do we recognize these sinful tendencies in our life and work at putting them off and responding in unselfish love instead?
- 4) Would other people characterize us as "peacemakers"? Why or why not? How can we use our tongue to bless others rather than to stir up strife and trouble?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barclay: "It is characteristic of the natural man. The word which James uses is difficult to translate. The word is *psuchikos*, which comes from the word *psuche*. The ancients divided man into three parts--body, soul and spirit. The body (*soma*) is our physical flesh and blood and constitution; the soul (*psuche*) is the physical life which we share with the beasts; it is no more than animal life; the spirit (*pneuma*) is that which man alone possesses, that which differentiates him from the beasts, that which makes him a rational creature and kin to God. This is a little confusing for us, because we are in the habit of using the word *soul* in the same sense as the ancient people used the word *spirit*, whereas to them the word *soul* meant the physical life which is not peculiar to man, but which is shared by all the animal creation which has life. So then, what James is saying is that this wrong kind of wisdom is no more than an animal kind of thing; it is the kind of wisdom which makes an animal snap and snarl with no other thought than that of prey or personal survival. The wrong kind of wisdom is the wisdom which a man shares with the animals and which is part of his lower nature."

Wiersbe: "Wisdom was an important thing to Jewish people. they realized that it was not enough to have knowledge; you had to have wisdom to be able to use that knowledge correctly. All of us know people who are very intelligent, perhaps almost geniuses, and yet who seemingly are unable to carry out the simplest tasks of life. They can run computers but they cannot manage their own lives! 'Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom' (Prov. 4:7)..."

Any person enamored with the wisdom of this world ought to read the first two chapters of 1 Corinthians and notice how much Paul has to say about God's wisdom and man's wisdom. Man's wisdom is foolishness to God (1 Cor. 1:20), and God's wisdom is foolishness to man (1 Cor. 2:14). Man's wisdom comes from reason, while God's wisdom comes from revelation. Man's worldly wisdom will come to nothing (1 Cor. 1:19), while God's wisdom will endure forever."

Vaughan (quoting John Adams): "Do we often see anything corresponding to the description here given? Where are these lovely, placid features? Where these soft, gentle, graceful movements? Where this spirit, pure, yet peaceful and pitiful? Where this hand, ever stretched out, not to strike, but to succour, -- not to deal blows, but to scatter blessings? We have plenty of noise, bustle, activity, -- abundance of a certain kind of zeal and effort. But O! where is Christianity with the lineaments it here bears, so beautiful, so benign? And the rarity of it is a very sad affair; for this wisdom is not merely an ornament, it is a necessity. Destitute of it we are undone -- without it we perish. It is the way to salvation -- indeed it is itself salvation. It is another name for religion, as it dwells in the heart, and influences the character and conduct."

Ross: "Peace is the atmosphere in which, or the conditions under which we may expect the good seed to ripen to the fruit which is righteousness. And the sowers are not merely *lovers* of peace, but *makers* of peace."

Brian Racer: The Ways of Wisdom
Testing Our Readiness to Speak to the Masses

INTRODUCTION:

Church preparing for massive outreach opportunity connected with Mel Gibson movie: The Passion of the Christ

I. (:13) A CALL FOR THE READY

- A. A Question for Self Examination (cf. 3:1-2)
- B. A Challenge to be Measured by
 - not deeds
 - not just good deeds
 - but good deeds done in gentleness

II. (:14-16) THE CASE OF THE UNPREPARED

- A. Competitive Motive – What is the motive behind what people are saying?

“*bitter jealousy*” -- “Zeal for God and His truth is a commendable attitude, but the subtleties of sinful human nature can readily pervert it into bitter antagonism against those who do not express their adherence to God and His truth in the same way we do.”
– D. Edmond Hiebert

“*selfish ambition*” – GR. Epitheian: “a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means” – by Aristotle; on working for a cause for pay; unethical practice is implied;

which will only lead to factions and division.

B. Carnal Wisdom

1. “earthly” – bounded by the earth
2. “natural” – “soulish” – Bounded by soul of man
3. “demonic” – spiritual, but demonically spiritual; Satan especially wants to destroy relationships among believers

C. Contentious Environment

look for such a situation and then trace the problem back to the contentious person who has a root heart problem

III. (:17-18) THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WISE PEACEMAKER

A. He Works with Wisdom from Above

1. Pure – squeaky clean; God doesn't use a dirty vessel
2. Peaceable – desiring and fostering peace; but not at expense of purity
3. Gentle – gently reasonable; cf. Abraham Lincoln
4. Reasonable – willing to yield; easy to be entreated; looking for an easy way to be persuaded and cooperative; requires listening before rendering judgment
5. Full of Mercy and Good Fruits – the compassionate side; Does your heart break over people and their problems?
6. Unwavering – in contrast to wavering, doubting person of Chap. 1; steadfast; straightforward
7. Without Hypocrisy – no mask; not playing games to win people's favor; sincere; what you see is what you get

