







A COMMENTARY

ON THE

General Epistle Of James

by

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**To**

**Delno, my wife, who has been  
such a great help, not only on  
this, but on so many other  
undertakings.**



# Preface

The book of James has been a much neglected book among the churches of Christ. As far as is known to the author of this work, this is the first full length commentary to be written on this book in the ranks of the Restoration Movement. Neither the *New Testament Commentary* undertaken by Moses E. Lard, J. W. McGarvey, and their associates in the 1870's nor McGarvey and Pendleton's *Standard Bible Commentary* was ever completed, and they did not include James. Nor has the J. W. Shepherd-David Lipscomb series, which has wide distribution, contained up to now a commentary on the epistle. Only the *People's New Testament with Notes* by B. W. Johnson and the commentary by Cato on the General Epistles, which was published in the last century and has been sometimes republished in this century, have offered any help on this interesting but difficult book. It would certainly seem that the time is ripe for some commentary to be produced on the letter.

The present effort is an outgrowth of a treatment of James included in the adult Bible study series *The Living Word*. After preparing that study, the writer concluded that it would be a natural thing to expand the material into a book-length commentary. The work has been almost completely rewritten, though most of the conclusions reached in the commentary are the same as in the earlier work. Much effort, however, has been expended between the two attempts to interpret the work. It might be well to add that the writer has taught a course in college on the General Epistles for several years.

The hope with which the work is sent forth is that it may help some students to understand better the background and thought of the letter of James. The epistle insists that the Word of truth can save us as children of God if the Word is received with meekness and provided it is accepted not only as being heard but as being done (James 1:21ff). If this work then helps to make us all doers of the word as well as hearers, the time will have been well spent. The book of James, if received with meekness and attention, will help us to be better morally, to let our faith be active in fruit bearing, and to strengthen our hearts in all times of difficulty and trial. "Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you."

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# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	7
A General Epistle .....	7
An Enduring Appeal .....	7
Authorship .....	8
Life of James .....	8
Objections to James' Being Considered the Author .....	13
The Jewish Nation in the Time of James .....	22
Relation to Other Books .....	25
The Date of the Epistle .....	26
The Form and Structure of James .....	27
An Outline of the Epistle of James .....	29
Bibliography on James .....	31

## COMMENTARY ON THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES AND DETACHED NOTES

### SECTION I (1:1-18)

The Gifts of God Manifested in Trials (1:1-18) .....	35
Salutation and Greeting (1:1) .....	35
The Joy of Trials (1:2-4) .....	39
Note on Moral Perfection .....	45
Wisdom in Trials (1:5-8) .....	45
The Trials of Poverty and Riches (1:9-11) .....	51
Patient Endurance in Trials Rewarded (1:12) .....	56
Temptations Negatively Considered: They Do Not Come from God (1:13-16) .....	59
The True Nature of God's Giving (1:17-18) .....	65

### SECTION II (1:19-27)

Attitude toward the Word Which Begets (1:19-27) .....	69
Meekness in Hearing the Word (1:19-21) .....	69
Being Doers of the Word as Well as Hearers (1:22-25) .....	74
The Application: Pure and Vain Religion (1:26-27) .....	80

### SECTION III (2:1-13)

The Sin of Respect of Persons (2:1-13) .....	86
--	----

### SECTION IV (2:14-26)

The Relation of Faith and Works (2:14-26) .....	102
---	-----

Note on "Faith Only" .....	117
----------------------------	-----

### SECTION V (3:1-18)

Admonition to Teachers (3:1-18) .....	121
Bridling the Tongue (3:1-12) .....	121
Note on Gehenna .....	132
The Truly Wise Teacher (3:13-18) .....	139

### SECTION VI (4:1-12)

Worldliness in the Church (4:1-12) .....	150
The Source of Wars and Strife (4:1-10) .....	150
Note on the Indwelling of the Spirit .....	161
Judging Our Brethren (4:11-12) .....	170

### SECTION VII (4:13-5:6)

Direct Address to the Unbelieving Rich (4:13-5:6) .....	174
The Presumptuous Use of Time (4:13-17) .....	174
The Sin of Shameful Wealth (5:1-6) .....	180
Note on the Bible and Social Justice .....	189

### SECTION VIII (5:7-12)

Attitude Toward Mistreatment (5:7-12) .....	192
Admonition to Patience (5:7-11) .....	192
Note on James 5:7-9, The Problem of the Delay of the Second Coming .....	197
Swearing Forbidden (5:12) .....	198
Note on Swearing .....	201

### SECTION IX (5:13-20)

The Christian in Illness and Sin (5:13-20) .....	205
Prayer and Singing (5:13) .....	205
Illness and the Efficacy of Prayer (5:14-18) .....	208
Note on the Elders .....	210
Note on Extreme Unction .....	216
Converting Erring Brethren (5:19-20) .....	226

APPENDIX .....	229
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# INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES

## A GENERAL EPISTLE

The epistle of James stands in the ancient arrangements of the New Testament under the "General (*catholikai*) Epistles." This designation is used as a kind of catchall for the letters not considered as coming from Paul. The designation signifies that the letters were written to the church at large or a larger segment or section of the church. The term is fairly accurate for all except III John (possibly II John also), which is perhaps included because of the natural grouping of the three epistles bearing the name of John.

James is a good illustration of the way in which the term is employed. It is addressed to the "twelve tribes which are in the Dispersion." Whatever this difficult term means specifically, it indicates that the book was written to a large segment of the church, to scattered groups of Christians throughout the Mediterranean world, rather than to an individual Christian or to an individual church as were most of Paul's.

The entire group of the Catholic Epistles (except I John and I Peter) were questioned at different times in the history of the early church. Eusebius and Origen both put them in the class of *antelegomena* or disputed books. The group won, however, a solid place in the canon. Except for rational critics who tend to date all possible books late, the decision of the early church in including these books in the canon has been defended in modern times with but few exceptions.

In some of the earlier manuscripts of the N.T. the General Epistles were placed immediately after the book of Acts. Jerome was the first to place them in the present position immediately after the book of Hebrews. Since his time this has been their customary place.

## AN ENDURING APPEAL

Though the Epistle of James is often considered one of the lesser books of the N.T., the writer has discovered that it is the favorite letter of many Bible students. Barclay confesses that he approached the study of the epistle as a duty in the process of writing

his series and ended by finding it a joy. Several years of study and teaching James as one of the books in a course on the General Epistles have led the writer to appreciate the letter as a fine book. Its study has indeed been a joy to him. The closer study involved in preparing the analysis of the book for the *Living Word Series* and in writing this commentary has convinced him that James is one of the finest and richest works of the New Testament.

### *AUTHORSHIP*

The author of the epistle calls himself "James, servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." There are four persons of this name mentioned in the New Testament. (1) James the son of Zebedee and brother of John, one of the three "innercircle" of the Apostles of Jesus; (2) James the apostle, son of Alphaeus, the same as James the less, the son of Clopas (Mark 15:40); (3) James the father (or brother) of Judas (not Iscariot) (Luke 6:16); and (4) James the brother of the Lord (Matthew 13:55; Galatians 1:19) and brother of Judas (Jude 1:1).

Of these four, two are hardly to be considered, for they are known only by their names and do not figure greatly in the early history of the church. The James who wrote this epistle was so well known that he expected to be recognized by his title. James the brother of John, son of Zebedee, died a martyr's death under Herod Agrippa I before the year 44 A.D. (the year of Herod's death). The story is told in Acts 12:2. There have been a few scholars who thought that this James was the author of this epistle. But most students consider his early death to render this supposition unlikely. Thus it is most likely, and it has been so unanimously the decision of scholars of all ages that this is the correct conclusion that, as the author of the article on James in the *Abingdon Bible Commentary* says, "There can be little hesitation in claiming him as its author." Objections to this view will be considered below.

### *THE LIFE OF JAMES*

The name of James stands first among the names of the four brothers and at least two sisters of Jesus in the family of Joseph

and Mary (Matthew 13:54-56; Mark 6:3). Presumably he was the eldest, besides Jesus, followed by Joseph, Simon, and Judas.

The exact relationship of these children to Jesus has been the subject of much discussion. Theories held throughout the history of the church may be summarized as follows.

1. That he was a son of Mary and Joseph. This view was that of Helvidius (identity unknown), whose work claiming that Joseph was the father of James and his brethren by Mary was contested by Jerome. It is argued that this thesis may be supposed from the relationship of Mary and Joseph and the implication of Matthew 1:24-25 that Joseph knew her not until the birth of Jesus. Further it is argued that this is the natural conclusion from the description of these children as the brothers and sisters of Jesus. Tertullian later argued from these facts that the sanctity of marriage is hallowed by the mother of Jesus' living in wedlock and bearing children after the birth of Jesus, thus showing that some leaders of the church held this view.

2. That he was a half-brother of Jesus, a son of Joseph by a former marriage (the Epiphonian view, after Epiphanius, who did not invent the theory but who strongly argued the thesis in the latter half of the fourth century). The idea goes back to the apocryphal book of James (*Protevangelium*), which tells of the miraculous birth and early life of Mary (daughter of a couple known as Joachim and Anna). She was presented to the temple and brought up there. At the age of twelve she was betrothed (according to the story) to an aged widower Joseph, who was chosen by a sign from heaven.

There is no evidence for the theory except legend. Its real motivation was to supply a basis for the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. The argument is based on such inconclusive assumptions as that Jesus' own brethren would not have questioned his sanity; that he would not have left his mother with John if he had had brothers to take care of her; and that Joseph must have been much older than Mary because he seems to have vanished completely from the gospel story.

3. That he was a cousin of Jesus (the Hieronymian view, so called from Jerome, whose Greek name was Hieronymos.) This belief, put forward in A.D. 383 and not previously documented,

has become the stated opinion of the Roman Catholic church. Jerome's argument (See Barclay, pp. 17ff where it is discussed in detail) proceeds from the erroneous assumption that the word "apostle" used to describe James in Galatians 1:19 can only refer to one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. He reasons that he is thus to be identified with James the Less, the son of Alphaeus (since James the son of Zebedee is excluded). This James is also to be identified with one of the sons of Mary (James and Joses) at the cross (Mark 15:40 and compare Mark 6:3). Jerome then insists that the description "his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas" in the list of John of the women at the cross (John 19:25 and compare Mark 15:40 and Matthew 27:56) refers to the same person (John names only three, not four women). He thus concludes that the Mary of Mark 6:3 is not Jesus' mother, but her sister, the wife of Cleopas, thus making Jesus and James cousins. He then assumes that this James is the same as James the Less and that his father was Alphaeus.

Against this contention it may not only be pointed out that Jerome began with an erroneous view of the word "apostle," which may be and is used in the N.T. in different ways from one of the twelve (as in Acts 14:14), but that James is repeatedly called Jesus' brother (*adelphos*). Too, the view rests upon the questionable interpretation of the passages listed above, especially that of John's list of women at the cross.

Though it is not necessary to the thesis of authorship maintained by most conservatives of the genuineness of the book of James, it may safely be concluded that James is an actual brother to Jesus in the flesh through the common mother, Mary.

Joseph the father of James is described as a "righteous" or "just" man, which probably means that James was reared in strict observance of the Law of Moses. It is interesting to note that all the children were named after illustrious Jewish ancestors. James was reared at Nazareth in Galilee, whence Joseph had returned after the trip to Egypt. Galilee during these years (B.C. 4-A.D. 39) was ruled over by Herod Antipas. During James' life Galilee was a prosperous and peaceful province. The region had been deeply penetrated by Gentile influences so that it had received the name Galilee of the Gentiles (Matthew 4:15). In later times Josephus estimated the population of Palestine at 3 million with many towns

over 15,000 population, one of which would be Nazareth (*Life*, Section 45). Here in such a surrounding James and his brothers grew up.<sup>1</sup> The . . . synagogue, the visits to Jerusalem for the feasts (Luke 2:41ff), the carpenter's shop are typical parts of the environment which molded his life and faith.

During the public ministry of Jesus James as a part of the family viewed his Messianic claims with the suspicion that he was beside himself (Mark 3:21) and sought to restrain him (Matthew 12:47; Luke 8:19). We are told that his brothers "did not believe on him" (John 7:5). At the cross, Jesus committed his mother to the beloved John rather than to the unbelieving brothers (John 19:26).

After the resurrection Christ appeared to James (I Corinthians 15:7) and this seems to have changed all, for immediately it is noted that he was among the number who waited during the interval before Pentecost (Acts 1:13-14).

For the first few years of the church's history little is heard of James. But he gradually emerges as a figure of prominence in the Jerusalem church. Three years after Paul's conversion he returned to Jerusalem and visited James along with Peter (Galatians 1:18-19). In the account of the visit 14 years later (Galatians 2:1ff) James is referred to as one of the "pillars" of the church (Galatians 2:9). After the breakup of the apostolic band his name stands out, though the later tradition which pictures him as "the bishop of the church in Jerusalem" is a reading back into the New Testament of later developments (see comments on "elders" in note on James 5:14).

James took part in the recognition of the Gentile mission of Paul (Galatians 2:9). The party which Peter and Barnabas joined, but which Paul rebuked respecting their separation or fellowship with uncircumcision, claimed James' leadership—whether rightly we do not know (Galatians 2:12). At the meeting to decide the question of Gentile circumcision James sides with Paul and Peter and suggests the writing of a circular letter making known the

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<sup>1</sup>See Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, pp. 272, 285ff; Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, Chapter 20; Ramsay, *The Education of Christ*, *Passim*; Headlam, *Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, pp. 98ff.



decision (Acts 15:13ff). He tempers the decision that the law is not enforced upon the Gentiles by suggesting that they defer to some of the deeply engrained ritual and morals of the Jews. Whether this is any more characteristic of James' concept of the gospel and its relationship to the Jews and the law than of Peter or Paul is not clear.

When Paul made his visit to Jerusalem bearing the gifts "remembering the poor" (Galatians 2:10; Acts 21:18ff), James and the elders made the proposal to Paul that to counteract the influence of the zealous Jews Paul should become surety for the obligations of a group of poor worshippers who had taken a vow (Acts 21:20ff).

James' attitude in these glimpses of him has been interpreted as typical of Palestinian or Judaistic Christianity. First, his Hebrew or Jewish background is taken as basic. But he is also seen in the dual role of championing the freedom of the Gentiles from the law (as Paul contended) while at the same time being zealous for the observance of traditional Judaism for Jewish Christians. This is probably to be interpreted as a measure of statesmanship aimed at winning his nation to the claims of the gospel (See Randall, pp. 20ff). Some have questioned whether the view implied in the arrangements for Paul's actions in Acts 21:20ff existed because the full light of revelation had not yet been thrown on the relation of the law and the gospel as it was later in the books of Hebrews and Ephesians (the view of J. W. McGarvey in his commentary on Acts) or whether it is to be explained merely as the prerogative of Jewish conscience (as in Romans 14; I Corinthians 8) which is permissible on social grounds (compare Paul's "to the Jew I became a Jew that I might win the Jews," I Corinthians 9:20; Acts 16:3), a prerogative which exists only as a liberty and must not be insisted on for others or thought of as a part of righteousness under the gospel (Cf. Colossians 2:16; Galatians 4:9-10; 5:4; 2:4-5). This question has important bearing upon the interpretation of the epistle of James, for it is often represented as exhibiting a type of Christianity not yet freed of its Jewish shackles, so that it is mainly interested in an orientation of the church to Judaism.

James' later life is revealed to us only from Josephus and Hegesippus (*Eccl. History*, 2:23). Here he is seen as a man of great piety, commanding by reputation the respect of Jew and Christian

alike and exercising great influence not only in Jerusalem among his nation and the church but also among Christians of the Dispersion who came to Jerusalem for the Jewish feasts. He is pictured as rigorous in his religious exercises, living the life of a Nazarite. His life ended in martyrdom at the hands of the enraged Jews, who threw him from the temple and stoned him to death in the year 62. He thus died in the same manner as Stephen and James the Apostle before him. See Appendix.

The role thus described by the Scriptures and tradition fits perfectly the letter of James as we have it. Often it is difficult to tell if Jews or Christians are addressed, and it may well be that he wrote to Christians of his nation but still with an eye to his countrymen to whom he hoped to appeal by virtue of his reputation and esteem for holiness. But in the absence of an apologetic note for the claims of Christ and the gospel this must not be pressed too far.

Thus there is nothing psychologically improbable about the relationship of James to the life situation which the letter presupposes.

### *OBJECTIONS TO JAMES' BEING CONSIDERED THE AUTHOR.*

In modern times many critics have doubted that James the Lord's brother could be the author of the epistle of James. This tendency started in the days of the Baur school, which attempted to date all the books of the New Testament late except the big four of Paul. Despite the fact that the climate of opinion among critics is vastly different today, the tendency to consider many of the later epistles of the canon as pseudonymous persists.

The arguments against the genuineness of James are discussed in detail by Easton in the *Interpreter's Bible*. His arguments may be taken as typical of the critics' view. They may be summarized under four points: (1) The Greek of the epistle is too good to have been written by an Aramaic-speaking Jew such as James; (2) The style of the epistle shows a familiarity with certain stylistic features of Greek literature which would be quite unlikely for James; (3) There is an absence of mention of Jesus and his teaching such as would be expected if written by a brother of the Lord; (4) James had a difficult time of gaining acceptance into

the canon. Easton argues that these objections are overwhelmingly against James' writing the epistle, and he adopts the rather fantastic theory of Meyer that the book is a Jewish production written in imitation of Jacob's address to the twelve tribes in Genesis 49. He thinks that some Christian writer took over the book and added some Christian sections and put the book out as a Christian document. We will examine these ideas in detail.

1. *The Greek Style.* It is argued that the epistle furnishes us with one of the two or three best examples of Greek idiom in the N.T. (along with Hebrews and parts of Luke's writings). This is an acknowledged fact, though it needs some explaining. Considering that James the Lord's brother was a native of Galilee where the native tongue would be Aramaic, it is thought impossible or at least most improbable that James could have written with the mastery of Greek that is exhibited in this epistle. Easton says,

Could we by the wildest stretch of imagination, think of James in mature life as learning to write the Greek of this epistle—an epistle cast in the Hellenistic and non-Semitic form of prose paraenesis, using the equally Hellenistic and non-Semitic diatribe, characterized by familiarity with Stoic-Cynic ethical terminology, and the Greek hexameters in 1:17 and 4:5? Or that, as in 4:6, he would cite the Old Testament (Prov. 3:34) from the Greek version (LXX), which is quite unlike the Hebrew?

He concludes: "Our epistle was not written by James the Lord's brother nor by any other James known to us by name in the New Testament" (p. 6). This argument has some weight, but one wonders if it is not actually an example of critical dogmatism. If the life of James were known in detail and if it were known that James did, in fact, never learn to write Greek in this fashion and if there is no possibility of the book's being written by James and presented in its present shape in such a case, then there might be some reason for such a dogmatic and positive statement.