B. He Works to Make Peace

1. He Sows the Right Seed
2. He Sows for the Right Reason -- Motivation = “in peace”

CONCLUSION: Peacemaking = Dangerous Ministry; you are getting into the middle between two antagonists; you must be prepared; you will be hit with some blows; have to value deeply the worth of restoring relationships

TEXT: JAMES 4:1-10

TITLE: FAITH WITHOUT INTIMACY IS DEAD

BIG IDEA:

DRAW NEAR TO GOD AND HE WILL DRAW NEAR TO YOU

**I. (:1-2) RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS CAN BE TRACED BACK TO
WORLDLINESS = A LUST FOR:
WORLDLY PLEASURES
WORLDLY POSSESSIONS
WORLDLY POWER / PRESTIGE**

A. The Surface Problem = Fighting with One Another

"What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?"

Zimmerman: "Although James specifically had in mind the conflict that leads to battered congregations and split churches, his words apply equally well to abusive families and broken homes. The same passions that lead to church disputes are at the root of all conflicts. Affairs of the heart, whether against God or a spouse, are remarkably similar. Following the steps James prescribes for dealing with these issues in the church will also extend their benefits into our homes and society."

B. The Root Problem = Lust for Worldly Pleasures

"Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?"

Zodhiates: "The passions of the flesh are described as constantly fighting to have their way, to be victorious over the spirit, over the new nature which Jesus Christ has given us. The flesh knows nothing of the grace of forgiveness and of esteeming others superior to ourselves. Pride and arrogance are instruments of the flesh for fighting its battles. The flesh loves war, war against others and war against what is lofty and ideal in life. The flesh is quick to declare others enemies."

C. The Root Problem = Lust for Worldly Possessions

"You lust and do not have; so you commit murder"

Mitton: "The fierceness of their desire and the violence of their resentment against interference with it actually culminates in murder. This is not other than our Lord warned us to be prepared for. He said: 'For within, out of the heart of man, comes ... murder' (Mark 7:21). The Old Testament bears witness to the same grim truth. Bitter jealousy led Cain to kill Abel. Thwarted covetousness led to Naboth's death at the hands of Ahab and Jezebel. Uriah the Hittite was sent to his death to make way for David's lust."

D. The Root Problem = Lust for Worldly Power / Prestige

"And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel"

Roper: "All of us have certain desires, many of them legitimate. But often we are frustrated in the expression of these desires. When we are frustrated, we have two options. We can either assert ourselves and get what we want by ourselves, and thus cause conflict and destruction - or we can ask God. And if we ask God he delights to give."

Zodhiates: "History tells us of a statue that was erected to a celebrated victor in the public games of Greece named Theogenes. The erection of this statue so excited the envious hatred of one of his rivals that he went every night and strove to throw the statue over by repeated blows. Ultimately he succeeded, but alas, the statue fell upon him, and he was crushed to death beneath it. Such generally is the end of the man who allows himself to be carried away by the spirit of envy."

E. The Fundamental Problem = Lack of Dependence upon God

"You do not have because you do not ask"

Only God can satisfy the needs of the human heart

Ross: "These desires for the wrong kind of pleasure which are at work in our members, he says, wage ceaseless warfare against everything that stands in the way of their gratification, and they express themselves in covetous longings after the wealth and the possessions of others, and thus strife and bloodshed arise, and even murders may result."

**II. (:3-6) FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD = HOSTILITY TOWARDS GOD
(THE TUG OF WAR BETWEEN FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD AND
FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD)**

A. (:3) Worldly Motives Abandon You to a Life of Frustration

"You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."

B. (:4) Worldly Alliances Alienate You as an Enemy of God

"You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

C. (:5) Worldly Loyalty Arouses the Jealousy of the Indwelling Holy Spirit

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

Wessel: "God is a jealous God (cf. Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 32:16; Zech 8:2; I Cor. 10:22)"

D. (:6) Supernatural Grace is Available to the Humble

"But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'"

**III. (:7-10) INTIMACY WITH GOD = THE CURE FOR WORLDLINESS
6 STEPS TOWARDS RENEWED INTIMACY WITH GOD
(THE PATHWAY TO TRUE INTIMACY WITH GOD)**

no "self-help" program here; this is a "God-help me" program

A. *"Submit therefore to God."*

B. *"Resist the devil"*

Result: *"and he will flee from you"*

C. *"Draw near to God"*

Result: *"and He will draw near to you."*

D. Cleanse Yourselves

1. Outward Purity

"Cleanse your hands, you sinners;"

2. Inward Purity

"and purify your hearts, you doubleminded."

the doubleminded are those with divided loyalty between God and the world

E. Grieve over Your Sin

"Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom."

F. *"Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord"*

Result: *"and He will exalt you"*

Vaughan: "It calls for an awareness of God's greatness and glory and our own insignificance and unworthiness. It suggests an acknowledgment of God's right to rule our lives and our readiness to do His will."

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) The word for "*lusts*" is the root word for "hedonism". What types of pleasures or entertainment tug at our heartstrings and threaten to divert our loyalty from God? Are we "*doubleminded*" in some respects?
- 2) How can this passage be applied to other types of conflicts and abuse -- such as child abuse, spouse abuse, even abortion?
- 3) What are some examples where we have either prayed for something with wrong motives or failed to pray because we did not want to live a life of submitted dependence upon God?
- 4) How can these same principles for renewed intimacy be applied to our marriage relationship as well? What specific things can we do to implement the six step program outlined here?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ross: (quoting Farrar from *Early Days of Christianity*) --

"Wars, fightings, pleasures that are ever setting out as it were on hostile expeditions, disappointed desires, frustrated envy and even fruitless murder to supply wants which would have been granted to prayer -- then, again, prayers utterly neglected or themselves tainted with sin because misdirected to reckless gratification, and because ruined by contentiousness and selfishness -- all this spiritual adultery, the divorce of the soul from God to the love of the world -- is this indeed a picture of the condition of Christian Churches within thirty years of the death of Christ?"

Mitton: "Sometimes we tend to think that peace is the natural state of man, and that strife is the unnatural element which disturbs it. Quite the reverse is true. Strife is characteristic of human life, and where lasting peace exists in a community, it is the mark of a great work of God's grace. Peace represents a notable achievement, and is possible only when individuals are ready to subordinate personal feelings to the common good. It does not just 'happen' but has to be 'striven for' (Eph. 4:3). It is like a garden with beautiful flowers. It does not just 'happen' by accident. Quarrels are like weeds; they flourish everywhere."

Mitton: "James has been denouncing the wicked causes of strife in human communities--the aggressive self-seeking of corrupt human nature, concerned only to find satisfaction for its own desires without regard for the evil things it brings to others and the community as a whole. Now he turns from the causes of this ugly evil, and points us to the neglected cure of it. The cure lies in the completely opposite approach to life, not greedy self-seeking, but a readiness to submit the whole of life in meek obedience to the will of God, a humble desire to learn that will, and a glad acceptance

of it as the one rule of life, once it is known. This is the way that leads to peace and good will in the community, and it is the refusal of this which provokes bitter hatred and ill will."

Mitton: "It is not, of course, that our lives have to be made entirely satisfactory, before we may draw near to God. Otherwise, who would ever be able to come? Often it is the very act of drawing near which first awakens the desire to have things put right, and then bestows the means for this to be done. But he who comes to God must be willing to be put right. Faith is not identical with obedience, but it must imply the readiness to be obedient, if only the power to obey is granted to us. Genuine faith, therefore, while fully aware that only God can really heal a sick soul will at the same time want to put right immediately those things which lie within its own power"

Roper: Re becoming a friend of the world -- "The most obvious thing is that we become a friend of the world. A self-assertiveness is the essence of worldliness. That is the world's creed: if you want to get ahead, then do it for yourself. No one else will do it for you. You have to claw and kick your way to the top of the heap. You only go around once, so you have to grab the brass ring. You have got to get what you want out of life. James says that when we feel that we have to get what we desire by asserting our self; then we ally our self with the world and with its philosophy, and thus we become an enemy of God. Why God's enemy? Because God wants to bring peace and reconciliation to the world. But the world's way always produces conflict and bitterness and strife. So when we choose to assert our self we constitute our self an enemy of God."

Zimmerman: "Spiritual adultery occurs when Christians look outside their relationship to God to get their needs met. A third party, the world, is invited into the relationship.

The world refers to the philosophies and practices that fallen men have devised in their effort to live apart from God. Thus, they are against God (anti-God).

To embrace the world (especially in this context of fulfilling our desires), is like inviting a hated rival into the marriage bed.

When we crave acceptance from the world, we reject God and set ourselves against Him as though we were His enemy."

Zodhiates: "Wars among us as Christian communities, denominations, and groups harm everyone. Perhaps the reason God has permitted the existence of various Christian groups in the course of the history of the Christian Church is for us to show that, although we are different, we can love each other. That impresses the world much more than if we were all one because of the will of a superhand imposed upon us."