But the facts are against these conditions. Nothing is known of James' education, his language ability, or opportunity. Besides this epistle, no known writings from his pen exist by which one might point in contrast to his acknowledged style. It is well known, on the other hand, that there was a deep penetration of Greek in-

fluence into Palestine affecting Galilee especially. Bethsaida, for example, not far from Nazareth, was known for Greek as its native tongue. (Cf. Cullmann, *Peter, Disciple, Apostle, Martyr*, p. 22). So James probably spoke Greek from childhood. How polished he might have become over a long period of contact and communication with Greek-speaking Jews is a question no one can answer. Certainly, if, conscious of his leadership, he had studied to equip himself to communicate better, it is not unreasonable that he could have done so. It is noted in the account of his death by Hegesippus that visitors from afar (Jews and Gentiles) sought out his counsel. Thus the situation might naturally imply that James grew in the use of the language. Paul, reared a Hebrew of Hebrew parents (Philippians 3:5), learned to write good Greek. Another possibility is that James wrote in Aramaic and procured someone in the church who could write good Greek to translate the epistle for his audience. Such a theory has, in fact, been urged by Wordsworth and later revived by Burkitt (*Christian Beginnings*, pp. 69f).

There is another factor, however. In addition to writing excellent Greek, James is still influenced by the Hebrew-Septuagint language background which was a part of his training. Several constructions as the instrumental use of the preposition *en*, (3:9), the use of the qualitative (or descriptive) genitive (possessive) (Cf. "hearer of forgetfulness," "forgetful hearer," 1:25 and see comment on 2:4), the use of the cognate dative ("pray with prayer," 5:17); the use of the collective plural (in the term "respect of persons" 2:1); the expressions like "synagogue" and "respect of persons" which have their meanings largely from the LXX background—all these show that James did not write "pure Greek." They fit perfectly the assumptions either that the book was written by a Palestinian Jew who first spoke both the Aramaic and Greek and went on from this to become proficient in the Greek tongue, or that an original document was translated into Greek by one with such a background.

But other points mentioned by Easton need to be noticed. If it is asked whether a Palestinian Jewish leader would quote from the LXX instead of the Hebrew, one replies that the motive and audience would determine. It should be remembered that James wrote for a Hellenistic audience, the Jews scattered in the Dispersion. Such Jews did use the Septuagint. How natural, then, that James,

even if his natural bent was to use the Hebrew (a conclusion of which we are completely ignorant), should use the Greek version in writing to them.

2. *Use of Literary Devices.* As for the charge that James copied the Greek Stoic diatribe style and made use of other Greek literary devices not ordinarily at the command of a Palestinian Jew, such claims are overdrawn. As is pointed out in the comment on James 4:13-5:1f, the direct address or apostrophe is more characteristic of the Old Testament prophet "burden" apostrophe than it is of the Greek diatribe. Metzger has shown that such style is common among the Jewish writings of the Talmud (*Interpreter's Bible*, "The Language of the New Testament," Vol. 7, p. 51). The coincidence of a sentence or two with a rhyme scheme may be a conscious quotation learned from an acquaintance, but more likely (as in other N.T. instances) it is pure coincidence (See Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, pp. 421ff): "as is common with speakers and writers of any language." The same points are made with respect to Paul (*Ibid*, pp. 421, 1196).

3. *Lack of Mention of Jesus.* This argument is stated by McNeile as follows:

It is difficult to think that a brother of the Lord, who had become a believer in Him, writing certainly before A.D. 69—some think at a much earlier date—could have written without speaking of His death or resurrection (unless a veiled reference to His death is to be seen in v. 6), and have contented himself with naming Him only twice (i. I; ii. I)—or only once, if, as is probable, the name in the latter passage is an interpolation. Although he refers to words of our Lord (see below), he shows little sign, such as we see in I Peter, of His "personal spell."

Actually this same charge is made against the genuineness of I Peter (see A. M. Hunter in the *Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. XII, "Introduction" to the First Epistle of Peter, p. 77ff, who answers the charge effectively). But the question raised does not take into consideration the nature of the epistle. James is not writing a theological or Christological treatise. Other critics have seen in the reticence to parade his relation to Jesus as sign of James' modesty and a note of genuineness. An impostor, anxious to claim the

authority of James for his work, would hardly have touched so lightly on the family tie.

But this charge ignores one of the most significant things about the epistle, that of the detailed reflection of the actual words of Jesus especially from the speeches of Jesus like the Sermon on the Mount. If James does not reveal the "person spell" of Jesus, he does show a baptism into the thought and words of Jesus of his own ethical vocabulary. Notice how Easton minimizes this data:

There is no book in the New Testament that tells us less about Christ. Nowhere in it is any saying of Jesus cited as such, and even indirect citations are very few (5:12 is really the only instance where there seems to be a definite quotation, with probable but less clear examples in 1:6-8; 2:8).

Ropes (pp. 38ff) is fairer in his treatment, listing 1:8 = Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9; 2:5 = Matthew 5:3; Luke 6:20; 3:18 = Matthew 5:9; 4:4 = Mark 8:38 (cf. Matthew 12:39; 16:4); 5:1-6 = Luke 6:24; 5:12 = Matthew 5:34-37. To this Ropes adds that it is much more significant that the epistle shows an inclination to follow some of the broad interests of the Gospels. He lists especially the emphasis on hearing as well as doing (Matthew 7:21-29, Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49; Matthew 25:31-46); the value set on poverty, the warnings to the rich, with the injunctions to prayer and devotion to God (1:9; 5:1ff; cf. Matthew 6:19-34); the restraint in judging and unkind speech (5:9 with Matthew 7:1ff). To these details many more may be added such as mention of the length of the famine in Elijah's time (5:17 with Luke 4:25); the parable of waiting for the harvest (5:7ff with Mark 4:26-29); "the judge stands at the door" (5:9 with Matthew 24:33), etc.

It is not that such ideas may not be found scattered throughout other literature; but it is difficult to explain, as Ropes says, "the special and strong interest in them found alike in the compilers of the Gospels (or of their source) and in James." Of course there are missing terms and ideas (like Son of Man and kingdom of God), but one does not expect the whole vocabulary and gauntlet of thought of the Gospels in five short chapters. Such an astute critic as Mayor lists 59 resemblances between James and the Synoptic Gospels and stars 26 of these as being of "the most importance." To these he adds 39 from the Johannine literature (written later

but sharing the common debt to the remembrance of the teaching of Jesus), of which 16 are starred as of more importance. He concludes, "Close as the connexion of sentiment and even of language in many passages, it never amounts to actual quotation, but is like the reminiscence of thoughts often uttered by our Lord, and sinking into the heart of a hearer who reproduces them in his own manner." (*Commentary*, lxxxv-xci). Surely commentators like Easton are guilty of suppressing the evidence in the interest of their theories.

4. *The Late Acceptance into the Canon.* This objection is stated by McNeile as follows, "The lack of early evidence and the slowness with which the epistle was received as canonical are unfavorable to the idea that it was written by the head of the mother-Church of Christendom." While there is some truth to the claim that James was somewhat late in emerging as fully canonical in the process of the church's identification and collection of its books, the facts need to be spread out and looked at before they influence us to say that the church made a mistake in that process. James shared with Jude, Revelation, II Peter, and III John the fate of being not too well known and thus falling under suspended judgment until they could prove their claims. The early church defined its canon or list of Scriptural books in the process of debate with the Gnostics, an early group of heretics. Marcion's acceptance of only a very limited cutting of the N.T. books led the church to examine its own thinking. Irenaeus pointed out that a book to be considered Scripture ought to meet four tests: (1) it should be apostolic; if not being written by an apostle, then it should be traceable back to a known companion or contemporary of the apostles so that its origin could be seen to lie in the first age of the church; (2) it must have been used universally, not having been known only by one segment of the church; (3) it must show itself worthy to be read in the churches; (4) it must prove that its contents were able to edify the churches.

James easily met all these tests except that of universality. Here it was known in the Greek Church, but less well in the Syrian and especially the Latin. Origen at the end of the second century was the first to expressly quote it as being from James (*On John*, xix). Eusebius put it among the disputed books (as has been pointed out, *E. H.*, III. 25) and he says of it, "Such is the story of James, who

is said to be the first of the Epistles called Catholic. It is to be observed that its authenticity is denied, since few of the ancients quote it, as is also the case of the Epistle called Jude's, which is itself one of the seven called Catholic; nevertheless we know that these letters have been used publicly with the rest in most churches." (*E. H.*, II. 23). Some Latin writers (e. g., Rufinus) often quoted it but as from "the apostle James" (*Hom. Viii, On Exodus*). In this he may well have been influenced by Paul's language in Galatians 1:19, in referring to "other of the apostles save James the Lord's brother." Though it is not quoted in the extant writings of Clement of Alexander, he is expressly said to have given concise explanations "of all the Canonical Scriptures" and to have included James" (*E. H.*, 6. xiv). Its first appearance in a Latin MS. is said (Barclay) to be in Codex Corbeiensis (Cir. 350). But its appearance in Jerome's Vulgate assured it a place in the Latin tradition for all time. The epistle was included in the Syriac version of about 412 A.D. (Peshitto) though II Peter, II and III John, and Revelation are omitted; but whether it goes back to the older tradition is not clear. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catech.*, 4. 5. 33) included it among the canonical books.

It is fair to admit that this evidence is not overwhelming in favor of James, but this fact must not be weighed wrongly. Clearly in the absence of an official apostolic list of Scriptural books, some books would be less well known and have more trouble getting recognition. If James and some of the other books were to be discarded as non-genuine, there would then still exist other books less well known than the rest, and the process could be continued backward until the last. When this lack of specific attributing of the epistle to James is allowed to have so much weight, one cannot help feeling that James is suffering from the over skeptical attitude of its critics and from the general tendency of late-dating of the N.T. epistles. That this evidence is not considered decisive in regard to some other books is illustrated by the fact that some books which have strong positive external evidence are still rejected by these authorities.

*Evidence in the Apostolic Fathers.* Of far more significance to this writer is the fact that the language and thought of James are so interwoven into the fabric of the earliest Christian writers (just as James does with the thought of Jesus, as shown above in regard



to the Gospels) that it seems clearly to have been a part of the reading and hearing of the church from the beginning. It is not so much that it is quoted directly as being from James but that again the evidence consists of reminiscences of James' words which have sunk into the hearts of the writers, who reproduce them in their own words.

Easton says, "Apparent citations found in second-century writers are not clear enough to be convincing" (*Ibid*, p. 15). But the detailed evidence is quite impressive. Let us take a few examples. The epistle of I Clement (written around 96 A.D.) says, "Abraham the friend was found faithful in his obedience" (10:1) James 2:23; "Rahab the harlot was saved because of faith and hospitality (I Clement 12:1) James 2:25. Huther considers it certain that 38, "let the wise show forth his wisdom not in words but in good works" reflects James 3:13. The *Shepherd of Hermas* (*Visions* III. 6) speaks of "those rejoicing in wealth" and then (like James 5:4) warns that "their groans go up to the ears of the Lord." Again in *Sim.*1:8 he echoes the specific "visit the widows and fatherless" of James 1:27. He warns with James 1:8 that he who prays should "ask in faith not doubting, not doubleminded," (*Mandate* 9:3-9). James 4:7 is reflected in "Resist the devil and having been conquered he will flee from you in shame" (*Mandate* 12:5). James 4:12 is echoed in "fear him who is able to save and destroy" (*Mandate* 12:6, 3).

The Epistle of Polycarp (died 155 A.D.) clearly conflates the qualifications of I Timothy 3:1ff with the instructions of James to visit the sick and the widows and orphans. (Epistle to the Philipians. c. 6). Elders are to be compassionate converting the erring (James 5:19), visiting all the sick (1:27; 5:14), not neglecting the widows and orphans, abstaining from all wrath, respect of persons (same word as James 2:1).

Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, iv. 16:2) joins the words: "Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness" with "and he was called the friend of God," just as James joins the passages from Genesis 15:6 and Isaiah 41:8; II Chronicles 20:7. It would be quite a coincident that different writers should do this independently.

Huther gives the natural explanation for the epistle's lack of early acceptance. James the Lord's brother, though referred to by

Paul as one of the pillars of the church, was not an apostle. After the fall of Jerusalem and the break of the church with most of Judaism, the Jewish church would naturally cling to James, and this would have lightened the hold which his memory would have on the rest of the church. Moreover the letter was directed to and had become the property of the Jewish churches of the Dispersion. Since these tended to hold aloof from the other churches, this created an obstacle to the epistle's becoming generally known. It is possible that the seeming contradiction of James with Paul's doctrine of justification by faith may have contributed.

*Arguments for James' Writing.* There are other arguments which favor the view that James the Lord's brother was the author. They have been summarized by Barclay (pp. 24ff). (1) The fact that there is a Hebrew cast to the Greek of the epistle; (2) that it fits well into the background of the Jewish situation as known from Acts and Josephus (to be developed more fully later); (3) that, if James had written a letter, it would probably be a general letter, just such as we have in this one. (This is in consideration of his position as leader of the Jerusalem church.); (4) that it represents Christianity largely in its early Jewish state, dealing mostly with moral and ethical problems, often with little which even an orthodox Jew might not himself stress, but reflecting in detail the early teaching of the Lord Jesus in such sections as the Sermon on the Mount, (5) the thesis helps to understand the likelihood that Peter and Paul knew the work (see below); (6) resemblances between the letter of James and the wording of the letter suggested by James in Acts 15 (two curious points: the greeting expressed by a Greek infinitive and the use of the words "name called upon you" from the O.T. James 2:7; Acts 15:17).

This writer would add a seventh point: that of the lack of a satisfactory alternative to the theory of James as the author. The prevailing alternative in extreme critical circles is that the book was written originally as a purely Jewish book and that it has been taken over by a Christian writer who has added a few sections and inserted the name of Jesus in the two places where it occurs (James 1:1; 2:1). A radical example of this thesis is seen in Easton's commentary where the older theory of Meyer is adopted that, since James in Greek is the same as the Greek name Jacob, the book as

originally written was modeled after Jacob's address to the twelve tribes or sons in Genesis 49. The book is then broken into twelve sections and these sections are combed for clues which call attention to the characteristics or traits of the individual tribes. The theory is that the Christian writer expunged the names of the tribes from the sections.

Even Barclay, who examines this theory (pp. 35ff), considers it "too ingenious." There is no evidence for it at all. It would be difficult to account for the interweaving of the material from the Christian Gospels into the document. And, finally, it is difficult to imagine the likelihood or a motive for a Christian writer's borrowing from a known Jewish document and recasting it as a document for the church. Easton's attempts to weed out the "Christian elements" and show the original form of its different sections are so subjective and arbitrary that they become ludicrous.

We conclude that James the Lord's brother is the writer of our epistle and that the church did not make a mistake in including it in the canon of the New Testament.

### *THE JEWISH NATION IN THE TIME OF JAMES*

The book of James is set against the background of Palestinian Judaism in its relationship to the Jews of the Dispersion of the years A.D. 30-70. The ethics of the book are the produce of the Jewish church in Jerusalem during these troubled years. The problems dealt with are probably the problems of the Dispersion, but the admonition comes from Jerusalem and the dominant figure of the Jerusalem which was still the centre of the growing church.

What was the situation in Palestine during these years? A survey of the main event of this period, especially the 20 years of James' active leadership will help greatly in understanding many of the things touched on in the epistle.

As Randall has pointed out (pp. 110-117), these were years of crisis for the Jewish nation. Two important developments reached their climax in this period: the final Jewish or national rejection of Jesus as the Messiah with the consequent separation of the church and synagogue and the end of the national life of the Jews with the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70).

The political and religious life of the country in these years is filled with corruption, strife, intrigue, and hatred. Seldom has a

nation seemingly so deliberately provoked its own destruction.

The year 30 A.D. marks the year of James' conversion. Almost immediately the situation began to deteriorate and progressively worsened until the end. At Pentecost Pilate the Roman Procurator governed Palestine, and the other divisions were ruled by Herod Antipas (Galilee and Perea), Philip (Bashan or the region west of Galilee), and Lysanias (Abilene and the country around Damascus). Philip died in 34; Antipas was banished in 37; and Pilate was banished in 36. Pilate was not replaced, leaving the Sanhedrin and the High Priest to govern. The Emperor Tiberias himself died in 37, being replaced by the infamous Caligula, whose pretensions to deity were especially offensive to the Jews. Caligula's appointment of Herod Agrippa I (41-44 A.D.) as King over all Palestine united the country, but the continuity thus resulting lasted only a short time (Acts 12). At his death his son, Agrippa II (Acts 26), was for several years not allowed to enter his province which turned out to be only a small part of what his father had ruled (only Bashan and Abilene). Most of Palestine was put back under the Roman Procurators or Governors. The years from 44-70 saw a series of these rulers, but they were generally greedy and inexperienced at leadership. The situation bred robbery, jealousy, and scandal. The Pharisees (and within their ranks the more reactionary Zealot group in Galilee) yearned for independence and courted disaster by hoping that the triumphs of the Maccabean revolt of the previous century might be repeated. But the Sadducees, who controlled the Sanhedrin and the temple with its rich income and who were in favor with the Romans, wanted to keep the status quo. The internal conflict was serious.

In the governorship of Cuspius Fadus (A.D. 44-46) occurred the uprising of Theudas in Judea, and during that of his successor Tiberias Alexander (A.D. 46-48) Judas and his sons played an even more serious role of the same sort. It was during these years that the infamous Ananias was elevated to the high priesthood which he held A.D. 47-59. In A.D. 48 another governor Cumanus replaced Tiberias Alexander, and under his blundering occurred the riot in the temple in which Josephus says 20,000 Jews lost their lives. He tried to intervene between the Jews and Samaritans, who were on the verge of civil war because of attacks upon Galilean pilgrims, but created a situation from which he was rescued

only by the Prefect of Syria. The High Priest Ananias and Cumanus were both summoned to Rome to give account, but Ananias won the contest of power through the influence of Agrippina, wife of Claudius, and he returned to his rule-and-ruin career in Jerusalem. The new Procurator was Felix (A.D. 52) (Acts 23:26; 24:3). Under him conditions of "legalized extortion" (compare James 2:6) became the order of the day. The Jewish nation, already impoverished by the famine (Acts 11:27ff), reached a critical economic state. It is against this background that the "remembering of the poor" leading to the collections for the "poor saints in Jerusalem" at the suggestion of James took place. As Randall has suggested, nothing illustrates and illuminates the relationship of the Jerusalem church and the churches in the outlying districts better than this story.

The greed of Ananias and the rich Jews of whom the Sanhedrin was typical is certainly mirrored by James 5:1ff. Resentment against this situation and against Rome, who allowed it, became intensified in the 50's by the growing Zealot bands of murderers and the armed Dagger Assassins (Acts 21:38). These Assassins who appeared in the early reign of Felix began their work under the instigation of the Governor himself with the murder of the ex-high priest Jonathan in the Temple (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.8.5ff).