Racer: Maintaining a One-Flesh Union with Christ
Introduction:

Look at the marriage relationship; look at broken relationships where adultery and infidelity has occurred; think of how all of the emotions of jealousy, love, passion,

patience, anger, etc. compare to how the Lord feels about His bride when we forsake Him to pursue worldliness in some area

I. (:1-5) A Broken Union

A. (:1-3) In Conflict with Each Other – with Troubling Consequences

1. An Internal Problem – strife between members

Pleasures waging internal way; when something else begins to own our hearts, our spirit becomes anemic and powerless;
Breaking fellowship with Christ evidences itself in our breaking fellowship with other believers

2. An External Pain – spilling out into our relationships

3. All Prayers Hindered

When we disconnect from God's grace and mercy and the plan of God, God won't give us something He knows will damage us

B. (:4-5) In Conflict with Our Beloved

Idolatry = Heart of Adultery – displacing the fidelity, loyalty and passion owed to Christ

1. Friends & Enemies – Friendship with the world = Hostility to God (Jer. 3:20)

2. The Fury of the Jealousy of God – Song of Solomon 8:6-7

Def. of Jealousy = Fear of being displaced that provokes one to anger in order to protect one's position; not just something God feels; but moved Him to take action; God wants our full passion devoted to Him; "My heart, God's Home";

God patiently waits, loves, doesn't quit

II. (:6-10) The Blessing of Brokenness – there is a way back; a way to be reconciled

A. The Power of Grace – we admit that we have messed up and need God's help

1. "Submit to God" – Get under and Listen

Where did I get off track; How can I get back on and proceed?

2. "Resist the Devil" – Must do step #1 before step #2

Stand firm against Satan's lies, accusations, temptations and false guilt trips

3. "Draw Near to God" – God hasn't moved; you just need to come back

4. "Cleanse Your Hands" – deals with sinful actions

5. "Purify Your Hearts" – deals more with the attitudes and motives

6. "Be Miserable, Mourn, Weep" = sign of genuine repentance; sometimes we cheapen grace and don't recognize the cost of the cross; also we often have to live with the consequences of our sin (even though we have been forgiven) – Humbly absorb these consequences as your lot in life without complaining against God

7. "Humble Yourselves" – I have messed up; I need you desperately lower your thinking about yourself; we get the wrong idea that we deserve everything: we deserved that promotion that someone else got (therefore he must have gotten it by some illicit means); we did everything right and therefore don't deserve to be in this position

B. The Power of a Jealous Love that Wins and Rewards

God's heart keeps coming after us until He makes us wholly His

TEXT: JAMES 4:11-17

TITLE: FAITH WITHOUT SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD IS DEAD

BIG IDEA:
DON'T USURP THE ROLE OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:

A lot of times Christians try to play God without even realizing the folly of what they are doing.

I. (:11-12) DON'T USURP GOD'S ROLE AS JUDGE

- A. (:11a) When we speak against our brother we exalt ourselves as Judges of the law
"Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law;"

note emphasis on the relationship we enjoy as "brothers"

Ross: "The spirit of humility cannot exist alongside the spirit which speaks against the brethren; such censoriousness in speech leads to one of the worst forms of pride; the man who is guilty of it does not merely criticize his brother but really criticizes the Law of God, that is, no doubt chiefly the Royal Law of love (2:8)."

Vaughan: this is "another way in which the worldly mind expresses itself."

- B. (:11b) Our role is to Obey the law ourselves, not to Judge the law
"but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it."
- C. (:12) The Role of Judge Belongs Exclusively to God
"There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?"

Wiersbe: "James was not forbidding us to use discrimination or even to evaluate people. Christian need to have discernment (Phil. 1:9-10), but they must not act like God in passing judgment. We must first examine our own lives, and then try to help others (Matt. 7:1-5)."

II. (:13-17) DON'T USURP GOD'S ROLE AS MASTER OF OUR DESTINY

Ross: "The uncertainty and brevity of human life should lead us to humble dependence on the will of God."

Vaughan: "In Palestine the Jews generally adhered to the agricultural life; but in the Dispersion they were frequently merchants and bankers."

A. (:13-14) Presumption Regarding Our Future Represents a Failure to Submit to the Sovereign Will of God

1. Presumptuous Plans

"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.'"

2. Limited Knowledge

"Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow."

3. Uncertain Lifespan

"You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."

B. (:15) Submission to the Will of God is the Proper Perspective Towards the Future

"Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that.'"

C. (:16) Presumption Represents Arrogant Boasting

"But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil."

D. (:17) Failure to Obey the Truth is Always Sin

"Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do you balance the need to be discerning and judge in areas where that judgment is appropriate with the warning in this passage against speaking against a brother and judging him in a manner that is reserved for God?
- 2) How do you balance the need for proper planning and goal setting and appropriate action steps with the warning in this passage against presumptuous assumptions and planning that leaves God out of the equation?
- 3) What other Scriptures speak of the frailty and brevity and unpredictability of the life of man? What other figures or images are used to convey this message?
- 4) Why do we seem to put such a greater weight on sins of commission rather than sins of omission? How does James 4:17 help to balance our perspective.

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Vaughan: Re the connection between vs 17 and the preceding context -- "There are others who feel that the statement is made with special reference to the sin which James has described in the immediately preceding verses. His readers were well-aware that their future was really in the hands of God. They knew perfectly well that they could not be sure of a single day and that they were absolutely dependent upon God for the preservation of their lives and for any prosperity which came to them. If, in spite of their knowledge, they continued in their proud ways, they were guilty of sin. In this interpretation the 'doing good' has reference to making one's plans in reliance on the will of God.

Still other commentators feel that this interpretation of the verse, by restricting its meaning too severely, robs the statement of its true significance. They feel that the verse should be treated as an independent saying having no connection with what has gone before. In this view the 'doing good' has broad and general application to any conscious duty of the Christian life. But whether one follows this interpretation or the immediately preceding one the essential meaning of the verse is the same. It insists that sins of omission are not to be thought of as inconsequential. They have in them the essence of rebellion against the divine will."

Barclay: "This uncertainty of life is not a cause either for fear or for inaction because of the insecurity of the future. It is a reason for accepting and realizing our complete dependence on God. It has always been the mark of a serious-minded man that he made his plans in dependence on God."

Roper: "... all of our life is to be lived out in recognition of the fact that God is sovereign Lord. He commands the future and he runs my life. He does what he chooses to do in my life and therefore behind my planning must be the recognition that God is sovereign. I must accept what he chooses to do. James says that anything other than that is arrogance. That is seemingly a very strong term, because planning for the future is a very ordinary activity. We do that all the time. And yet James says that if we plan without making room for God in our life it is an act of evil arrogance:"

Holwick: Re illustration from the life of Spurgeon -- "God alone knows the heart.

One of the most famous preachers of the 1800's was
Charles Spurgeon.
He was Queen Victoria's favorite preacher, and he was
a Baptist.

Spurgeon and his wife had a practice of selling, but
refusing to give away, the eggs their chickens laid.
Even close relatives were told, "If you want them, you

have to pay for them."
Since he had a huge church and a salary to match, some
people labeled the Spurgeons as greedy.
Sort of like how television evangelists are labeled
today.

The Spurgeons accepted the criticisms without defending
themselves.

It was only after Mrs. Spurgeon died that the whole
story was revealed:

All the profits from the sale of eggs went to support
two elderly widows.

The critics never knew this; HOW OFTEN DO WE?

There are many times when it is best to leave our doubts
about others to Almighty God.

He is still in charge of the universe - he'll know what
to do with them."

Holwick: Re planning in submission to the will of God --
"Examples of God-oriented plans in Bible:

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| a) Paul's anticipated return to Ephesus. | Acts 18:21 |
| b) A visit to Corinth. | 1 Cor 4:19 |
| c) Longer stay if permitted. | 1 Cor 16:7 |
| d) Reaching spiritual maturity. | Hebrews 6:3" |

Zodhiates: "One of the greatest temptations of an advanced, well-informed Christian is to assume an authoritative attitude toward other Christians. If we live close to God, it is sometimes possible that Satan may try to make us consciously or unconsciously act as though we ourselves are little gods and therefore have the right and sometimes the imperative duty to assume the responsibilities that belong to God, especially the responsibility of passing judgment upon others. It is good to remember that there are certain responsibilities and prerogatives that God does not choose to pass on to us, no matter how close we are to Him."

Zodhiates: "The call to take no thought for tomorrow is certainly not a call to neglect duties and evade responsibilities, but a call to trust in Providence when the time only to trust has come. When I have done for tomorrow all that is laid at my door, then let me not encroach upon the province of Him who alone can rule the future and the contingent by troubling myself with them. Let me simply do this day the work which is this day due; and though long and impenetrable months may lie between me and its result, for that I must trust Him whom the sparrows trust; saying cheerfully, 'The Lord will provide!'"

TEXT: JAMES 5:1-12

TITLE: FAITH WITHOUT THE FEAR OF GOD IS DEAD

BIG IDEA:

3 DANGERS THAT MUST BE AVOIDED BY THE PROPER FEAR OF GOD

I. (:1-6) THE DANGER OF FILTHY RICHES

A. (:1) Summary: It's Payback Time for the Filthy Rich!

"Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you."