The recall of Felix soon after the rule of Nero began brought the more able Festus to the troubled province. But his efforts to promote peace availed little. His predecessor, whom Tacitus in the well-known description had pictured as one "wielding in a career of cruelty and lust the powers of a despot with the instincts of a slave," had brought the crisis to the burning point. Festus joined with James the Just and the party of moderates in counselling the wisdom of peace. But Festus died in A.D. 62, and in the three months before Albinus reached Jerusalem to succeed him, Ananus and the Sanhedrin reenacted the tragic scene of death under the charge of blasphemy formerly used against Jesus and Stephen, but this time with James the Brother of Jesus as the victim.<sup>1</sup>

Hegesippus is almost certainly wrong in placing this event just before the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 68. But he is undoubtedly right in inferring that James' murder was in the

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<sup>1</sup>See descriptions in Appendix.

line of leading events which precipitated that fatal downfall of the nation. The high priest who had done the deed was deposed by the new Governor, but the Governor (Josephus *Wars of the Jews*, 20. 9. 1) organized his own pillage, set prisoners free for fees, and allowed the Sadducees free rein in Jerusalem; mobs ran riot (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20. 9; *Wars*, 2. 14. 1ff). He was exceeded in the audacity of his misrule only by his successor Florus (A.D. 64-66). Meanwhile the Romans were growing tired of the bickering and the attacks upon the Roman supply trains. Vespasian was on his way to set the troubled province at peace. The rest is tragedy.

It is against this period of official abuse by the rich Jews of Jerusalem and the suffering which it caused the common people of the nation, attended by the strife and bickering described above, that the book of James best fits. The course to pursue in the midst of such trials and sufferings for Christians (and those of the righteous number of non-Christians to whom James might still appeal) is the principal theme of the epistle. The traditional steadfastness of the Jewish faith, given added depth by the wisdom of Jesus, the Lord of Glory, is the formula of the just James. But this faith must be active, consistent, and fruitful. It must issue in self-control, righteous conduct, and above all the wisdom of peaceful living. James writes out of the background of his own local situation with an eye to the problems of the churches in the outlying districts, and especially as they are influenced by the conditions in the capital and the provinces of Palestine.

### RELATION TO OTHER BOOKS

James has a close affinity to many other books both of the New Testament and of Jewish apocryphal books. The question is discussed at length in Mayor's Commentary (Chapter III, pp. lxxxv-cxxvii) where the evidence is set forth by parallel quotations in the original. Mention has already been made of the parallel in the early church fathers as evidence of the early knowledge of the book by Christian writers. Too, it has been emphasized that James' thoughts are permeated with the very words as well as the thoughts of the Four Gospels. Mayor thinks that there are significant parallels in James and especially Galatians (which he would place in A.D. 57) and Romans (A.D. 58) which may indicate that Paul

knew and had possibly read the epistle of James. He also thinks the evidence for the same conclusion in respect to I Peter is strong (Cf., for example, the recurrence in both of the phrases " manifold trials" and the "proving of your faith" in James 1:2 and I Peter 1:6-7). Such conclusions are not within the possibility of proof, and, in fact, the data has often been interpreted just the other way around.

Another point is the fact that James' language in the original often has many parallels in the Jewish Apocrypha, especially the books of *Wisdom* and *Ecclesiasticus*. It should naturally be expected that such books from the heritage of the period between the Testaments would be familiar to a Jew such as James was. That James may have made use, either directly from the books or because they were "in the air" or speech of his environment, is not to be thought strange. The Holy Spirit certainly made use of the natural vocabulary and mode of expression of its different writers. That their styles differ is proof of this. It is often almost a commentary itself to check parallel uses of a Greek expression in other writers. This often helps us to understand what the writers mean. We have made some use of this material in the present work.

### *THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE*

Josephus' and Hegesippus' accounts give us conflicting dates for the death of James. Josephus places it at the time of the death of Festus, which would be in 62 A.D. Hegesippus places it just before the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Vespasian, which would be about 68 A.D. It does not appear which of these is correct, though most are inclined to accept the earlier date. 62-68 becomes the latest possible date for the writing of the epistle. Our present epistle agrees in every respect with the conclusion that it was written before the events of the destruction of Jerusalem. The destruction of the temple provided the clean break of the Jews and the synagogue from Christianity, and it is most unlikely that the epistle with its implied address to the Jews at large would fit a later date. Assuming that James is the author, we come to a date in the early 60's or earlier.

When one thinks what the earliest date likely is, he must remember that the picture given of James in our documents shows James as coming to a position of leadership after the death of James the

Son of Zebedee (Acts 12, A.D. 44). This date then became the earlier terminus from which the letter could have been written. Before this time would also hardly give time for the scattering and location of the Jewish Christians in the Dispersion or of the building up of congregations among them (Acts 11:19ff). A date much earlier would also not account for the persecutions mentioned in the Book. It has frequently been argued that the letter must have been written before the meeting in Jerusalem (Acts 15), which is variously dated around 47-49. This is on the grounds that the letter does not mention the controversy over Judaism (but see the comment on James 4:11). There is some weight to this, though it is an argument from silence. Plummer suggested that the letter was written during the period from 53-62 at a time when the controversy was not raging, though Mayor doubts that there was a time during this period when the question was not a burning issue (see p. cxlvi). The height of the strife and wars of the Jews characterized by the jealousy and warring faction which finally led to the destruction of Jerusalem may possibly favor a late date, not too long before the death of James.

There is really nothing decisive to settle the question. There is an 18-year period from 44-62 A.D. when the letter was most likely written. But the choice between the middle of the 40's and the decade of the 50's is difficult. This writer would incline to latter date, but it is merely a feeling.

### *THE FORM AND STRUCTURE OF JAMES*

"The main thread," as McNeile has remarked, "upon which [many sections of the epistle of James] are strung is the obvious but important truth that a man's faith, his attitude toward God, is unreal and worthless if it is not *effective*, if it does not *work* practically in life." (*Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*, p. 201)

The epistle consists largely of small sections, some of which themselves consist of a grouping together of "sayings" or "maxims." The relationship of the different sections (and of the parts within the sections) to each other is often only apparent and must be adduced by the reappearance of the key ideas or words which are introduced in one place and picked up and expanded later (Cf.



control of the tongue in 1:26 with the section 3:1ff). James' favorite device for tying his sections together is by repeating some idea or word brought in incidentally at the end of one paragraph and then made the subject of the next section (Cf. the word "lacking" in 1:4, "lacking in nothing" with "If any man lacks wisdom" of the next verse.) This device, which is technically called *duadiplosis*, is perhaps the outstanding stylistic feature of the epistle (cf. "nothing doubting" and "for he who doubts" in 1:6).

This loose structuring of a document along practical and ethical lines without a dominant theme was common in Hebrew literature (especially in "wisdom" literature, that is, Proverbs, etc.). Its technical name is "gnomology" (from the Greek word *gnome*, meaning "proverb"). Parallels exist too in the practical sections of Paul's epistles (e. g., Romans 12ff; Colossians 3:1-5:4), in the Hebrew letter (especially chapter 13) and in the hortatory sections of I Peter. When the admonitions were given in the second person "You" (as in 2:20; 4:13; 5:1), the advice is sometimes called "par-aenesis" (from the Greek *par-aiteo*, "I advise"). This style is familiar from the Old Testament prophetic apostrophe sections (where a writer turns aside to address an opponent in direct language) and in rabbinical literature. Thus the efforts of Easton, Barclay, and others to find the main parallel and motif for the epistle of James in the sermonic style of the Greek Stoic preacher (the diatribe) are probably misplaced.

Concerning James' method of writing Farrar has said,

The style of St. James is formed on the Hebrew prophets, as his thoughts are influenced by the Hebrew gnomologists. He has nothing of the Pauline method of dialectic; he is never swept away, like St. Paul, by the tide of his own impassioned feeling. His moral earnestness glows with the steady light of a furnace, never rushes with the uncontrolled force of a conflagration. The groups of thoughts follow each other in distinct sections, which never interlace each other, and have little or no logical connection or systematic advance. He plunges *in medias res* with each new topic; says first in the plainest and most straightforward manner exactly what he means to say, and enforces it afterwards with strong diction, passionate ejaculations,

rapid interrogations, and graphic similitudes. He generally begins mildly, and with a use of the word "brethren," but as he dwells on the point his words seem to grow incandescent with the writer's vehemence (see 2:1-13; 4:11,12). In many respects his style resembles that of a fiery prophetic oration rather than of a letter. The sententious form is the expression of a practical energy which will tolerate no opposition. The changes—often apparently abrupt—from one topic to another; short sentences, which seem to quiver in the mind of the hearer from the swiftness with which they had been launched; the sweeping reproofs, sometimes unconnected by conjunctions (Asyndeton, or absence of conjunctions, Jas. 5:3-6), sometimes emphasized by many conjunctions (Polysyndeton, or multiplicity of conjunctions, Jas. 4:13); the manner in which the phrases seem to catch fire as the writer proceeds; the vivid freshness and picturesque energy of the expressions;—all make us fancy that we are listening to some great harangue which has for its theme the rebuke of sin and the exhortation to righteousness, in order to avert the awfulness of some imminent crisis. The power of his style consists in the impression which it leaves of the burning sincerity and lofty character of the author.

*Early Days of Christianity*, p. 319.

### *AN OUTLINE OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES*

James is not a book which lends itself to detailed analytical treatment as does, for example, Romans or Galatians. It has often been asserted that James cannot be outlined but that only a listing of the subjects treated in succession may be drawn up. His letter is said to "consist mainly of moral precepts, added to each other without any obvious plan."

But the more this writer has studied James, the more the feeling has grown that there is more unity and cohesion than appear at first sight. The book opens with a consideration of the place of trials in the Christian's life. This subject is extended through the subtopics of wisdom, poverty and riches, and the relation of trials to temptation to do evil. The assertion that God may be responsible for temptation leads to a denial and an exposition of the good gifts which God does give, especially the gift of salvation, through

the word of truth. This leads James into a discussion of the power of the word to save those who receive it in the right way. But James insists that the word must be a vital factor. It must be active in both positive and negative ways in our lives, in good deeds, and in morality. Then beginning with Chapter 2, James discusses a number of sins or attitudes, which are mostly enlargements of things previously mentioned. He discusses the relation of faith and partiality (2:1-13), faith and works (2:14-26), wrong use of the tongue (3:1-18), and worldliness or "not keeping oneself unspotted from the world" (4:1-12). All these seem related to the theme of James 1:19-27. The remainder of the book picks up the thread of the difficulties and trials of Christians. 4:13-5:6 is an apostrophe addressed to the rich persecutors of Christians; 5:7-12 teaches Christians their proper attitudes in the midst of persecutions, admonishing patience and forbidding to swear. The rest of the book continues the general treatment of attitudes in the midst of difficulties, especially sickness and sin. First, a general admonition to prayer in troubles is given (5:13), followed by instruction in illness to call for the elders of the church (5:14-15). Where the contingency exists that the sick one may be a sinner, instruction is given as to how to deal with the sin (5:15b-16). Prayer is held out as the solution to difficulty, and assurance is given that prayer will avail (5:17-18). Finally, in view of the peril of the sinner, an exhortation encouraging the strong to rescue the erring closes the epistle (5:19-20). Thus without manufacturing connections which do not exist, it is possible to see an over-all unity of subject and design in the letter.

### The Contents

#### Section One. THE GIFTS OF GOD MANIFESTED IN TRIALS.

1:1-18.

1. Salutation and Greeting. 1:1.
2. The Joy of Trials. 1:2-4.
3. Wisdom in Trials. 1:5-8.
4. The Trials of Poverty and Riches. 1:9-11.
5. Patient Endurance in Trials Rewarded. 1:12.
6. Temptations Negatively Considered: They Do Not Come from God. 1:13-16.

7. The True Nature of God's Giving. 1:17-18.

Section Two. ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD WHICH BEGETS. 1:19-27.

1. Meekness in Hearing the Word. 1:19-21.
2. Being Doers of the Word as Well as Hearers. 1:22-25.
3. The Application: Pure and Vain Religion. 1:26-27.

Section Three. THE SIN OF RESPECT OF PERSONS. 2:1-13.

Section Four. THE RELATION OF FAITH AND WORKS. 2:14-26.

Section Five. ADMONITION TO TEACHERS. 3:1-18.

1. Bridling the Tongue. 3:1-12.
2. The Truly Wise Teacher. 3:13-18.

Section Six. WORLDLINESS IN THE CHURCH. 4:1-12.

1. The Source of Wars and Strife. 4:1-10.
2. Judging Our Brethren. 4:11-12.

Section Seven. DIRECT ADDRESS TO THE UNBELIEVING RICH. 4:13-5:6.

1. The Presumptuous Use of Time. 4:13-17.
2. The Sin of Shameful Wealth. 5:1-6.

Section Eight. ATTITUDE TOWARD MISTREATMENT. 5:7-12.

1. Admonition to Patience. 5:7-11.
2. Swearing Forbidden. 5:12.

Section Nine. THE CHRISTIAN IN ILLNESS AND SIN. 5:13-20.

1. Prayer and Singing. 5:13.
2. Illness and the Efficacy of Prayer. 5:14-18.
3. Converting Erring Brethren. 5:19-20.

### *BIBLIOGRAPHY ON JAMES*

Instead of copying a long list of the ancient and modern commentaries and works on James it seems better to list the books which have been of the best help in writing this commentary. In this way the reader will be directed to those works which he might wish to consult or obtain in his own further study of the epistle.

The writing of this commentary has led anew to an appreciation of the debt which is owed to those who have made the study of the

word of God a labor of love. We lay ourselves under tribute to all who have given to us the results of their study.

1. *Lexicons and Grammars.* Mention should be made first of the help of the lexicons and grammars. In addition to the older ones like Thayer's and Abbott-Smith's, Arndt and Gingrich's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Chicago, U. Press, 1957), which is the English edition of the German Walter Bauer's *Griechisch-Deutsches Woerterbuch zu Neuen Testaments* (4th Ed., 1952), has been used. Especially has Arndt and Gingrich been consulted on nearly every word in the original of James. One never ceases to be amazed at the wealth of information in this source. Frequent reference has also been made to the Classical standard lexicon of Liddell-Scott-McKenzie-Jones (9th Ed.) and to Bauer's *Theologische Woerterbuch* (a few articles of which are available in English in *Bible Key Words*). Among the grammars the new R. W. Funk's English edition of Blass-Debruner (*A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, Chicago, U. Press., 1961) has been consulted often, and use has been made of Robertson's *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, Broadman, 1934). Especially helpful also have been the marginal notes in Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece*. It is quite likely that the most original contribution of this commentary is the drawing together of material from these sources.

2. *Translations.* The debt owed to the many splendid translations of the New Testament is great. In addition to the King James, the American Standard Edition of the Revised Version (1901), the Revised Standard Version (1943, 1952), and the New English Bible have been studied and consulted as standard translations. The American Standard Revised has been chosen as the text for the comments. This perhaps needs some explanation. First, this text is now free of copyright. Secondly, as the American representative of the great English revision, it is based upon later manuscripts and evidence than the King James and reflects basically the textual conclusions of modern study. Use of it, therefore, saves much space which would have to be taken up needlessly in explaining the King James renderings. At the same time the ASV is a more literal translation than any of the newer translations. While this is often no great gain in the sense, it does lend itself to explanation. Many of the freer translations are difficult to relate to the

original text. At the same time all the help possible from these later translations has been sought.

Mention should be made especially of Moffatt's, Goodspeed's, Phillips', Schonfield's, and Williams' translations. Others have been consulted but not to the extent of these.

3. *Commentaries.* Among the commentaries on the Greek text those of Carr (*Cambridge Greek Testament*), Oesterley (*Expositor's Greek Testament*), Ropes (*International Critical Commentary*), Mayor (*MacMillan Series*), and the older commentary of Bishop Wordsworth have been used and have been consulted on almost all points. It has been the writer's purpose to make the material in these sources available in English form in some degree. It has seemed to him that one of the best ways to establish and illustrate the meaning of the original language is to study the parallel uses of the Greek expressions in other writers. Such evidence is given in abundance in this type of commentary.

Among the more popular English works those of Ross (*New International*), Knowling (*Westminster Commentaries*), William Barclay (*Daily Study Bible*), Tasker (*Tyndale Series*), and Blackman (*Torch Commentaries*) have been the most useful. In addition to these much help has been gained from G. H. Randall's *The Epistle of James and Judaic Christianity* (Cambridge, 1927—perhaps the best modern English defense of the genuineness of the epistle), A. T. Robertson's *Studies in the Epistle of James* (Nashville, Broadman) and from the older work *The Early Days of Christianity* by F. W. Farrar. Easton in the *Interpreter's Bible* (Volume XII) has been consulted mainly for his radical critical position. The writer has also utilized his own short work in the adult study series *The Living Word* (Austin, Texas, Sweet Publishing Co., 1962).

The writer has sought to give credit to the authors used for the ideas which he has adopted. But he finds this is often difficult to do, for there has been much dependence of the scholars upon each other's works. Often credit has been given to one writer only to find that the information is actually taken from an earlier source and quite often without acknowledgement. We are all under obligation to all others who have worked in the same fields. How much original work is really the result of stimulation of what others have thought and worked out!



# COMMENTARY ON THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES

## SECTION ONE

### THE GIFTS OF GOD MANIFESTED IN TRIALS

1:1-18

#### 1. SALUTATION AND GREETING

1:1

1 <sup>1</sup>James, a <sup>2</sup>servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion, <sup>3</sup>greeting.

<sup>1</sup>Or, *Jacob*

<sup>2</sup>Gr. *bondservant*.

<sup>3</sup>Gr. *wisbeth joy*.

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In the typical fashion of good Greek correspondence James has three main elements in the salutation: He names himself as the author, gives the "twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion" as the recipients of the letter, and includes the "greeting." Notice that the name is put at the beginning rather than at the end as is our custom.

1 **James**,—The English name is derived from the Italian form *Giacomo*. The Greek for it is the equivalent to our "Jacob" and is, in fact, the same word that is translated "Jacob." The name was fairly common in Palestine. In this study James is assumed to be James the brother of Jesus. He was not one of the twelve but rose to prominence in the church at Jerusalem after the stoning of Stephen. Compare Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; I Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19; 2:9, 12; Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55. For further identification and character of this James and for consideration about the authorship of this letter see the Introduction, pp. 8 ff. We assume that James writes as a leader prominent in the church at Jerusalem. He has in mind the problems of the church scattered abroad. He probably was in contact with the churches through the continual travel to Jerusalem of those coming to the feasts and for other business. It is known from contemporary accounts that James was held in great reverence and esteem as a righteous man and a leader of the church.

**servant**—(Greek "slave"). From the Old Testament point of view the term was a term of honor and carried a meaning close to that of "worshipper." It had been worn with honor by the greatest



of the Jewish worthies: by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deuteronomy 9:27); Joshua and Caleb (Judges 2:8; Numbers 14:24); Job (Job 1:8); Moses (I Kings 8:53; Daniel 9:11); and Isaiah (Isaiah 20:3). It was especially used of the prophets (Amos 3:7; Zechariah 1:6; Jeremiah 7:25). It was used collectively of the church at Jerusalem in one of the early narratives (Acts 4:29). There is probably also a subtle blending of this O. T. religious significance and the more common secular meaning of the word, which was that of a civil slave. The slave had no rights, privileges, or will of his own. He owed complete submission and loyalty to his master, who actually held the power of life and death over him. James' use from this background would, then, be a conscious term of humility, of self-denial, and of loyalty. It would carry the affirmation that the will of God and Christ is the only rule of faith and life for one belonging to the church.