Speaking against those who had gained wealth in unethical ways and then had used that wealth in selfish ways; stresses the certainty of the judgment

Vaughan: "anguish for impending judgment"

Tasker: "Assuming their unrepentance he announces, in the spirit of the Old Testament prophets, the inevitable doom that confronts them. And the inference he would wish his Christian readers to draw from this denunciation is the folly of setting a high value upon wealth, or of envying those who possess it, or of striving feverishly to obtain it. For the truth is that all who are rich without having 'poverty of spirit' are faced, whether they are aware of it or not, with swift and sure retribution at the hands of God. Because the rich are nearly always self-deceived, by thinking that their present prosperity will be permanent, James warns them that *miserias* are coming upon them. And because they imagine that by means of their wealth they can mitigate, if not render themselves immune from the sorrows and hardships that are the lot of others, James bids them weep and howl at the severity of the divine retribution which will fall upon them. This judgment has not already arrived; but it is so certain and so predetermined that James, in true prophetic manner, speaks of it almost as if it were a present reality, for the literal meaning of the original is that these miseries are now in the process of coming upon them."

B. (:2-3a) You Can't Take it With You / Even Riches Don't Last Forever

1. *"Your riches have rotted"*

cf. storehouses of corn and grain going bad

2. *"and your garments have become moth-eaten"*

3. *"Your gold and your silver have rusted"*

C. (:3b) Your Hoarding of Wealth Will Come Back to Haunt You

1. Evidence that Demands a Verdict

"their rust will be a witness against you"

2. Conspicuous Consumption

"and will consume your flesh like fire"

3. Bad Timing

"It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!"

D. (:4) Your Exploitation Has Not Gone Unnoticed

"Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

Barclay: "The selfish rich have gained their wealth by injustice. The Bible is always sure that the laborer is worthy of his hire (Luke 10:7 1 Timothy 5:18). The day laborer in Palestine always lived on the very verge of starvation. His wage was small; it was impossible for him to save anything; and if the wage was withheld from him, even for a day, then literally he and his family would not eat."

Vaughan: "In Psalm 46:7, 11 the title is used in a context declaring God to be the Saviour and Protector of His people. Its use in James points up that none other than the omnipotent God to whom all the hosts of the universe are subject is the Avenger and Protector of the poor."

E. (:5) Your Hedonism Has Set You Up for Stricter Judgment

1. You Have Lived High Off the Hog

a. *"You have lived luxuriously on the earth"*

b. *"and led a life of wanton pleasure"*

Barclay: "The selfish rich have used their wealth selfishly. They have lived in soft luxury, and have played the wanton. The word translated *to live in soft luxury* is *truphein*. *Truphein* comes from a root which means *to break down*; and it describes the soft living which in the end saps and destroys a man's moral fibre; it describes that enervating luxury which ends by destroying strength of body and strength of soul alike. The word translated *to play the wanton* is *spatalan*; it is a much worse word; it means to live in lewdness and lasciviousness and wanton riotousness. It is the condemnation of the selfish rich that they have used their possessions to gratify their own love of comfort, and to satisfy their own lusts, and they have forgotten all duty to their fellow-men."

2. You Have Fattened Yourself for the Day of Slaughter

"you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter"

F. (:6) Your Bully Tactics Will Now Be Avenged

"You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you."

Ryrie: "This probably refers to the practice of the rich taking the poor (*"the righteous"*) to court to take away what little they might have, thus *"murdering"* them."

The rich did not fear God and did not think they would be held accountable for their behavior. They placed all of their security in their wealth.

II. (:7-11) THE DANGER OF COMPLAINING AGAINST YOUR BROTHER

A. (:7a) Summary: Be Patient (as you anticipate the soon return of the Lord)

"Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord."

B. (:7b) Example of the Patience of the Hard Working Farmer (looking forward to the harvest; trusting in divine providence)

"Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains."

Barclay: "The early Church lived in the expectation of the immediate Second Coming of Jesus Christ; and James exhorts his people to wait with patience for the few years which remain... the early rain was the rain in late October and early November; without it the seed which had been sown would not germinate at all. The late rain was the rain of April and May, without which the grain would not mature. The farmer needs patience to wait until nature does her work; and the Christian needs patience to wait until Christ comes."

C. (:8) Summary Repeated: Be Patient (as you anticipate the soon return of the Lord)

"You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand."

D. (:9) Warning Against Complaining (in light of the soon return of the Lord)

"Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door."