Notice that there is a complete lack of claim to special prestige or attention as a brother of Jesus. Some have thought this unnatural, but it is a mark of modesty. Paul usually joins some other title with his frequent use of the term "servant," such as "apostle" (Titus 1:1). Only in Philippians 1:1 and Jude 1:1 do we find the term used singly in address as here.

The use of the term "servant" for "slave" is said to be confined largely to early American usage and English Biblical translations. The present custom is still to keep the two words sharply separate. Hence the margin of the ASV ("bondservant") conveys the proper meaning of the original.

**to the twelve tribes**—"The twelve tribes" was a synonym for the nation of Israel as a whole (Acts 26:7). It was true that the twelve tribes no longer existed as settled units in Palestine as in earlier times. We speak of the "lost tribes of Israel," thinking of the ten tribes taken into Assyrian captivity (II Kings 17). But many of the individual members of such tribes knew their tribal identity. Even so, the term was spiritualized to include the nation without regard to the loss of identity of the tribes.

There are different understandings of how James uses the term here. Some contend that the book was written originally to Jews—fleshly Israel as God's people. This would be the literal meaning of the expression. This is unlikely, however, in view of the book as it now stands. So it is assumed by some that the present book has

been worked over by a Christian hand and that the references to Jesus and the distinctly Christian material have been added to the original, which was addressed to Jews only (See Introduction, p. 14). Of this there is no evidence. It is unlikely that Christians would have so appropriated such a writing. Also it has been pointed out that it would have been unlikely that anyone would have attempted to reach such a widely separated group as all the scattered people of the Jews.

A second meaning is that the term "twelve tribes" is equal to "Israel," used figuratively for the church. In Luke 22:30 ("Ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel") Jesus seems to use "twelve tribes of Israel" in this way. This idea of the "Jew" as the spiritual worshipper of God under the gospel rather than a physical descendant of the fleshly offspring of Jacob is quite well documented. Paul said, "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3). Compare Romans 2:29 and 9:6. This may also be the meaning of "Israel" in Galatians 6:15 ("peace be upon them . . . and upon the Israel of God"). In Revelation 7:4ff those sealed as the servants of God are presented as 144,000, out of "every tribe of the children of Israel." Thus it is quite possible that James is simply using this figurative way of addressing the whole church of Christ.

There is, however, a third possibility. There are those who insist that the term "twelve tribes of Israel" as spiritualized in the above manner refers only to the remnant of faithful Jews who accepted the gospel and thus that it means all "Christian Jews." On this point, compare Burton, *International Critical Commentary* on Galatians 6:15. Though it does not seem possible, over-all, in the New Testament to limit the term "Israel" in this way, there does seem much to support the idea that James is written especially to Jewish Christians. The book is Jewish to the core. There is little or nothing which would imply that the writer had a Gentile group in view. The argument of Knowling (*Westminster Commentary*) that the book was written at an early time when the writer still anticipates the acceptance of the gospel by all Israel does not seem plausible. This places the book too early. Most commentators who place the book very early think that it was written by James the Apostle (died 44 A.D., Acts 12:1). It is most plausible

to this writer that James the Lord's brother had in mind Jewish Christians as those whose interests were closest to him and that, though "the twelve tribes" may mean "the whole church," particular stress is laid on that part allied to his own concern—the Jewish part.

**of the Dispersion.**—The King James "scattered abroad" is better translated by "Diaspora" as a technical term for all Israel living outside of Palestine—the Dispersion. In New Testament times Israelites were living in "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5-11). This exile from their native land had taken place over a long period of time and in many ways. First, it had been the result of forced removal at the times of the captivities of the Northern Kingdom (to Assyria, 721 B.C.) and then of Judah (to Babylon, 606-586 B.C.). The people of Judah retained their identity by refusing to intermarry with their captors. The great monument of this residence in Babylon is the Babylon Talmud, an immense library of commentary on the law. Josephus bears witness that many such Jews remained in the East to his day. Hillel, the grandfather of Gamaliel (Paul's teacher), had been educated in Babylon. Much later the Romans at the capture of Jerusalem (63 B.C.) carried many Jews into slavery, from which many of them were eventually freed to constitute the "Freedmen's" class (Acts 6:9). But many Jews moved out of Palestine of their own accord. According to II Kings 25:26 Jews in large numbers removed themselves to Egypt out of fear of the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. Alexander the Great (d. 323 B.C.) enticed many Jews to different parts of the Empire with offers of special privileges. More than a million Jews were said to reside in Alexandria, the capital of Egypt. Egypt even saw the building of a temple there for Jewish worshippers. In Syria, Damascus, in Cyrene of North Africa, in Crete, and all over Asia Minor the Jews lived and set up their synagogues. At one time Antiochus the King of Syria transplanted 2,000 families from Babylon to the provinces of Lydia and Phrygia. So widespread was this scattering that the geographer Strabo said, "It is hard to find a spot in the whole world that is not occupied and dominated by Jews."

This Dispersion is witnessed in the book of Acts as the reader sees Paul visiting the synagogues for his first contacts with the community. Along with these, there were large numbers of devout

Greeks ("Godfearers") who were already attracted to the religion of the Old Testament by the teaching and lives of their Jewish neighbors. This was certainly one of the great providential factors in the spread of early Christianity.

The book of James, then, in all probability was written to Jewish Christians living among the Dispersion, with special thought given to those living in the nearer regions to Palestine where the book might reach.

**greeting.**—The form of this greeting is peculiar to this passage among the epistles of the New Testament. It occurs elsewhere in the N.T. in Acts 15:23 (the letter of the church at Jerusalem to their Gentile brethren suggested by James) and in Acts 23:26 (the letter of the Captain Claudius Lysias to Felix the Governor). In the original it is an infinitive used as an imperative. The verb literally means "to be happy" or "rejoice." But it was used as an informal greeting meaning something like our "Hello" or "How do you do?" At the beginning of a letter, as here, it is simply a salutation, and the rendering "Greeting" is a good way of expressing it in English.

The more usual epistolary salutation in the N.T. is the "Grace to you" type. This most often has no verb expressed. In I and II Peter and Jude it is used with the verb "be multiplied," where the verb is in the mood of wishing. The form used by James is a more formal type and presents evidence of a more stylistic language in the letter.

## 2. THE JOY OF TRIALS

1:2-4

2 Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold <sup>4</sup>temptations; 3 knowing that the proving of your faith worketh <sup>5</sup>patience.

<sup>4</sup>Or, *trials*

<sup>5</sup>Or, *steadfastness*

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The first section of the epistle seems to include verses 2-18. The central idea is that God is the giver of every good and perfect gift (v.17). The benefits of God are, however, often paradoxical; they often seem to be burdens and difficulties instead of blessings. The case in point is the difficulty or trials to which Christians are often subjected. The right view of these trials is presented, with the implied suggestion that wisdom is needed from God to accept this

conception of suffering. This wisdom is promised as an answer to believing prayer. In this connection a warning is given to the doubting petitioner. As such trials seem heaped upon the poor disciple, James presents a view of the acceptable attitude of both the poor and the rich. James then promises the reward for faithful endurance of temptations. He assures the readers that temptations cannot be thought of as coming from God, as He gives only good gifts. Finally, the supreme gift of all—salvation (presented under the figure of birth into the family of God)—is mentioned. The material of this section is calculated to help us count our blessings even in the midst of seeming adversity.

The first subject treated, then, in the epistle is that of trials and the way they are to be received by Christians. The idea is not that trials are pleasant in themselves but that, since they are beneficial to the individual, they are to be received gladly rather than with sorrow and despair. Their main effect is to produce perfection in the Christian's character by developing steadfastness.

2 **Count it all joy,**—The word "count" means to "reckon" or "consider." It is not to be thought that trials are to be courted because they are enjoyable. It is only when they are understood to be the occasion of benefit that they may be reckoned as joy and received as such. "All joy" probably means "every kind of joy." The joy is as varied as the manifold tests themselves. Others take the idea as that of "pure joy," "nothing but joy." Cf. Acts 4:29, "complete candor." The sufferer is to be glad that he can suffer. He is not to dwell on the unpleasantness of the experience. There should be no such thing as a complaining, grumbling disciple of Jesus. We must develop the attitude of Jesus, who "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2).

**my brethren,**—Fifteen times in the course of the epistle James uses this expression. Both the Greek and Hebrew words for "brother" originally have reference to those born of the same mother or womb. The Hebrew developed the wider sense of relative also (Genesis 13:8, where Abraham called his nephew Lot his brother). It is used of tribal relationship, of those who belong to the same group or people (Exodus 2:11; Leviticus 19:17). It could even apply to a proselyte (Leviticus 19:7), to a covenant brother (Amos 1:9), or to a friend (as David and Jonathan, II Samuel 1:26). James uses it here of the wide sense of fraternal relation of those

born together into the family of God. The former distinction between "brothers" of fleshly relations and "brethren" for fraternal ties ought to be kept. The sons of Jacob and Mary were "brothers" (John 2:12; Acts 1:14); this should not be rendered "brethren." James' frequent use of the term is a touch of humility and affection, though he exhorts pointedly and strongly at times as a brother (James 2:1ff).

**fall into**—The trials under consideration are outside the man. As the man in the story of the Good Samaritan, who "fell among" the robbers, so the Christian in the course of this life will encounter many things from without which will test him within. Usually such experiences will catch him unawares. He cannot anticipate what they will be or just when they will come. He cannot be prepared for the circumstance of each; he can only be prepared in attitude for whatever form it may happen to take.

**manifold temptations;**—The marginal rendering "trials" is undoubtedly the meaning of James here. The word may have the sense of "temptation" (enticement to sin), but this does not fit this context. David prayed that God would try or test his heart and mind (Psalms 26:2). The sense of the "trial of suffering" is well known to Jewish literature (*Wisdom of Sirach* 6:7; 27:5,7). In Revelation 2:2 the sense of "trying or testing" of false teachers (by examining their teaching) is found. In verse 13 James uses the word in the sense of enticement to sin, but he is warning against taking his former use (in the passage now being discussed) as meaning that. It is most certain that James here has the sense of "testings" or "trials" in mind.

But what in particular does he mean? One should read Hebrews 10:32ff, where the writer mentions "a great conflict of sufferings." Among the things mentioned are "being made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions," "the spoiling of your goods," and "bonds." These are the adversities of life, the unexpected disappointments and sorrows, the oppositions of the enemies of the truth. In Romans 5:3 Paul mentions "tribulations" and in 8:18ff the "sufferings of this present time," to which is added "the groaning and travailing in pain of the whole creation." Compare also I Thessalonians 2:14f. "Manifold" means that the writer has no specific kind in mind but thinks that there are many possible ways of being tested. In the book itself James mentions the oppression of

the rich (2:6), being dragged to court and having one's religion blasphemed (2:6-7), the keeping back of wages due one (5:1ff), and even the killing of the righteous (5:6). Then of course there is the passage on sickness (5:13ff).

3 **knowing**—The Hebrew idea of "knowledge" tends toward the idea that knowing is an act of the will, i.e., an acknowledgement. One must himself allow something to be said to him. Compare such passages as I Samuel 2:12; Isaiah 1:3; Jeremiah 2:8; 9:2-5; Psalms 9:10; 36:10; Daniel 11:32. This does not mean to learn or make sure of something, but to recognize and accept the consequence of something which is revealed to one. Hence the verb is used often to call special attention to something, by way of warning. See Matthew 24:43; Luke 10:11; Ephesians 5:5; II Timothy 3:1; II Peter 1:20; 3:5. The calling to attention is usually given as an imperative or command. Here it is given in a participle following an imperative. These could almost be translated as two imperatives: "Count it joy; recognize that..."<sup>1</sup> "Accept the fact that..."

that the proving of your faith—The reason the Christian is to count or reckon an unpleasant trial as a joy is that he is to know or recognize from his instruction as a Christian that there is value to him in the experience. That reward comes when the proving of faith works patience. But the expression "proving" or "trying," in the opinion of most modern commentators, rather means the "genuineness"<sup>2</sup> (what is left as the real thing after the testing has taken place) instead of the "testing" itself. This is undoubtedly the meaning of this word in I Peter 1:7. It is not certain, but this could be the meaning here. Moffatt translates: "The sterling temper of your faith produces endurance." But Arndt and Gingrich and the majority of the late translators (Phillips, RSV, Goodspeed, and NEB) still hold to the more traditional rendering. The meaning "genuineness" would give the following sense: "Count it joy when you are tempted, since you may recognize that what is genuine in your faith will produce steadfastness." If our faith is genuine, we can not only stand the trial, but we will be stronger for

<sup>1</sup>See Rudolf Bultmann, *Gnosis (Bible Key Words)* (A and C Black, London, 1952), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>*dokimion*. The rendering "genuineness" is possible from considering the better reading *dokimion* (rather than *dokimos*) and taking it, not as the neuter noun, but as the neuter singular of the adjective *dokimios*. See Arndt and Gingrich and Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, pp. 359ff; Funk, 263.2.

4 And let <sup>5</sup>patience have *its* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.

<sup>6</sup>Or, *steadfastness*

the experience. On this basis the occasions of trial may be considered a joy. But the other meaning of "testing" or "trial" can also make good sense. The trying of faith produces patience because such faith (assuming that it is genuine) can be strengthened by such experiences, and greater loyalty and fidelity to God will be wrought in us. In either case the trial results in steadfastness in the true believer.

**worketh patience.**—The verb means "works out, brings about, or creates." It is a more emphatic compound form of the simple verb of the same meaning, which was a favorite of Paul. Compare Romans 5:3, "Affliction worketh patience." The uncompounded verb occurs in 1:20 ("wrath worketh not the righteousness of God") and in 2:9 ("If ye have respect of person, ye work [commit] sin")

"Patience" is perhaps too passive for the Greek word. It means "endurance," "steadfastness," "perseverance." Thayer says in the N.T. it is "the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trial and sufferings." Notice Romans 2:7 ("patient continuance in well-doing") and II Corinthians 6:4 ("much patience in afflictions"). Other scriptures which stress this need of steadfastness are Hebrews 10:36; 12:1; Luke 21:19. Many of the Jews considered this quality the queen of the virtues. In view of the longsuffering which the nation had undergone, this is understandable. Persecutions were new to the Gentile Christians, but the Jews were longsuffering. When the Christian's faith is what it ought to be, the difficulties of life only make him both desire and enabled to continue. A muscle is strengthened and hardened by strenuous labor. The more the runner trains and punishes himself the more likely he is of winning. This is the "knowledge" or "recognition" which James calls for in such trials. It is this which can enable him to treat trials as joys.

4 **perfect work,**—Patience is to have its perfect work. "Work" here means "manifestation" or "practical proof" (Arndt and Gingrich). Paul spoke of the "work of faith" (I Thessalonians 1:3), i.e., faith manifested in work; "work of ministry" means the



actual manifestation or practice of service or ministering. Thus James says that this stedfastness or patience must be put to actual work; it must be allowed to work in our lives in the midst of trials. Goodspeed translates: "Stedfastness must have full play." The RSV has "must have its full effect." The NEB renders "If you give fortitude full play . . ." Thus the word "perfect" is taken in the sense of complete or full. Arndt and Gingrich translate: "Let endurance show itself perfectly in practice."

**that ye may be perfect**—James sees the chance that some may lose heart amidst struggles; but these never become perfect; that is, they do not attain the end or stature which God intends for them. They fall short or are "lacking." "Perfect and entire" does not mean moral perfection or sinlessness. The idea is that patience allows one to fulfill his lot or destiny as a Christian, to attain to the station or stature to which God has called him. NEB renders "You will go on to complete a balanced character that will fall short in nothing."

The one who has genuine faith amid persecutions and difficulties finds endurance developed in himself. "We also rejoice in our tribulations; knowing that tribulation worketh stedfastness; and stedfastness approvedness; and approvedness hope" (Romans 5:3-4).

Much teaching needs to be done in the church on the subject of trials and stedfastness. Too many members are going back into the world because of weak faith. They need to be taught the purposes of God in difficulty. Elders and teachers need to study how to involve members in the work of the congregations where they may be encouraged through fellowship, helped and comforted in adversity, shielded and strengthened in temptation, restored from sins and mistakes, and made to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. This is the real duty of shepherds of the flock who watch over the souls of the disciples.

**entire, lacking in nothing.**—The word "entire" is used of that which has no blemishes and is complete in all parts. It is often used to describe sacrifices which meet all the requirements of the ritual. The noun form is used of the lame man healed by Peter and John (Acts 3:16). Hermas uses it of faith that is intact or blameless (*Mandates* 5, 2, 3). Here it has the sense of a character that meets all the requirements of maturity.

“Lacking in nothing” is the opposite or negative counterpart of completeness.

### NOTE ON MORAL PERFECTION

A word needs to be said about the teaching of the gospel on perfection of character. We have emphasized that when James says “Ye shall be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing,” he means, not moral perfection or sinlessness, but the reaching of the desired goal—full growth or maturity of character. James will say later (3:2), “We all sin in many respects.” Sinlessness is not the meaning of “sanctification” in the New Testament, though this is the goal toward which all should aspire. The fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19) or the measure of the stature of Christ (Ephesians 4:13) must be our aim. The idea of an entire sanctification by the Holy Spirit as a second work of grace is not a Biblical idea. The New Testament teaching is that of a progressive perfecting of holiness (II Corinthians 7:1) through daily renewal (II Corinthians 4:16). The rendering of the New English Bible in Matthew 5:48 (“You must be all goodness, just as your heavenly Father is all good.”) is certainly not supported by anything in the context of the passage. Since the context is that of complete love—for both just and unjust, the perfection is that of the perfect love which characterizes the Father. James uses the word “perfect” again (3:2) of the man able to bridle the whole body. Its basic meaning is that of maturity of character. See Colossians 1:28; 4:12; I Corinthians 14:20; Hebrews 5:12-14; and Philippians 3:15.

### 3. WISDOM IN TRIALS

1:5-8

5 But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

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Verse 5 begins a subsection in which “wisdom” is stressed. James connects the thought by picking up the word “lacking” in the previous verse, as he had done with “patience” in verses 3-4. There is much discussion as to whether in such passages one is to consider this a new subject or a part of the larger context of the subject “trials.” Some contend that James simply strings subjects together like pearls or beads on a string and no connection should

be sought. But a deeper study of the whole section seems to indicate that throughout (verses 2-18) the general subject is pursued. In verse 12 James returns to the subject of trials (as though summarizing). Hence it is better (and certainly does no violence) to connect the subject of wisdom and poverty with that of trials. The thought is elliptical and is to be understood something as follows: If anyone lacks wisdom to see the value and ability in trials as just explained, he must go to a divine source for such wisdom. He should ask of God.

lacketh wisdom,—What is wisdom? It is not mere knowledge. Knowledge comes from experience, particularly through the revelation of God and our study and learning of it. But one may be a "walking Bible" and not be wise. Nor does it mean knowledge gained by direct revelation. This was the mistake made by Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism. He read this promise and decided to pray for a revelation, which he claimed he got. Wisdom is the common sense to put into practice the principles and instructions given us in the revelation of God's word. The man who believes in God, who fears or reverences Him, and who lets His will have its way in his life is wise, but "the fool despises instruction."

The Jews, as many other people of the Near East, had a special interest in wise sayings. Wisdom writing was one of the genre of literature of the section. But the Jews grounded their wisdom literature on the revelation of God's word. Notice that in the book of Proverbs, especially in the first chapters, wisdom is personified. She speaks to man to inform him what is good for him. Hort says that the sense of the word is "that endowment of heart and mind which is needed for the right conduct of life." Proverbs, Psalms, Job, and Ecclesiastes, as well as the Jewish apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Sirach, are examples of wisdom literature.

Job shares with James the thought that wisdom is needed to develop the right attitude toward suffering.

There is a sense in which wisdom is the central emphasis of the book of James. Mayor says that James gives it the emphasis which Paul gives to faith, Peter to hope, and John to love. James will elaborate on the "wisdom from above" in the latter part of the third chapter (3:13-18).

James knows that in the midst of trials no matter how well Christians may know God's will they will face circumstances which will demand that they be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves." They will often not know how to act or "how to answer" those who attack their faith (I Peter 3:15). James gives the answer to those who feel the lack of wisdom. In all areas of Christian conduct we need wisdom: as elders, preachers, parents, or teachers. We need to remember its source.

let him ask of God,—The source of wisdom is God, and the method of obtaining it is prayer. Notice the reflection of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount: "Ask, and it shall be given unto you" (Matthew 7:7). Prayers for wisdom are frequent in Jewish literature: I Kings 3:5-15; 4:29-34; Proverbs 2:6; Wisdom 7:7; 9:4.

who giveth to all liberally—God gave Solomon wisdom in answer to his prayer. No other will ever attain that stature of wisdom which he had (I Kings 3:12). But still God will give wisdom to all who ask, and in a generous quantity. The word for "liberally" is difficult to translate, for it can mean many things. Sometimes it seems to mean "simply" or "singly," that is, without any conditions or strings attached. In Barnabas 6:5 "to write simply" means to write plainly. Again, it seems to be equivalent to our word "liberally," since the gift which is willing and unconditional tends also to be liberal. Let the student consider the word in the following contexts: II Corinthians 8:2; 9:11; and Romans 12:8. The "single eye" (Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:34) seems to mean "generous," as opposed to the "evil eye" which means "stingy": Matthew 20:15; Mark 7:22 (Cf. Cadbury in *Harvard Theological Review*, 47, '54, pp. 69ff). So the meaning here seems to be that God is lavish in his gifts, especially in the giving of wisdom. God as Father knows how to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. Thus the man who desires, asks for, and seeks wisdom throughout a life of patience and steadfastness may expect to receive it.

It is interesting to note that the description of God as the one who giveth is so placed in Greek as to be a direct modifier or attribute: "Let him ask of the giving God." It is the very nature of God to give, just as it is for him to love and forgive. We need not

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed.

worry as to how God will impart that wisdom. If we ask, He will give.

and upbraideth not;—God does not reproach or upbraid the one to whom He has given. Some give so that they may throw it up to the one who has received by reminding him of their generosity and his debt. The Book of Wisdom has the following, which may be what James (who certainly must have known the book) is thinking of: "My son, blemish not thy good deeds, neither use uncomfortable words when thou givest anything . . . Lo, is not a word better than a gift? and a gift of the envious consumeth the eyes" (Ecclesiasticus 18:15-18). From the same book we have, "After you have given, upbraid not" (41:22). No one likes a gift given so that the giver can parade his liberality. Lowell said, "The gift without the giver is bare." Oesterley points out three characteristics of God as a giver: "to all," "liberally," and "upbraiding not."

6 Ask in faith,—Jesus often said that faith is a condition of acceptable prayer (Mark 11:23): "Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it." To pray in faith means to pray in the trust that God will answer the prayer according to His will. We are not only to believe that God is, but also that "he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). There have always been materialists who doubt the power of God to answer prayer in a world of science. But law and order answer to the lawgiver. Others doubt the goodness of God or His disposition to bless us. Is it not strange that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ should be thought of as a harsh God? What is needed is belief and trust in God, not an "understanding" of all God's ways in the universe.

nothing doubting:—The Classical meaning of this verb is "to divide, to make a distinction, judge, or dispute." But the meaning "doubt," "be at odds with one's self," appears in the New Testament. It occurs with this meaning elsewhere in Matthew 21:21; Mark 11:23; Romans 4:20; 14:23; Jude 22. "Hesitate" would be a better translation in Acts 10:20. The King James "wavering" blends in the context with the figure of the wave of the sea. This "doubting"

7 For let not that man think "that he shall receive anything of the Lord;  
<sup>9</sup>Or, *that a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways, shall receive anything of the Lord.*

shows that the praying person has not committed himself fully to trust in God. The same word is used by James in 2:4 and in 4:3f. In the latter passage it is indecision between friendship with God and the world.

like the surge of the sea—The doubting petitioner is changing and uncertain like the surge of the sea. The word for "surge" means the "billows, the rough water, the breakers" upon the shore. The word is used elsewhere in the N.T. only in Luke 8:24, of the waves of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. One is reminded of the old song which speaks of the time when the "fearful breakers roar." When the surf is "wind-driven and tossed," it is then really surging. The whole picture is one of indecision, of uncertainty. Perhaps the thought is that the one praying is lifted high like the crest of the wave by hope one minute and then lowered by doubt and despair of receiving the next. There is an old saying that some people have just enough religion to make them miserable. Knowling points to Ephesians 4:13-14, where perfect or mature Christians are contrasted with those who are tossed about by every wind of doctrine.

7 For let not that man think—The "for" connects with "let him ask in faith." The reason for the prayer of faith is that the one not praying thus need not even think to receive. "That man" is the doubter, and there is something of contempt in the expression, as though a doubting, halting man of prayer is a contradiction. The verb "think" means "to suppose," or "to imagine." It is used in the LXX (Genesis 37:7) of what Joseph supposed in his dream. The ASV is uncertain whether to take the latter part of the sentence beginning "a doubleminded man . . ." as modifying the subject of the verb "shall receive" or to take it as being in apposition with the noun. Either is possible, and the thought is the same either way it is expressed. The construction means to "stop thinking."

that he shall receive anything of the Lord;—"The Lord" here is probably the Father, inasmuch as the prayer for wisdom is to be directed to Him. But the same expression in 5:14 probably refers to Jesus. One who prays in doubt may receive God's blessings in

8 a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways.

natural ways, as God blesses both the just and the unjust. But his prayers are not answered.

**8 a doubleminded man,**—The ASV takes this and the following adjective probably correctly as an appositive to “that man”: “that man—a doubleminded man” will receive nothing. The word is not found in Biblical texts outside of James’ use here and in 4:8. But in later ecclesiastical Greek (Cf. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*) it is a frequent word occurring not only in the adjective form but as a verb (*dipsucho*) meaning “to hesitate,” or “be doubleminded” and also in the noun form (*dipsuchia*) meaning “indecision, doubt, or hesitancy.” In I Clement 11:2 we have: “For the doubters and the uncertain about the power of God are for judgment.” The Didache mentions the sin of doublemindedness as a part of the way of death. As already noted, James uses this word again in 4:8 of the man who would serve God and the world at the same time. Both uses portray men who act as if they had two minds and thought with both at the same time. Cf. Ecclesiasticus 2:12, “Woe . . . to the sinner who goes on two ways.”

**unstable in all his ways.**—The doubter is unstable or restless. In 3:8 James uses the same word of the tongue; it is a “restless” evil, that is, a continual, neverceasing evil. Here the idea is unsettled, fickle, and, hence, unreliable. Such a man cannot be trusted. Oesterley thinks that James may be suggesting that the man who cannot trust God cannot be trusted by others.

“In all his ways” means in his paths. The word in the plural often means conduct as a whole. Arndt and Gingrich refer to Acts 14:16 (“God suffered the nations to walk in their own ways”) and to Romans 3:16 (“Destruction and misery are in their ways”). The usage is a frequent Old Testament one: Proverbs 3:6; Psalms 10:5; Jeremiah 16:17. Solomon said, “In all thy ways acknowledge her (wisdom; the Hebrew has Him) so that she may direct thy ways” (Proverbs 3:1). In 1:11 the word is different and means “undertakings, pursuits, or schemes.” Goodspeed renders it “uncertain about everything he does.” The NEB paraphrases: “Can never keep a steady course.”

## 4. THE TRIALS OF POVERTY AND RICHES

1:9-11

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 9 But let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate;
 

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James progresses to a new phase of the subject. Mayor rightly sees this section as set within the framework of the whole section from verse 2 to verse 18. The verb "boast" is set forward emphatically in the sentence, probably because of its similarity to the word "joy" in verse 2. It expresses a Christian's continued confidence in any circumstance in which he finds himself. Also it is a contrast to the doubting, hesitant man of the previous section. The general idea of the section is that of Solomon, "The rich and the poor meet together, Jehovah is the maker of them all" (Proverbs 22:2). The poor is not to be depressed by the trial of poverty, nor the rich proud of his wealth. Life is uncertain. The gospel teaches each person to make adjustment to a new and common station in Christ, and each in turn can find something to boast of in what Christianity has done for him.

9 **let the brother,**—There has been much discussion as to whether both of those addressed in the section are to be thought of as Christians. James uses the term "brother" in the first case but not in the second. Some (e.g., Easton) take the position that the teachings of the gospel assume that no rich man can be a Christian. But this position is certainly false. Many of Jesus' friends and early disciples were well to do: Joseph of Arimathaea, Barnabas, Nicodemus, Mary (sister of Lazarus), and the women of Galilee. James would hardly have written in the supposition that no rich were potential Christians. In 2:6 he does speak of the rich as a class in a derogatory manner, but this is to be explained on the grounds that this was the general rule, to which the devoted and humble Christian among the rich is the exception.

In his teaching on the uncertainty of riches James is reflecting the teaching of Jesus: Matthew 6:19-34; 19:16-30; Luke 12:15-21; 16:9-31; Mark 10:24; and compare I Corinthians 7:29-31; I Timothy 6:17.

The gulf between the rich and poor in New Testament times was great—greater perhaps than in our modern times. There was no large middle class with its abundance due to industrial jobs. (See Deane, A. C., *The World Christ Knew*, Michigan State College, 1953.) The poor were despised and often oppressed (James



5:1ff). There was in the possession of riches a constant source of pride. The desire for money under such circumstances would be keen (I Timothy 6:9).

**of low degree**—As in Luke 1:52, the word here means “poor” in terms of wealth. In other passages, such as 4:6, the word is a character trait; so also in Romans 12:16, “Condescend to men of low estate.” The rich man is set over against the word in the next verse, showing that material poverty is the meaning here.

**glory in his high estate**:—James’ statements in this section are capable of being interpreted in several ways, as a check of several commentaries or even of translations will reveal. The descriptive phrases following the word “boast” are nouns standing in prepositional phrases: “In his exaltation” and “in humiliation.” In each case some would read into these a temporal relation and translate “when he is raised” (Moffatt) and “when he is brought low.” Taken in this way, the admonition is that Christians are to do their duty in whatever circumstances the changing fortunes of life may thrust upon them. If the poor should become rich, he is to accept the fact without exulting or taking pride in it; if the rich man, on the other hand, should lose his money and become poor, let him boast or glory in his poor estate, since riches are notoriously fleeting. Another possibility is that the phrases are to be taken as irony: the rich man who now boasts in his wealth is to boast (if he can when it happens) in the poverty which is coming upon him. This would be as if James says, “Your wealth is soon to be taken away; then we’ll see if you can boast.”

It is better, however, to take the words as they stand to mean that in whichever of the two states one finds himself, there is something of which he may at that time boast: if poor—in the wealth of his station in Christ; if rich—in the position of humility which he is to assume in the church in spite of his riches. So Barclay heads the section “As Each Man Needs” and says, “Christianity brings to every man what every man needs.” Mayor sees the teaching of the whole as “the intrinsic effect of Christianity in changing our view of life.” Phillips puts it: “The brother who is poor may be glad because God has called him to the true riches. The rich may be glad because God has shown him his spiritual poverty.” Lenski’s comment also agrees with this. Mayor’s comment is worthy of quoting:

Far from being thus undecided and unsettled, the Christian should exult in his profession. If in low estate, he should glory in the church where all are brothers and there is no respect of persons; he should realize his own dignity as a member of Christ, a child of God, an heir of heaven: if rich, he should cease to pride himself on wealth and rank, and rejoice that he has learnt the emptiness of all worldly distinctions and been taught that they are only valuable when they are regarded as a trust to be used for the service of God and the good of man.

Mayor thinks of the "humiliation" of the rich man as that of the disdain of the world at one who becomes a Christian. Oesterley objects to this in that in the words of James it is the rich man (not merely his wealth) who passes away. But when the riches pass away, "the rich man" (as such) is gone, just as we might say, "There are no rich men since the depression." Further, he argues that "in your exaltation" and "in your humiliation" cannot both refer to Christianity since they are in contrast to each other. However, the reasoning above has shown that they can both refer to different people in the church in different circumstances. The last interpretation set forth above is to be preferred and is the one on which the comments here are based.

The word "glory" in the sense of boast or take pride in (in a good sense) is common in the New Testament, and Paul is especially fond of it. A check of the concordance reveals that Paul uses it of glorying in God or Christ (Romans 5:11; 15:17; I Corinthians 1:31; Philippians 3:3), in the cross (Galatians 6:14), in the hope of salvation (Romans 5:2), in those he had converted (II Thessalonians 1:4, etc.), in affliction (Romans 5:3), and in infirmities (II Corinthians 12:9). Paul feels foolish for glorying in his accomplishments in answer to his critics (II Corinthians 11:16ff). Boasting in the Law (Romans 2:17), in self-righteousness (Romans 3:27), in the mistake of a fellow Christian (I Corinthians 5:6), or in racial advantages (Galatians 6:13) is condemned. James uses the term in 4:16 of glorying in "vauntings" in a bad sense. Here the poor may boast in his attainment in Christ. He need not be ashamed of or intimidated by his poverty; he has something which balances it.

10 and the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

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**in his high estate:**—Literally “in his height.” The word can mean “pride,” and, in a concrete usage in the plural, “the heavens.” But here it means “high position” or “rank.” Cf. Luke 1:52 and Job 5:11. The verb is used in the frequently quoted paradox: “The one who humbles himself shall be exalted” (Luke 14:11; 18:14). The Christian’s spiritual condition is one of richness, of exaltation in Christ. He is priest and king (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; I Peter 2:9). He is to participate with Christ in judgment (I Corinthians 6:3). His spiritual blessings constitute promises “exceeding great and precious” (II Peter 1:4). Christ became poor that we might be made rich (II Corinthians 8:9). Compare Hebrews 11:26; Philippians 4:19; Ephesians 3:8. Though the world may scorn the Christian, he is heir of all God’s honor, glory, and wealth. In all such as this he may take pride.

**10 the rich, in that he is made low:**—Literally “in his humiliation.” Arndt and Gingrich and a few translations have it: “Let him boast in irony of his coming humiliation.” But James means rather that he should boast in his humble station as a Christian (see discussion above). The world looks on a Christian as a nobody. The rich man’s fellows would probably belittle his faith. He himself has voluntarily taken on the attitude of a servant (James 4:10). He may accept the fact that his wealth counts for nothing and challenge even the poor to be more humble than he. Jesus taught: “Let him that is chief become as he that serveth” (Luke 22:26). Compare the attitude of Paul in Philippians 3:5-8. If the rich should lose his wealth, he may take it joyfully (Hebrews 10:34), but this is not James’ point here.

**because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.**—Life is as fleeting for the poor man as for the rich, but James’ warning here is directed toward the rich, because the tendency to trust in the uncertainty of riches may make him more likely to forget the fact. If only one’s wealth recommends him, then when it is gone he has nothing to boast of. Thus James is saying that the rich should glory in his self-abasement, in that which some would consider as worthless, but which is for him the earnest of his eternal inheritance. Quickly he will pass from this life, leaving behind his

11 For the sun ariseth with the scorching wind, and withereth the grass; and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his goings.

earthly wealth (I Timothy 6:7) in which most rich people glory. Hence he should glory in the things that are more abiding.

Like the flower of the grass the rich man is soon to pass away. He is here today but gone tomorrow. In James 4:14 to the rich merchant who is presumptuous in planning his future he says, "Ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." It is not the wealth itself that James sees as fleeting (though it is certainly that) but the life of the rich. Palestine has two rainy seasons. After the spring rains the grass grows profusely; but, after they cease, the flower soon disappears. Cf. Matthew 13:6. The expression "pass away" for death and disappearance is not uncommon. Cf. Matthew 24:34, "This generation shall not pass away." For the figure compare "My heart is smitten like grass and withered" (Psalms 102:4) and also Isaiah 40:6 (of fleeting human life), which is quoted in full in I Peter 1:24. Cf. also Psalms 37:2; Job 14:2.

11 For the sun ariseth with the scorching wind,—The words "no sooner" of the King James are not in the Greek. The verb here (along with the next two) is in the past tense (aorist)<sup>1</sup> and represents what customarily or repeatedly happens. The verbs are correctly translated present in English. The hot sun beams down on the grass in summer after the rains cease. The original only says "with its scorching . . ." Our translators understand the word "wind" as being implied, thinking of the Sirocco or Southeast Palestinian wind. So also does the LXX in such passages as Hosea 12:1 and Jonah 4:8. Arndt and Gingrich, however, incline to the King James' "burning heat" of the sun. At any rate, the grass does not last long in the summer.

withereth the grass and the flower thereof falleth.—The word "grass" is usually used of green grass of the meadow (Matthew 14:19). But here it must include also flowering plants as growing together. The verb "falleth" refers to the falling of the petals of the flowers.

the grace of the fashion of it perisheth:—More literally, "the beauty of its face or appearance." For the use of "face" for "ap-

<sup>1</sup>The Gnostic Aorist, Compare Funk, Sec. 333.

pearance" see Matthew 16:3, of the face of the sky. Even Jesus remarked about the beauty of the flowers (Matthew 6:28-29) as well as of the fact that the flower is "here today and tomorrow is cast into the oven."

so also shall the rich man fade away—both as a rich man and as a man. His riches may be lost as suddenly as the flower falls. But whether his wealth is lost or not, the individual is mortal and will not remain. Man must put his confidence in something more permanent than riches. The verb is used of the withering of flowers (Job 15:30), of the fading of beauty (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 11:56), and elsewhere of the untimely death of a loved one. The word in a negative form ("unfading") furnished the name of an evergreen plant ("the evergreens") used by Peter (I Peter 5:4) to typify the crown of life.

in his ways.—Either "in his pursuits of business" (trade journeys, 4:13) or (probably more likely) in his busy pursuits and customs of life, he is suddenly gone.