E. (:10-11) Remember the OT Examples of Endurance

1. Example of the Godly Prophets

"As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we count those blessed who endured."

2. Example of Job

"You have heard of the endurance of Job"

3. Examples of the Compassion and Mercy of God

"and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful."

The imminent return of the Lord as the Judge should give us all a proper fear of the Lord and the necessary patience to endure suffering rather than to complain against perceived mistreatment by our brothers.

III. (:12) THE DANGER OF SWEARING AN OATH

A. Summary: No Need to Swear an Oath

"But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath"

cf. "Cross my heart and hope to die" mentality of children swearing that something is true

B. Stick to Your Simple Word

"but let your yes be yes, and your no, no; so that you may not fall under judgment"

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do I acquire wealth and material possessions only by ethical means? Do I function as a faithful steward of what God has committed to me, or do I use my wealth selfishly and extravagantly in self-indulgence? How does this passage help me not to envy the rich?

2) Regarding verse 10, do we presume that our patience and perseverance will always end up in some type of fairy book ending with God always delivering us in this life? What was the experience of the prophets of old who were patient to remain faithful to God's message?

3) Isn't it remarkable that the story of Job actually ends up as a testimony to the *compassion* and *mercy* of the Lord? How does this help us deal with some of the suffering in our own lives?

4) How should verse 12 be applied in the context of taking an oath to tell the truth in our current legal system? Why do some Christians believe that they should not swear an oath of any kind?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Criswell: "Job was a man who found greatness in yielded submission, in loss, in pain. He was a man who came to glory under the hand of God... In the furnace of the fires of the trial of God, the Lord always has a purpose. From that vantage point, looking as God views our sufferings, we see that He is in it, He purposes for us a double portion of His grace and kindness, and He would bring us to glory. Had Job remained a rich man and that is all, would it have been the same? ... God had a marvelous thought in His mind when He looked at Job and saw how fine he was and how good he was and how responsible he was. So God decided to lift him up, to bless him beyond what Job ever thought possible in just having possessions. God added to Job's possessions a shekinah, a glory, a presence as though it were given from heaven itself. Did you know trial does that and without the trial there is no glory?"

Barclay: Re vs 12 -- "James is not thinking of what we call bad language, and of swearing in the modern sense of the term; he is thinking of what we call taking oaths, and confirming a statement or a promise or an undertaking by an oath. In the ancient world, there were two evil practices.

(1) There was a distinction--especially in the Jewish world--between oaths which were binding and oaths which were not binding. The distinction was this: any oath in which the name of God was directly used was considered to be definitely binding ...

(2) There was in this age an extraordinary amount of oath-taking. This in itself was quite wrong. For one thing, the value of an oath depends to a large extent on the fact that it is very seldom necessary to take one. Its impressiveness lies in its exceptional character ... And for another thing, the practice of taking frequent oaths was nothing other than a proof of the prevalence of lying and cheating and falsehood and swindling. In an honest society no oath is needed; it is only when men cannot be trusted to tell the truth that they have to be put upon oath."

Tasker: "The way to avoid swearing of this kind is by being strictly truthful in ordinary speech, avoiding exaggeration, so often indulged in to create an impression, eschewing the half-truth which conceals the lie, and generally aiming at simplicity and straightforwardness. Sometimes it is the fear that their words will not be taken at their face value which leads men to try and reinforce them by swearing; and that in itself is a reflection upon the insincerity and duplicity which so often characterize conversation. Men should say what they mean, and mean what they say."

Wiersbe: "Luxury has a way of ruining character. It is a form of self-indulgence. If you match character with wealth, you can produce much good; but if you match self-indulgence with wealth, the result is sin. The rich man Jesus described in Luke 16:19-31 would have felt right at home with the rich men James wrote to!"

Wiersbe: "Note the witnesses that God will call on that day of judgment.
- First, the rich men's *wealth* will witness against them (5:3).

- The *wages* they held back will also witness against them in court (5:4a).
- The *workers* will also testify against them (5:4)."

Luck: "Contrary to the conception of some, these verses evidently do not forbid the use of oaths on the part of Christians in connection with testimony at a court of law, for it must be remembered that our Lord did not refuse an oath in such an instance (Matt. 26:63, 64). But the teaching is that we should ever be temperate and absolutely truthful in our speech, our yes always meaning *yes*, and our no, *no*, so that oaths will not be necessary; men will know that our simple statements are completely trustworthy and dependable."

Vaughan: "In the present passage James teaches that Christians are to be longsuffering in reference to the hardships and injustices which they experience. They must not seek retaliation nor harbor resentment against their oppressors. James does not mean that there is never any occasion for protest against wrong, nor does he mean that the Christian is to put forth no effort to remove evil. What he does suggest is that suffering inflicted on Christians by a hostile world is to be expected. When it comes it should be borne valiantly and without complaint."