James' point in this discussion is that, though wealth is to be thought of from a worldly viewpoint as a trial, the Christian may view it otherwise. The poor is thus not to bemoan his fate or the rich take pride in his wealth. It is quite possible that the subject of partiality toward the rich at the expense of the poor in 2:1ff may be connected with this passage. The thoughts certainly are parallel. If Christians are judging their poor brethren as described, they are certainly not considering the "exaltation" or "high estate" of the poor brother in Christ.

This verse seems to complete the thought begun in verse 2 of finding joy in the midst of trials. It also forms the transition to the next section. James has asserted that trials are a joy in that they are intended to work in us the spirit of patient endurance. Now James further promises that they become a beatitude because the one enduring them will, when he is approved, be awarded a crown.

##### 5. PATIENT ENDURANCE IN TRIALS REWARDED

1:12

12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been ap-

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12 **Blessed is the man that endureth temptation;**—The word "blessed" could be translated "happy," or "fortunate." In a religious setting it probably suggests something of the life or condi-

proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which *the Lord* promised to them that love him.

tion apart from the world's ills, for it denoted to the Greeks the kind of life the immortal gods lived. (Compare I Timothy 1:11; 6:15—the only instances in the N.T. where it refers to God.)

The same Greek words for "Blessed the one enduring" occur in the Septuagint of Daniel 12:12, which James may have remembered. The endurance is in bearing or suffering temptation and remaining faithful. This does not necessarily mean that one must always overcome in a trial or that one can never err in a trial. But since errors must be corrected and repented of, some who backslide never recover. One must never be overcome and give up. "In your patience ye shall win your souls" (Luke 21:19). "Temptation" here is still probably to be thought of primarily as "trial" in the sense already used. Of course such trials also become the occasions for inducement to sin when the devil takes advantage of them to tempt us. Thus they may yield different results from receiving the crown contemplated in this verse. "But if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38). The reason for the blessedness is stated in the closing part of this verse—the reward of the crown. This result is restated in James 5:11 in different terms.

when he hath been approved,—The Greek word<sup>1</sup> means something tried and proved genuine; hence, as in Romans 16:10 ("Salute Apelles the approved in Christ"), it means "the tried and true Christian" (Arndt and Gingrich). Compare also I Corinthians 11:19; II Corinthians 10:18; 13:7; II Timothy 2:15. Thus the King James "when he has been tried" is not quite the correct meaning of the original. When the Christian endures the trials which come his way—neither growing weary and quitting nor being fatally captured by Satan through his wiles, thus being perfected and strengthened by successive triumphs—he will receive the reward. God is not unwilling that we should be tested in this way. The Spirit was the agent of Jesus' being led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Mark 1:12). This knowledge of the use of trials leads the Christian to joy in meeting them.

shall receive the crown of life,—The Greek word for "crown"

<sup>1</sup>*dokimos*.

is the source of our name "Stephen." The crown was usually made of leaves of laurels or palms. Jesus' was of thorns (Matthew 27:29). The wreath was worn by the victor at athletic contests (I Corinthians 9:25), at festivals (Isaiah 28:1f), and also at times by kings and dignitaries as a sign of rank (so Christ in Revelation 14:14). But the usual headdress of an Eastern ruler was a purple band trimmed with white on a tiara, the diadem. The term "crown" is often used figuratively of a virtue or reward: "crown of grace" (Proverbs 1:9) or "glory" (Proverbs 4:9). So here "crown of life" means the crown which consists of life (Matthew 7:14), that is, immortality.<sup>1</sup>

**which the Lord promised**—The term "Lord" is added in the translation, though a few MSS. have it. The subject is understood. There is no specific promise to "the crown of life" from the lips of Jesus. But the content of that promise is frequently dealt with (Mark 10:30; Matthew 19:29; 25:46; Luke 18:30). Similar promises occur in the O.T. Reference could be to them, if the subject be understood as the Father. Some speculate that this could be a remembered saying of Jesus which is not recorded in our four gospels (as in Acts 20:35).

**to them that love him.**—Promises of blessings on those who love God are frequent both in the Old Testament and in the New: Exodus 20:6; Psalms 5:11; I Corinthians 2:9 (here Paul has quoted the LXX, Isaiah 64:4, though the Greek translation differs somewhat from Paul); I Corinthians 8:3. Jesus had taught that keeping His word was evidence of love for Him (John 14:23; 15:10). Love is conceived as the motivating power which makes endurance possible. Knowling quotes Bengel, "Love begets patience (endurance)."

Note: The "crown of life" in this verse is not to be confused with the new life in Christ, which is described as the promise of the Christian in this world. What Paul calls the "newness of life" (Romans 6:4; cf. II Timothy 1:1; II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 4:23f) John calls "the more abundant life" (John 10:10) and "life eternal" in many passages (John 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 17:2f; I John 3:15; 5:11, 13, 20; and compare John 3:36). John sees our relationship to God as His newborn sons as a

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<sup>1</sup>The genitive of apposition or contents.

quicken into new life. This life is qualitatively (not quantitatively) related to our future life in heaven. It is of the same kind of life as the divine life (II Peter 1:4), as it is a foretaste of that life which we will have with God. The mistake of those who apply these scriptures to the doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy is that the term "eternal" is conceived quantitatively so that it is thought that once one has such life it cannot be lost. There is a type of duality in the Bible's speech about eternal life, for some scriptures speak of that life as a future gift. But others, failing to recognize this duality and reacting against the Calvinistic doctrine of never falling from grace, have denied the teaching of the New Testament on the blessing of that life here and now. See the article on "life" (*zoe*) in Arndt and Gingrich.

#### 6. TEMPTATIONS NEGATIVELY CONSIDERED: THEY DO NOT COME FROM GOD

1:13-16

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted <sup>7</sup>of God; for God <sup>8</sup>cannot be tempted with <sup>9</sup>evil, and he himself tempteth no man:

<sup>7</sup>Gr. *from*.

<sup>8</sup>Or, *is untried in evil*.

<sup>9</sup>Gr. *evil things*.

What James has said about trials might be used by some to blame God for the temptations which are the occasions for their sins. In Greek the same word is rendered "trial" and "temptation." Only the context will indicate which of the meanings is present. In these verses James is guarding against a misapplication of his teaching in the section on trials. God does not tempt people to do wrong.

13 Let no man say when he is tempted,—The term "trial" in verse 2 and "temptation" are from an action noun formation in Greek, while the verb in this verse is a verb from the same root.<sup>1</sup> It is much discussed as to whether the sense of the words is the same or not. The consensus of commentators seems to be that James' habit of taking up the words used previously as the leading idea of the new section shows that James has reference to a common conception, though with a double sense. The noun has reference to the objective trial, the verb to the subjective tempta-

<sup>1</sup>*peirasmos* and *peirazomai*.



tion (Mayor). Here, then, James is dealing with the inner yielding of the man to inducement to sin which may accompany the outward trial designed by God for man's good. Man is not to think that because God permits us to be tested he is therefore to blame if we yield to an urge to sin which Satan may present on the occasion. Several commentators cite a parallel in Ecclesiasticus 15:11ff, "Say not thou, It is through the Lord that I fell away: for thou oughtest not to do the things that he hateth. Say not thou, He hath caused me to err: for he hath no need of the sinful man. The Lord hateth all abomination; and they that fear God love it not." "When he is tempted" is a participle in Greek, "while being tempted." In the course of temptation one should not excuse himself into yielding by thinking that he can blame another.

**I am tempted of God.**—The Greek preposition here actually means "by," as in Matthew 16:21. Some Jews blamed God for sin. They observed an evil tendency in man, which they called *Yetzer bara*. There was an argument over the origin of this tendency. Some argued that Satan put the tendency in man; others said man alone was responsible. But it was boldly reasoned by some that God created all things and so He must have created the evil in man. If true, this would make God responsible for man's sin. See Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible*, on these verses. Carr (*Cambridge Greek Testament*) suggests that a misunderstanding of the model prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," may have led to the currency of the idea in the church.

**for God cannot be tempted with evil,**—The margin has "untried in evil," with "evil" meaning sin, not merely difficulties. But the sense of the context is in favor of the other translation. The form could mean "not tempting anyone" or "not being tempted." The form is not found elsewhere in either the LXX or the New Testament. Most of the verbal adjectives of its type have the sense of the perfect passive; for example, "is subject to suffering" (Acts 26:23). Compare Funk, Section 65. 3. Arndt and Gingrich point out that the active idea of "not tempting" is expressed in the next phrase, and hence this word is to be taken as passive "cannot be tempted." The other idea would make James repeat himself meaninglessly. This passage confirms the conclusion that "temptation" here means seduction to do evil. The truth expressed is that God's nature is such that he is not susceptible to evil or sin. Bible

14 but each man is <sup>10</sup>tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.

<sup>10</sup>Or, *tempted by his own lust, being drawn away by it, and enticed.*

writers affirm the absolute holiness of God. He is love (thus above hate in its moral sense); He cannot lie (Titus 1:2); He is a God of holiness (I Peter 1:15).

**and he himself tempteth no man.**—The argument is that, since God is completely free from the power of temptation, it is also beyond His nature to tempt others. That would in itself be an evil. The "himself" may emphasize that God is not personally responsible for enticement to sin. There is a sense in which one might say that God is indirectly responsible for such, since he may ordain an incident of testing which the devil may use to seduce one to sin. But even here God is not responsible for sin. He works in such instances to counteract the work of the enemy. Paul tells us, "He will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able, but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (I Corinthians 10:13).

**14 but each man is tempted,**—The possibility of temptation and sin is universal. The Bible knows nothing of the idea of entire sanctification wherein one rises above the possibility of sin by the eradication of evil tendency in himself. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). Even the Son of God was tempted in all points as we are (Hebrews 4:15). Paul said that he had to buffet his body and bring it into subjection (I Corinthians 9:27).

**when he is drawn away by his own lust,**—The verb means to be "dragged or taken in tow by." This is a strong word to express the intensity of the lusts or passions in us. Compare Paul's equally strong language in Romans 7:5, 18-24. The law of sin in our members leads us to do evil while our minds will to do what is good. The situation led Paul to describe himself as a "wretched man." The same lusts are described by James later (4:1) as warring among our members. James emphasizes that it is by our own lusts (Cf. II Timothy 4:3; II Peter 3:3; Jude 18f), rather than by God, that we are tempted. The origin of temptation is within. Satan is bound as far as we are concerned (Matthew 12:29; Hebrews 2:14) and has no power over us that we do not give him (I Corinthians 10:13).

His enticements would have no power unless something within us were appealed to by his temptation. There would be no temptation to gluttony or fornication if there were no appetites for food or sex. Certain desires are stronger in some than in others. One may be strongly influenced by strong drink; for another, drink may have no enticement. Satan searches out the weak spot in our members.

The term "lust" is a neutral term in its predominant use in secular authors. In the Bible it may have a good sense, as in Proverbs 10:24 ("The desire of the righteous"); Philippians 1:23; and I Thessalonians 2:17. In a bad sense (as here) it means a desire to do what is forbidden, especially in respect to the lower desire of the flesh. For this use, especially of illicit sexual desire see Romans 7:7f; Colossians 3:5; I Thessalonians 4:5; Galatians 5:24; I Peter 4:3; I Timothy 6:9; II Timothy 2:22; 4:3; II Peter 2:10; Ephesians 4:22. Knowling quotes Charles: "The real force of this verse is that man's guilt and sin are not derived from Adam but are due to his own action. The evil impulse does not constitute guilt or sin unless man obeys it. As the Talmudists say, 'It was placed in man to be overcome.' " One might also observe that James' teaching strikes at modern philosophical theories of determinism, which attempt to put the blame for man's sin on surrounding circumstances, natural forces, and inheritance factors. Every honest man's conscience bears witness to his responsibility for sin. Like David he must confess, "I know my transgression; and my sin is ever before me" (Psalms 51:3). Thousands rise above their circumstances. Man falls, not because of circumstances, but because of yielding to what is within.

It is also interesting to note that lusts or desires are personified in the passage: "One's own inward concupiscence meeting him as a soliciting unchaste woman" (Lange). This figure introduces the following words and prepares the way for the descriptions of sin's being born: "conceived," "brings forth" (verse 15).

and enticed.—The verb originally was used of the devices of the hunter. But it came to be associated with the wiles of the evil woman. II Peter 2:14, 18 warns of false teachers who "entice unstedfast souls" and even pictures how it is done: "enticing by lusts of the flesh, by wantonness those just escaping from them that live in

15 Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death.

error, promising them liberty, while they themselves are slaves of corruption."

15 **Then the lust, when it hath conceived,**—The article with the noun "lust" is the article of the abstract noun and should not be translated in English. The same goes for the one with "sin." The abstractions fit the personification of lust as an enticing woman. Sin is the child of the surrender of the will to the allurements of desire. It may be argued, as some have done, that Satan is really the father of sin. But James is using allegory (as Mayor points out), and in the allegory he takes the figure only back as far as the desire of the one seduced. For the word "conceived" James uses the regular Greek word for a woman's conception in childbirth. Compare Genesis 4:1; 30:17, Luke 1:24, where the LXX and Luke use the same word. The Septuagint in Psalms 7:14 has a similar use of the metaphor: "He hath travailed with unrighteousness, he has conceived affliction and brought forth iniquity." For the taking of the thought further back to Satan, compare the Jewish treatise, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (Benjamin 7:2), "The mind conceives through Beliar (Satan)." Mayor also quotes Justin Martyr in the Dialogue with Trypho (327 C) "Eve when a virgin conceived the disobedient word from the serpent and bore death."

**beareth sin:**—Again James uses one of the ordinary words in Greek for the birth of young (Matthew 1:21, of Jesus' birth). However in the following verse where the fullgrown sin bears death, James uses a different and less common word.

**and the sin, when it is fullgrown,**—The figure of birth is continued in the word "fullgrown." In this context the sense of the word is that of full age or maturity. Sin does not result in death immediately, nor does it necessarily do so. Repentance and confession (I John 1:7-9; Acts 8:22) may avoid the result of sin. But if sin is allowed to grow unchecked and to become perfected in our lives without repentance, it will produce ruin. "Sin when it has become a fixed habit determining the character of the man, brings forth death" (Mayor).

**bringeth forth death.**—The word is used in the New Testament

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16 Be not deceived, my beloved brethren.

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only here and in verse 18 of this same chapter. The figure is not completely carried through. There is no mention of the conception of sin before bearing death. But the child sin, when grown, has the power to produce death, as lust has to bring sin into a life. The fact emphasized is a common one in Scripture: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23; 8:6). Matthew 7:13-14 mentions the fatal consequences of following the wrong way.

Death does not mean merely physical death, since all will die that death (though sin does at times result in physical death). Nor does James mean merely that men become "dead to what is good" ("dead in trespasses and sins," Ephesians 2:1ff). The death meant is eternal death, the second death. Knowing contends otherwise. He says that eternal death is not meant, "since a soul, if converted, may be saved 'out of death.'" But the point is that here sin is contemplated as "fullgrown" in its effects on our lives. (Cf. Hebrews 6:6 and I John 5:16) Its wages, then, are eternal death. The Bible does teach that a child of God can so sin as to be finally lost. The climax of James' reasoning is thus reached in showing that the final result of temptation is death. But God is the giver of life and could not be charged with being guilty of the death of those to whom He wills only what is good.

16 Be not deceived,—"Do not be deceived about the source of temptation." The verse is to be connected in this way with the preceding thought. Good gifts (as James will go on to say), not evil ones, come from God. Let no one therefore deceive you into yielding to the impulses to sin by laying the blame on God. "Brethren," as so often, softens the zeal of James' language. Such warnings against our being deceived are numerous: Luke 21:8, I Corinthians 6:9; 15:33; Galatians 6:7.

This verse is intended to be connected with the subject discussed in verses 13 to 15. Verse 16 serves as the connection. Though some would charge that God is the source of allurements to do evil, these are wrong. Anyone accepting this conclusion is allowing himself to be deceived. God's gifts actually fall in the class of good things. Jesus emphasized that even the sunshine and rain are gifts of God to his children, and these gifts are not necessarily depend-

## 7. THE TRUE NATURE OF GOD'S GIVING

1:17-18

17 Every good <sup>11</sup>gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning.

<sup>11</sup>Or, *giving*.

ent upon the children's returning His love and serving Him (Matthew 5:45).

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift—James uses two different words for "gift." In form the first means the "act of giving" itself (as in Philippians 4:15, where it is contrasted with the act of "receiving"), and the second means the result of the giving, "the gift" itself (Romans 5:16). The adjective "good" probably here means "useful," or "beneficial," as in Ephesians 4:29; while "perfect" means "what has attained its purpose or end," hence "complete" or without defect. Thus James emphasizes that "every useful act of giving" and all complete or perfect benefits are from God.

When James emphasizes that "all" good and perfect gifts are from God, the context demands that James means that God is the ultimate giver of such gifts and that He gives only such things as may be so described. This could mean that some things might seem to be bad (in the limitation of human wisdom) and still come from God. But it denies that what is positively evil (like inducement to sin) can be attributed to Him. We are taught that God's philanthropy is responsible for all we have: "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28-29). We cannot remind ourselves too often that everything that is good comes from Him. "Be ye thankful."

is from above,—That is, from heaven, the dwelling place of God (Acts 14:17; John 19:11; 3:31). A grammatical question is raised as to whether "from above" is adverbial, as in the ASV, or should be rendered as a modifying phrase—"every good gift from above is coming down." Where the copulative verb (which in Greek is omitted) is inserted makes little difference. The rhythm of the sentence is kept better by the rendering of the ASV, and most commentators and translators take it that way.

from the father of lights,—God is creator of heaven and earth and as such is the father of all heavenly bodies such as the sun,

moon, and stars. But there is a double meaning to the words. These lights symbolize spiritual light, as in John 1:4-5; 8:12ff; 9:5. God is the originator of all light, both physical and spiritual. Notice that in the next verse the blessing that is spelled out as the specific illustration of God's grace to us is the privilege of becoming His children. Knowling cites the following references which refer to God as creator of the lights: Genesis 1:14; Jeremiah 4:23; 31:35; Psalms 136:7, besides Jewish sources.

**with whom can be no variation,**—The verb "can be" is perhaps a little strong for the Greek, though the reading adopted by the later texts can mean "exist" or "be possible" (Cf. its use in Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11).<sup>1</sup> The noun "variation" is a rare word for astronomical changing (Arndt and Gingrich). The King James "variableness" makes the noun refer to an abstraction of quality; "variation" is better, as the word means "change." The reference is probably to the rising and setting of the sun (as we think of it), or to the waning and waxing of the moon, and also possibly to the instability of the lesser lights. God is the father of such lights, but in his giving of good things he is not constantly changing. His gifts are always good, perfect, and abundant. They are not withheld even because of our lack of constancy. In giving wisdom (1:5ff) and in his giving spiritual illumination, as well as physical blessings, He is a consistent giver. The next verse will bring out the point further.

**neither shadow that is cast by turning.**—The text as adopted by most modern editors is literally "There is no variation or a shadow of turning." There are several other readings in the different MSS. The one adopted by Ropes in the ICC would be translated "There is no variation of turning shadow" or "no variation characterized by turning of shadow." The difference is mainly between "variation" or "turning shadow" (two things) and "variation which consists of turning shadow" (one thing). The textual differences undoubtedly exist because the scribes have tried to clear up what seemed to them a puzzling expression. Whichever reading is adopted, James' point is that God created the lights, but they are changing and varying. But God Himself, the father of the lights, is not

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<sup>1</sup>The verb *eni* is a contraction of *eneimi*. Some MSS. have simply *ouk estin*, "there is not."

18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

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like the lights he created. Light from Him is constant and steady. God so consistently gives good things that He could not be the author of evil temptations.

18 Of his own will he brought us forth—James concludes the thought begun in verse 12: Our participation in the new birth, the privilege of being children of God, is an example of God's gracious gifts in contrast to the thought that he is the source of temptation to sin and death.

"Of his own will" emphasizes the thought that our salvation is the result of the deliberate choice and purpose of God, that is, that it is a gracious gift from Him. Our salvation grew out of His desire, good pleasure, and counsel alone. It was His will, free from any outside necessity or cause. This is in harmony with the general teaching of the Bible that salvation is a free gift—a matter of unmerited favor, springing from the fountain of God's love.

he brought us forth—As sin begat death (verse 15), so God our father begat us as His children. The "us" refers, not to men in general, but to Christians. Christians are born of the will of God (John 1:13). Many New Testament passages speak of the rebirth of souls dead in trespasses and sins through the gospel: I Peter 1:3, 23; Titus 3:5; I John 2:29; 3:19; 4:7f; 5:1; I Corinthians 4:15; John 3:5. The use of the aorist tense (of point action in past time) seems to refer to a definite act in our lives—our conversion, culminating in our baptism into the new life (Romans 6:4). Thus both Titus 3:5 and John 3:5 connect the rebirth and baptism. The efforts of some commentators to make the words refer to creation (Genesis 1:26) are hardly successful. The "word of truth" as the instrument of God's "bringing us forth" is not the statement "Let us make man," but the gospel of Jesus Christ. Compare the continued use of this word of truth which we are to receive with meekness (verses 19ff). The use of the term "firstfruits" of us as Christians (man was not the firstfruits of the world's creation) and the clear implication of the following verses that James is speaking of the "salvation of our souls through the word" (verse 21) make it plain that the birth is the new birth.

by the word of truth,—The message conveying the truth of God



(Compare other passages where the possessive [genitive] sustains a similar relation to the noun: Colossians 1:5, "The word of truth of the Gospel"; Acts 13:26, "The word of this salvation"; and II Timothy 2:15, "handling aright the word of truth"). As in these passages, the "word of truth" here is the gospel as God's revelation or proclamation by which the world is regenerated through Christ. With this, consider I Peter 1:23, "begotten again . . . through incorruptible seed, the word of God" and also Paul's "I have begotten you through the gospel." Since the word is given through the Holy Spirit's instrumentality, this is not essentially different from saying "born of the Spirit." No explanation of the new birth is scripturally sound that makes it independent of the preached word and obedience to the ordinances of that word (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Peter 3:21; Mark 16:16). The idea of a direct operation of the Spirit, acting in some mysterious way apart from the "word of truth," is not a Bible idea. A confidence that one is "saved" gained from some subjective feeling apart from obedience to God's word is not the assurance that the New Testament gives of pardon (I John 2:3).

that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.—"A kind of" means "not a literal firstfruits" in the Old Testament sense, but a firstfruit in another, or spiritual, sense. The firstfruit was the first portion of produce (animal or plant) which belonged to God and was offered to Him before the rest could be put to ordinary use. It was to be of the choicest part of the harvest and thus a pledge of further harvest. The law governing it is found in Deuteronomy 18:4; Numbers 18:12; Exodus 13:11-16 (of the first-born). Israel was so called (Jeremiah 2:3), "the firstfruit of the Lord's increase." The Jewish writer Philo called Israel the firstfruit of the whole human race. The idea is that, since Christians, consisting of a portion of the human race, have been gathered, there is a prediction of the ingathering not only of a larger portion of the Israelites, but of the world's nations into the church (Acts 15:16ff). There is almost certainly the pledge of holiness also involved. This lies in the idea of not only the first part but the choicest and best part being offered. For other uses in the New Testament compare the following: I Corinthians 15:20, 23 (of Christ as first from the dead); Romans 16:5; I Corinthians 16:15; and in some texts II Thessalonians 2:13 (of a specific group of Christians promising

a larger harvest in the region, etc.); Romans 8:23 (of the foretaste of the Spirit already given); and Revelation 14:4 (where, as in our passage in James, the idea is more quality than time). For this idea compare (cited from Arndt and Gingrich) the scholiast on Euripides, *Or.* 96, "the first fruit means not only the first in rank, but also the first in honor (or preciousness)." The word "first-born" is a related idea, and for this, see Hebrews 12:23, where Christians are so called.

of his creatures.—Though the word may involve all creatures including animals (I Timothy 4:4), it is often limited to mankind (as in Colossians 1:23). So the word seems to mean "human beings" here. James sees Christians as the firstfruits of the larger number of men. The word "proclaims a new order of things in the world of spiritual growth; they (Christians) are in advance of other men, in the same way that the firstfruits are in advance of the other fruits of the season" (*Expositor's Greek Testament*).

## SECTION TWO

### ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD WHICH BEGETS

1:19-27

#### A. Meekness in Hearing the Word. 1:19-21

19 Ye know *this*, my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

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This section of James 1 connects with the previous section by the occurrence of the "word of truth." That "word" has been described as the means of God's bringing us forth to be His children. If the word can do so much, then it ought to be accorded the proper attention and response. It must be received with meekness; it must be acted on, being put into active use in a life of benevolence, morality, and self-control.

19 Ye know this,—The difference between this and the King James "wherefore" is that the ASV is based upon a better text. The two Greek words involved are much alike and might easily be mistaken by the copyists. The truth that James had expressed about Christians' being brought forth by the word is well known by those who know the truth, for a vital part of that truth is that we are begotten by the word. As Christians we must continue to let the word have force in our lives, if we are to work out our salvation. It is possible for one to hear the word in becoming a Christian and then let himself become offended at the teaching of the

20 for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

word. God's word must be at work in us as His children (I Thessalonians 2:13).

**be swift to hear,**—We ought (in view of the word's power) to be eager and anxious to hear the message of God. Many will listen to the word to be baptized, but not to the teaching about self-control, good deeds, worshipping God, or other such parts of the doctrine of Christ. Having tasted the "good word of God," Christians ought to be even more eager for it to work in their lives.

**slow to speak,**—The idea is "slow to speak back at, or show displeasure at the teachings of the word." At Antioch the Jews became jealous and contradicted the word spoken by Paul (Acts 13:45). Some disciples became angry with Paul and became his enemy because he told them the truth about the teaching of Christ (Galatians 4:16).

**slow to wrath:**—"Slow to get angry at the teaching of the word and slow to harbor anger against God." A king in the Bible became so angered at the reading of God's will to him that he cut the page out of the scriptures that the scribe was reading and burned it (Jeremiah 36). This even now is sometimes done.

**20 for the wrath of man**—Man in anger cannot please God; in such a state he cannot do works which are acceptable to Him. Only those who are humble in spirit can enter the kingdom of God. Those who would become enraged at the leadings of the Spirit of God in the word as to the kind of lives they should live and the kind of service they should render cannot hope to please Him.

**worketh not the righteousness of God.**—One angry at God could or would hardly do or practice the things that God desired him to do. The antithesis of working righteousness is doing sin (2:9, where the same verb is used—"commit sin"). "Righteousness" here is not used in the special New Testament (one could almost say Pauline) sense (Romans 1:17, 21) of the imputing to us by virtue of the blood of Christ a righteousness which we have not actually attained. Rather the sense here, which is also quite common in Paul (II Corinthians 6:14; I Timothy 6:11; II Timothy 2:22; Romans 14:17; Ephesians 5:9), as well as elsewhere (Matthew 6:1; II Peter 2:21; I John 2:29), is that of human works as good deeds which are approved by God, thus "doing right in the

21 Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of <sup>13</sup>wickedness, receive with meekness the <sup>14</sup>implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

<sup>13</sup>Or, *malice*.

<sup>14</sup>Or, *inborn*.

sight of God." The word (apart from the special Pauline sense mentioned above) almost always in the New Testament means man's conduct before God, action approved by Him. It thus comes to mean virtually uprightness in living. This word always has this sense in Matthew. Thus Jesus is baptized "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15), which must mean something like to do all His duty toward God. As Dr. Schrenk has observed (*Bible Key Words, Righteousness in the New Testament*, London, A & C. Black, 1959), the works are said here to be "of God" because He has defined and made the demand for them. But it is remarkable that James puts it that such deeds cannot be done by human anger. James puts the working of them under the divine and not the human side. Thus we have here a sort of mediating position between Paul's usage and the earlier customary way of speaking. On the whole subject of righteousness and "justification" in the N.T., see Schrenk's work.

James implies in the following verse that the primary reason for man's wrath (even that of some Christians) against the teaching of the word is the existence of sins in their lives which they do not wish to correct. The sins are of such nature as those now listed. James throughout the epistle mentions sins of various kinds of which his readers are guilty.

21 **putting away all filthiness**—The verb here is the ordinary word for taking off clothes (Acts 7:58). But it is often used (as here) in a figurative sense; for example, Romans 13:12 (putting off works of darkness); Colossians 3:8 (wrath, anger, etc.); I Peter 2:1 (all evil).

The term "filthiness" in an ethical sense means "moral uncleanness," "vulgarity," and, in some writers, "avarice or greediness." The more general sense is probably correct here complementing "wickedness." The force of "all" in such cases is "each instance of " or "every trace of," or perhaps "every kind of." In intent, at least, complete resignation to the will of God is essential. That will dictates a purpose to erase sin from our lives as rapidly and in every way possible with God's help. We must not make

provision to fulfill the lust of the flesh (Romans 13:14). Our sins should be those of honest mistake and weakness of the flesh. Sincere repentance envisions nothing else in our lives but to put away all evil. In this way we will perfect sanctification (II Corinthians 7:1). Without this we shall not see God (Hebrews 12:14).

**overflowing of wickedness** (margin, malice),—"Wickedness" or "vice" is the usual meaning of the term here, though in some contexts the meaning "ill will" or "evil feeling" (malice) is to be seen, especially when it describes an attitude toward other people (I Peter 2:1; Titus 3:3; Ephesians 4:31). Here this meaning is not a natural antithesis of meekness as is demanded by the context. The word for "overflowing" means "surplus" (King James, "superfluity"). It implies (as Ropes suggests) that such evil is not a normal part of character, but an excess.

**receive with meekness**—The verb means "to accept" or even "to approve of." See I Corinthians 2:14 ("receive the things of the Spirit"); II Corinthians 8:17; II Thessalonians 2:10 ("receive the love of the truth"). For the idea of receiving teaching, see Luke 8:13; Acts 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; I Thessalonians 1:6; 2:13. Many people are not teachable. The kind of preaching many want to hear is that which confirms their already fixed ideas. Some even resent new insights to old truths. Notice James' implication that even some teachers have too implacable ideas or notions (James 3:17).

"Meekness" is seen in the Old Testament as the hallmark of the future reign of the Messiah: Psalms 25:9 ("the meek will he teach his way"); 34:2; 37:11; 76:9; 147:6; 149:4. The word as an ethical term is concerned with anger; it means "absence from resentment," "resignation in suffering." Here it is opposite to "wrath" and means receiving the word in a yielding and receptive attitude. The word is a key New Testament word. Jesus applied it to Himself (Matthew 11:29). See Matthew 5:4; Colossians 3:12; Ephesians 4:2; II Corinthians 10:1; Galatians 5:23; II Thessalonians 3:5.

**the implanted word**—Notice translations on this interesting word: Moffatt, "the word which roots itself inwardly." Goodspeed, "the word planted in your heart." NEB and Phillips, "the message God has sown in your hearts." The word can mean something which is inborn or native to one (the margin "inborn") or something which by absorption becomes deeply rooted and planted in one's being. The word seems to be used here by anticipation (prolepsis):

it must be actually received before it can become implanted. Thus the language means "Receive with meekness the word, which, when implanted, can save your soul." There does not seem to be any teaching from the Bible that the word of God is inborn or innate in us, unless one thinks that there are some marks of divine truth in the human conscience and that this might be thought of. The idea of the truth becoming infused and engrafted in our hearts and minds seems to be the correct idea. The word may also be taken as being descriptive or qualitative, meaning the word "whose essence or tendency is to root itself in our hearts" (Matthew 13:21).

**able to save your souls.**—God's word is powerful to save all, saint and sinner (Cf. Romans 1:16; John 5:24; Luke 1:37; II Timothy 2:9). Since these words are addressed to those already born again as God's children, the salvation referred to must be to the future, the culmination of that deliverance already achieved in Christ (II Thessalonians 5:23; II Peter 1:5).

The fact that the word of God can become implanted in the heart (as Ropes suggests) "does not exclude that it should also exist for man's use in written or traditional form, whether in the law of Moses or in the precepts of Jesus." The attitude of many modern theologians toward the word is queer. The doctrine of total depravity from Calvinism caused many preachers to doubt that the message of the gospel either read from the Scriptures or preached could convert and thus save a soul, without some direct influence of the Holy Spirit apart from the word. Since the rise of modern critical study of the Bible, many scholars and preachers (though recognizing the general authority of the Bible when used subjectively) are distrustful of considering the Scriptures as containing "public" or "propositional" truth. But the concept of Scripture itself implies propositional truth. Barth solves the problem of the word by defining it as simply "revelation" and that in turn as what takes place in the human heart when it perceives or grasps the truth. Hence the word is truth perceived by the individual. But the New Testament concept is that of the word as Scripture, "the Sound Doctrine," the gospel of Christ. It is able to save. Let us not speak of it as "a dead letter" or "the mere word."

**your souls.**—Some would call the use of "soul" here a Hebraism, standing for the whole person, as if he were saying "is able to save you" (Cf. Matthew 11:29; 26:28; III John 2; Revelation 18:14).

## B. Being Doers of the Word as Well as Hearers. 1:22-25

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves.

It is possible, however, as Knowling says, that James is using the word in a more theological sense of the soul as the seat and center of life which transcends earthly existence: "a thought of salvation with eternal issues. Cf. our Lord's words in Matt. x:18; xvi.26."

As James has insisted that we must continue to be good hearers if the word is to save us, so now he also insists that we must be obedient to that word. The word must work effectively in us.

**22 be ye doers**—This is a characteristic word in James (Cf. 1:22, 23, 25; 4:11). In 4:11 it means one who "keeps" or "observes" the law as opposed to one who "judges" the law. Elsewhere in the N.T. the word for "doer" occurs in the Classical sense of a "poet" (Acts 17:28) and in Romans 2:13 (as here) with the meaning opposed to "mere hearers." James does not mean that his readers are non-Christians who have heretofore been content merely to hear the gospel. Rather he is writing to Christians and stressing their conduct and practice as such. Some of them are content merely to have become Christians and have not gone on to perfection. The verb which usually means "become" may have the meaning in the present imperative of "go on being or becoming" or "show yourself more and more." For example, Matthew 10:16 ("be ye [act] or go on being prudent"); cf. also 24:44; I Corinthians 14:20; 15:28; Ephesians 5:1 (so Mayor).

The admonition is followed up by James with illustration and explicit examples of what he means. See the references to self-control, good works, and morality at the end of the chapter. Jesus also abhorred the hypocrisy of those who "say and do not" (Matthew 23:3; cf. 7:21, 24-27; Luke 8:21; John 8:31; 13:17).

**hearers only**,—James is not thinking of the reading of the law of Moses in the synagogues, though the complaint was registered that many did only hear the law. He is thinking of Christians who fall short in ways to be mentioned in the book. He thinks of those who hear, read, or study "the perfect law of liberty" (verse 25) but do nothing about it. Lenski is right. The ethics James emphasizes are those of the gospel, not the law of Moses, though the two are related.

23 For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding <sup>15</sup>his natural face in a mirror: 24 for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

<sup>15</sup>Gr. *the face of his birth.*

**deceiving your own selves.**—The ones who hear only and do not practice righteousness deceive themselves by making a false estimate of their standing before God. They may “enjoy” hearing the word preached, or they may read and think that they are serving the Lord; but in the void of their neglect of that word, their religion is vain.

23 **If any one . . . he is like**—James’ illustration presents in parable form the uselessness of being a mere listener to the word of God. The word is a kind of mirror in which we see our true selves and how far short we are from being and doing as we should. If looking into such a mirror does not lead to efforts to correct and improve ourselves, then we are like the man who looks into a common mirror and does not profit from it.

**unto a man beholding his natural face**—The verb often means to “look with contemplation or reflection” (“consider the lilies,” Luke 12:27; compare also 12:37; Acts 7:31f; 11:6). The idea is not so much that he takes only a fleeting glance (as some commentators think) but that he looks and goes away and does not remember. The contrast is in the verb “continuing” in verse 25.

“His natural face” is literally “the face of his birth” (see on 3:6, “wheel of nature”), that is, the face or appearance which is his as a result of his physical birth. The corresponding image which we see in the mirror of God’s word is our spiritual image or condition.

**in a mirror:**—The ancients did not have mirrors made of glass and quicksilver, but theirs were of polished metal, such as alloys of tin or copper or of silver or gold. Soldiers will remember the GI polished metal mirrors. These are adequate for one to see himself.

24 **for he beholdeth himself,**—The illustration implies that the mirror revealed something that needed correcting. One goes to a mirror to see how he looks—if his hair needs combing or cutting, if his face needs washing, etc. When one sees himself, he sees his good and bad points.



25 But he that looketh into the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.

and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth—James used the perfect tense of the present result of a past action: There the man is; he has gone away (and is no longer looking in the mirror); and he immediately forgot what he saw. This means that he was a mere “looker” and not a “doer,” since he does nothing about what he saw wrong. His looking has been no blessing or profit because it was not followed up by action to correct his appearance.

what manner of man he was.—That is, whether he was pleasing to himself or needed improving; James does not draw the full comparison. But he is thinking of the ethical condition of man in comparison to the demands laid out in the word of God. From our point of view one might think of the image of Jesus, which we are to imitate and into which we are to grow. This gives concreteness to the kind of character God wants us to be. Consider the Sermon on the Mount and look especially at the moral and ethical parts of the epistles in the New Testament. Here we get the picture of ourselves as God wants us to be. When we look, we see ourselves in relation to the will of God; and, as implied, we will see our defects or shortcomings, as well as our duty. Whether it does us good depends on whether we are like the man in James’ parable.

25 But he that looketh—Some people may profit from looking into the mirror, and some may profit from looking into the mirror of God’s word. But only certain ones will—those described in this verse. The verb “looketh” means to “bend over to look” and its usage indicates the meaning of “examine thoroughly or minutely.” So angels who wonder about man’s salvation “desire to look into these things” (I Peter 1:12; see also John 20:5, 11). The look at God’s word must be more than a glance, if we see ourselves as God would see us.

into the perfect law,—This must be interpreted in the context as the same as the “word of truth” (verse 18), the “implanted word” (verse 21), and simply “the word” in verse 22, and possibly “the faith” (objective) of 2:1. James calls this “a law,” and by all of this he must mean the body of truth or the word (message) which constitutes the foundation of the religion of Jesus Christ. This word was contained in the preaching of the apostles of Jesus and

then was committed to written form to constitute what we know as the Christian Scriptures or the New Testament. In what sense this is to be considered a "law" is to be studied below. That he uses it to summarize or call attention to the teaching of the gospel is quite evident.