TEXT: JAMES 5:13-20

TITLE: FAITH WITHOUT FERVENT EFFECTUAL PRAYER IS DEAD

BIG IDEA:
THE EFFECTIVE PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN CAN ACCOMPLISH MUCH

I. (:13-16) PRAYER OF FAITH OFFERED FOR THE SICK

A. :13) Pray Whenever You Experience Suffering
"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray."

Contrast: *"Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises."*

B. (:14) Ask For Prayer When You Experience Severe Sickness

1. The Occasion -- *"Is anyone among you sick?"*
2. The Initiative -- *"Let him call for the elders of the church"*
3. The Remedy
 - a. *"let them pray over him"*
 - b. *"anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord"*

Mitton: "The use of oil, both by the disciples of Jesus (Mark 6:13) and as recommended by James, was supplementary aid for awakening faith. The healing work is done by God's Spirit, offered freely to man's need and appropriated by faith, but material aids may sometimes prepare the way."

C. (:15) Prayer Offered in Faith Works Like a Charm

"and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him."

Wiersbe: "But what is 'the prayer of faith' that heals the sick? The answer is in 1 John 5:14-15 -- 'And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.' The 'prayer of faith' is a prayer offered when you know the will of God. The elders would seek the mind of God in the matter, and then pray according to his will."

D. (:16a) Confession of Sins to One Another Must Accompany Intercessory Prayer for One Another (where appropriate)

1. Confession of Sins to One Another
"Therefore, confess your sins to one another"
2. Mutual Intercessory Prayer
"and pray for one another"
3. Goal
"so that you may be healed."

E. (:16b) Theme: *"The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."*

II. (:17-18) EXAMPLE OF ELIJAH

- A. (:17) Elijah Was No Different Than Us
"Elijah was a man with a nature like ours"
- B. (:18) Elijah Prayed and Got Results
 1. Prayed for no rain
"and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months"
 2. Prayed for rain
"And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit"

(:19-20) CLOSING GREETINGS -- RESCUE THE PERISHING

- A. (:19) Encouragement that Those Who Stray Can Be Rescued
"My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back"
- B. (:20) Encouragement that the Benefits of Saving the Perishing are Enormous
"let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins"

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How much do we depend upon prayer as the channel for seeking God's deliverance and blessing? What have we experienced about praying in faith, about praying fervently, about praying effectually?

2) How does this passage shed light on the modern day phenomenon of "faith healers"? To what extent are the elders of the local church involved in the ministry of these individuals?

3) What type of confession of sins is appropriate? How do the Roman Catholics use this verse to justify confession to a priest? What is the actual emphasis of this passage? When is public confession potentially harmful and unnecessary?

4) Am I perceptive of when a brother is starting to backslide and wander from the truth? Am I proactive to approach him in the right spirit before it is too late? What is my attitude towards such an individual? Am I judgmental? Do I gossip about his problems?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Criswell: Re Divine Healing --

"... there are two things in our text that are very plain.

- (1) The prayer of faith will heal the sick and the Lord will raise him up.
- (2) There are means that are used in that healing...

Does God always heal? No. God has healed, God does heal, God can heal, God will heal, but God does not always heal...

... no apostle had the power to heal indiscriminately.

What is to be the attitude of a child of God toward illness? ...

There are times when I am sick--that is just a fact. And the best thing for me to do is to recognize it. So what do I do with my illnesses and with my hurts? Having recognized them, I talk to God and take it to Him.

- My suffering may be my own fault. I may eat the wrong things and get sick ...
- Also, suffering can be a chastening from the Lord ... There are illnesses that are due to our sins and are judgments from almighty God.
- Again, it may be that we are afflicted that we might manifest the glory of the Lord."

Barclay: "Here in this passage there is set down the great differentiating characteristic of Christian truth. Christian truth is something from which a man can wander. Christian truth is not only intellectual, philosophical, speculative, abstract; Christian truth is always moral truth. Christian truth, is, therefore, not something about which a man may merely be mistaken in opinion; it is something from which he can wander in action."

Wiersbe: He believes that this prayer for the sick involves a very special circumstance - that of church discipline:

"The person is sick because of sin (15b-16). The Greek text says, *'if he has been*

constantly sinning.' This parallels 1 Corinthians 11:30, 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep' (have died). James has described a church member who is sick because he is being disciplined by God. This explains why the elders of the assembly are called: the man cannot go to church to confess his sins, so he asks the spiritual leaders to come to him. The leaders would be in charge of the discipline of the congregation."

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