Why does James speak of this law or word as "perfect"? The gospel is the "perfect" law because it is the later and more perfect revelation than the Law of Moses—a higher and more enlightening revelation of God's will than the former law. In fact, the Christian point of view is that it is the final and complete revelation of God's will (Cf. Jude 3). The Christian expects no "latter-day revelation." So Mayor says, "The law of liberty is called *perfect* as the heavenly Tabernacle in Heb. ix. 11, because it carries out, completes, realizes the object and meaning of the Mosaic law which it replaces (Matt. v. 17)." Whatever may be the meaning of the term "law" in 4:11 (see on that verse), James nowhere contains a contrast of the word of truth with the Law of Moses in terms of Peter (Acts 15:10) and Paul (in Galatians, e.g., 5:4; 4:9; Romans 7:2; Ephesians 2:14; Colossians 2:14). But there is nothing in James contradictory to this point of view, and James' view points in their direction, especially in our present passage and in 2:12. The New Testament writers see the gospel as the fulfillment and logical outcome of the Old Testament (Acts 24:14ff; Romans 13:8-10), especially in respect to the law's purpose and moral demands. The gospel achieves what the law tried but could not do (Romans 8:3; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 7:19). But the gospel also is qualitatively better than the law. It reveals things previously not even imagined (II Corinthians 2:9-12; I Peter 1:10ff). As the church is the better and more perfect tabernacle (Hebrews 9:11), so the word of truth, as the law which is brought in through the changing of the Law of Moses (Hebrews 7:12), is "the perfect law."

**the law of liberty,**—If James calls the word of truth a "law," in what sense is this true? Paul once said that Christians are not under law but under grace (Romans 6:14; see also John 1:17). Paul does not mean that we are not under the law (of Moses), but he means that the gospel is not a system of law, but of grace. If this is so, how then does James here (and indeed Paul himself in other places) refer to the gospel as a law (Galatians 6:2, "law of Christ"; Romans 3:27, "law of faith"; 8:2, "law of the Spirit")? The answer

is to be found in the meaning of the qualifying phrases used with the term, just as here in James it is to be found in the meaning of the term "law of liberty."

The expression "law of faith" in Paul seems to mean a law which demands faith rather than works as the basis of merit; the "law of the Spirit" is the "law" which demands that the individual submit himself to the leadings of the Holy Spirit given by Christ and dwelling within him (Romans 8:2). The "law of Christ" in Galatians 6:2 seems to mean Christ's "new commandment" (John 13:34), the "law of love" (which is, of course, the same as James' "royal law" in 2:8); this is the "old command which ye had from the beginning" which is yet new (I John 2:7ff). The term "law of liberty" (which is actually a paradox, for law in its nature is restraint or limitation rather than freedom) means "freedom" or "liberty" in Christ as a principle of life.

One understands the gospel of Christ only when he understands this paradox. Failure to understand it leads either to legalism or to antinomianism (unrestrained excess). Paul in Galatians 5:1 declares that Christ has set us free; however, we must not consider this as license (Galatians 5:13). Then, as an illustration, Paul says that as set free from the law we are free from the law to "love our neighbor as ourselves." But if this were considered license, the church would destroy itself through hate (verse 15). So Christians are to put themselves under a law of love to become slaves (this is the literal meaning of "serve" in the passage) to one another (5:13). This is as if a slave freed legally by his master wanted to continue as a slave (of his own choice or liberty) because of the great love which he had for his master.<sup>1</sup> The word of Christ is a law in the sense that it is a revelation of Christ's will or desire for us; it is his commandment. But the keeping of this law or commandment is not the merit or basis of our justification as under the law of Moses (if it were, when we broke it, we would be condemned without hope of pardon as under the law, Galatians 3:10; James 2:10). Rather this obedience is the "obedience of faith," rendered freely out of gratitude or love to God and Christ for

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<sup>1</sup>The story is told of the great American pioneer preacher of Missouri, T. M. Allen, that, when he set his slaves free and told them to go, they chose to stay and serve him voluntarily because of the affection with which they held him. His will continued to be a law for them, but a "law of liberty."

their grace (Romans 16:26). Thus as to the "word of truth" as a system of salvation, "we are not under law"; but, when the word is considered a test of faith and love to Him, "we are under law to Christ (I Corinthians 9:21). This paradoxical way of speaking is the very essence of Christianity. If one sees the "duties" of the teaching of Christ or His apostles as a check list of obligations which he obeys and thus earns his salvation as a matter of "obedience," he is a legalist without real understanding of the gospel of Christ. But if one thinks that, being freed from law, he can follow his own inclinations in the teaching and practice of the truth, he is considered a reprobate and a heretic (Titus 1:15-16; 3:10, etc.).

James himself shows that the "law of liberty" does not mean that the Christian is free from regulation. If he shows partiality and is without pity for the poor, he sins (2:9) and will be judged without mercy (2:13). If he errs as a teacher, he will receive heavier judgment (3:1). If he is worldly, he becomes God's enemy (4:4) and a sinner (4:8). If he swears, he falls under judgment (5:13). Or if he errs from the truth, he may die (the second death) (5:20).

Paul once used these words: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). This has the following sense. My guilt was involved in crucifying Christ. He died that I might not have to die; hence, I live because of His death. So I should consider that it is not really I who live, but rather I should let "Christ who loved me and gave himself for me" live in me. I live as though it were He living instead of me. Thus His every wish for me becomes the "law" to me. The obedience of the Christian to the will of Christ is out of a free disposition, a choice to lay all upon the altar; it is not a compulsion to law. If we are lost as Christians, it will be because we lack the kind of faith to be justified in this manner, as James will show in 2:14-26.

What a wonderful system Jesus gave to us by his death! "The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given to us. For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:5f). If we would serve God from such motivation, what a difference there would be in our worship and service. Who could consider any "duty" placed upon him by such a Savior a burden? Who would have the effrontery to inject his will or "think-so" into his service against the will

of such a Lord?

✓ The hearer who responds by doing, after looking into the "law of liberty," will be blessed.

and so continueth,—The Greek has double participles used as substantives ("the one looking" and "the one continuing to [look])." The King James "continueth therein," that is, in the law, is somewhat misleading. The one who looks into and continues to look into the word (while at the same time he does not forget to do) is the one who is blessed. The perfecting of character (and thus our salvation) depends upon both continual contemplation of the word and translating it into fruit in our lives.

The verb used by James for "continueth" is used by Paul in Philippians 1:25 of his continuing to live in the midst of the churches. But it is John who gave the word its distinctive meaning in the New Testament, as he used it to emphasize the continuing to live by the word (John 8:31; II John 9). And see I Timothy 2:15; II Timothy 3:14. James' point is not far different, for he implies that action must follow the continuing to look.

being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh,—The two phrases are grammatically alike; both have nouns depending upon a possessive (genitive) which is descriptive or adjectival: "a hearer of forgetfulness" and a "doer of work." They mean "not a forgetful hearer" but an "active worker." Consider the parallels as "servant of unrighteousness" for "unrighteous servant" (Luke 16:8) and "judges of evil thoughts" for "evil-thinking judges" in James 2:4.<sup>1</sup>

shall be blessed in his doing.—The blessing is the approbation and reward of God for a "well-done." Compare the words of Jesus in John 13:17, "If ye know these things, blessed will you be if you do them." In Jesus' parable of the wise and unwise builders (Matthew 7:24ff) the blessing is that of having the house to stand. The blessing is in the doing; it is realized in the continuous application to duty in a free spirit.

#### C. The Application: Pure and Vain Religion. 1:26-27

James now selects three things which illustrate how a man may be a hearer of the word—how he may, in fact, be very attendant

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<sup>1</sup>See the article "Exegetical Helps - Genitive of Description," *Restoration Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (3rd Quarter), 1958, pp. 128ff.

26 If any man <sup>16</sup>thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain.

<sup>16</sup>Or, *seemeth to be*.

upon the "services" of the church—and still be a "forgetful hearer" whose religion is vain. The three are control of the tongue, benevolence, and purity of life.

26 If any man thinketh himself to be religious,—The verb means to "fancy or suppose." "Seems to be" can be misleading. James is speaking of the man who deceives himself, not an insincere person. A man may suppose himself to be devout or pious while not heeding what he has heard about self-control of the tongue (I Corinthians 3:18). Another possible meaning is "has a reputation as" (Cf. Galatians 2:2,6; Mark 10:42). But the use of the word "deception" seems to favor the other meaning.

"Religious" is the translation of the only use of this adjective in Biblical Greek. However the noun is used in these verses and in Acts 26:5 ("the Jews' religion") and in Colossians 2:18 ("worshiping of angels"). The root word carries the idea of "external rite" or "service." Many people "go to services," and this is a scriptural idea as here. Formal worship is "service" or devotion to God. Though a similar verb is used in the Jewish book of Ecclesiasticus (11:15; 14:16) in the sense of superstition and worship of false gods, the use of verse 29 ("pure and undefiled" religion) forbids that meaning here. The meaning is that one may be a worshipper of God in vain. The warning is in line with the Old Testament prophets who emphasized that the service of God in sacrifices and Sabbath keeping or tithing is of no value if one disregards the duty of justice and mercy and faith. A church or a member of the church can have a name that he lives and be dead (Revelation 3:1) or think himself rich when he is poor (3:17).

**bridleth not his tongue**—The thought is a revival of the idea "swift to hear, slow to speak" in verse 19, and it is, of course, expounded more at length in Chapter 3 where the cognate noun for "bridle" is also used for illustrating control of the tongue. The idea is to restrain, control, and guide the tongue or speech in the proper direction. This is a prime consideration of Bible teaching in both Old and New Testaments: Psalms 39:1; Job 2:10; Matthew 12:34-37; 15:19; Ephesians 4:25-29.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

but deceives his heart—The implied completion of the condition is “If one thinks himself religious . . . while he isn’t (as seen in his lack of self-control), then his religion is vain.” See on verse 22, “deluding your own selves.”

this man’s religion is vain.—It is useless for one to worship God who so obviously omits such a vital part of what the true religion given by God is. Jesus taught that we should leave our gift at the altar and be reconciled to our brother before our worship is acceptable (Matthew 5:23). “Vain” means “useless,” “empty,” or “fruitless.” So faith may be useless (I Corinthians 15:17; cf. also Titus 3:9; I Corinthians 3:20; Matthew 15:8; and I Peter 1:18).

27 Pure religion and undefiled—“Pure religion” is the antithesis of the vain or empty religion just mentioned. We might expect “useful” as the antithesis, but James varies the parallel. “Pure” means “what is free from stain or sin” (as in “pure in heart,” Matthew 5:8, and “clean conscience,” I Timothy 3:9). If one holds the faith in partiality, he sins (2:9). So if one is indifferent to the suffering and is immoral in life, he sins. Only “pure” religion is useful. There seems to be no difference in “pure” and “undefiled.” Acceptable worship is that which combines religious service and a holy life with active participation in good deeds (see on James 3:17).

before our God and father—The standard of judgment of what is acceptable is God’s, not ours. His is the only absolute standard of acceptability; we must do what is “good and acceptable in the sight of God” (I Timothy 2:3). See Romans 2:13; Job 9:2; I Corinthians 3:19; Galatians 3:11; II Thessalonians 1:6; I Peter 2:4; II Peter 3:8. To set our own standard is “will worship” (Colossians 2:18). The Greek has no pronoun “our”; however, the translation of the definite article in such a place as this as possessive is correct.

The father” seems to be added (so Huther) to emphasize that the God we worship is the Father. This emphasizes the aspect of his nature as love. If we worship God, who is father and who loves His creatures, while we ourselves are heartless and merciless, we should be able ourselves to see that there is something incongruous in our worship.

James defines the contents of pure religion in the following infinitives, in both a positive and negative way. Of course this is not an exhaustive definition. James is merely illustrating. Later in the epistle James mentions other things which are a part of or a defect in our service to God.

to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,—“To visit” literally means “to look in on” or “go to see.” But religiously the word had a long history in the sense of “supplying the needs of” or “caring for” (as in Jeremiah 23:2; Zechariah 11:16; Matthew 25:36, 43). The meaning is especially fixed here by the term “affliction” or “distress,” that is, their being destitute and hence lacking in the necessities of life. In the Old Testament the word is used of God’s visiting His people by delivering them and supplying their needs and wishes (Genesis 21:1; Exodus 3:16; 4:31). Though the verb is cognate with the verb “to oversee” in the New Testament, this is not the meaning here (as has just been demonstrated by an examination of the context), and the verb does not mean here “to take them under the oversight of the church,” that is, for the church itself to provide institutional care for the widows and orphans. But this does not preclude that elders are to take the lead in visiting and seeing that the wants of the needy are supplied. So Polycarp, an early Christian, wrote that elders “are to be tender-hearted, merciful to all, converting the erring, visiting all who are sick; not neglecting the widow or orphan or needy, and providing always what is good in the sight of God.” (Philippians Chapter 6)

• “The fatherless” is literally “orphans,” that is, those “deprived (of their parents).” This may occur either through death or abandonment. A “widow” is one who has been deprived of a husband in either of the above ways. (The word is derived from *charomai*, “I need.”) The abandonment of a child (exposure) was one of the common dark crimes of the ancient pagan world and resulted in many orphans. There is abundant evidence that neither word necessitates loss by death only. It is heartless to think of a child whose parents are dead as an orphan, but one abandoned as not. The Greek will allow the wider usage, but some modern interpreters will not.

The duty mentioned here is highlighted in the ministry of the early church. In Acts 6 daily ministrations to widows is put under



the Seven; I Timothy 5:3 enjoins the support of widows who do not have relatives to support them. Old Testament references are numerous: Deuteronomy 26:19; Exodus 22:22; Job 31:16f.

The New Testament puts no limitation upon which widows or orphans are to be helped. Paul's rule is "Do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith"<sup>1</sup> (Galatians 6:10). One would assume that James' rule would work in the same way.

Among churches of Christ there has been much discussion as to the significance of this passage in the light of our concept of congregational government. Some claim the passage is purely individual, not authorizing or permitting any collective or congregational activity at all. Even if that were true, that would not eliminate such collective action in passages like Acts 6 and I Timothy 5:16 ("Let not the church be burdened; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed").

Others claim that there is a pattern laid down in the New Testament as to how such benevolence to widows and orphans that are dependent upon the church is to be shown. It has actually been asserted that there were "local church homes" established in the New Testament churches for such care. Proof is given as the case of widows in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6) and those the church was obliged to relieve (I Timothy 5:16). But surely there is no such information given or implied in these passages. In either case what is to keep one from supposing that the food or support was supplied to the widows who maintained their own homes? That the church had direct responsibility in such cases is clear. How it was discharged is not spelled out. Such a matter is one of expediency so long as it does not violate the teaching of the New Testament. Whether a local church sets up a local home to care for its orphans (with help in case others desire fellowship), whether one church provides the service which may be utilized by others, or whether a private home is set up by individuals holding the work in trust and administering it as representatives or messengers of the churches (as is done in principle in II Corinthians 8:19, 20, 23) would seem to be left to our discretion. If a local church may contribute

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<sup>1</sup>"Especially" here refers to two different groups, as it ordinarily does. See I Timothy 4:13, where "books" and "parchments" mean two different things. In "He is the savior of all men, especially of them that believe," Paul means that He is the savior of two groups, one potentially and the other actually.

to a private home (as in I Timothy 5:16), why can it not contribute to the same kind of home set up by either individuals or a church in lieu of the home which no longer exists? Let no one be fooled by false issues of "institutionalism." The real issue in the "how" of benevolent work is the making of laws where God has not made them.

The point is raised as to whether the action of the verbs "to visit" and "to keep unspotted from the world" is not individual, since both verbs have as their subject "one" in "oneself." It is true that the subject implied for the infinitives is individual. But this proves nothing about the "how." The fact that the responsibility is individual does not mean it may not be collectively discharged. In the Jerusalem church the individual Christians kept themselves unspotted from the world and also individually ("all sold their possessions") gave to the church ("laid it at the apostles' feet"). The result of such individual discharge of responsibilities was that through the church (Acts 6) they discharged their responsibilities. Both actions carried individual responsibilities, but one was discharged singly and the other collectively.

**keep oneself unspotted from the world.**—Cf. the use of "unspotted" in I Timothy 6:14 ("keep the commandment without spot") and see I Peter 1:19 and II Peter 3:14. The idea is that one should guard himself from the world of evil or corruption so that he is not defiled by it. See in greater detail the comment on James 4:1-10. The "world" here is the realm of Satan, the world of evil men who are in the kingdom of evil (I John 2:15). "Friendship with the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4). One must not defile himself with the sinful pleasures of the world if his worship is to be acceptable.

## SECTION THREE

## THE SIN OF RESPECT OF PERSONS

2:1-13

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

<sup>1</sup>Or, *do ye, in accepting persons, hold the faith . . . glory?*

The second chapter of James begins with a warning against the sin of partiality or respect of persons. It grew out of a sin which James seemingly knew to be prevalent among the Jewish churches and was related to his previous discussion by furnishing a further example of inconsistency on the part of those whose practice of pure and undefiled religion was defective. Just as those who were hearers and not doers lacked self-control over their tongues and did not exhibit the love that led to visiting the fatherless and widows, so also they showed that they did not possess the right attitude toward the poor people. James rebukes them sharply and calls them "evil" and "sinners." The thought of James 1:26f that religion must reflect the great importance of conduct is now enlarged in a specific illustration of something of which many of his readers were guilty.

1 My brethren,—That is James' oft-repeated address and (as Mayor says) seems very appropriate here, where he is to address them on a breach of brotherly love.

hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ,—“Have (hold) faith” is a characteristic Greek expression for possessing a trait or inner quality. It occurs in such expressions as “have love” (John 5:42) and “have hope” (Acts 24:15). Other occurrences are Acts 14:9; Romans 14:22; I Timothy 1:19. It means virtually the same as to “believe in” something. Thus “faith” is subjective and does not refer to the teaching or doctrine to be received (as in Galatians 1:23). This indicates also that “of the Lord Jesus Christ” is objective and means “have faith in” or “believe in” the Lord Jesus Christ. For this usage see Romans 3:26; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 3:12; Philippians 3:9. Having such faith is an essential element of being a Christian. “To have faith” in such a context is virtually the same as “to be a Christian.” “The believers” or simply “believing” is often a simple way of saying “Christians.”

The text of Westcott-Hort and several commentators (Cf. the margin of the ASV) take this sentence as a question. There is no way except the context to tell for sure. The Greek verb form here is the same for the imperative and the indicative (question), and the particle with which the sentence begins may be the negative with an imperative or an interrogative particle expecting a negative answer. Knowling points out that the conjunction "for" in verse 2 is smoother if read after an imperative than after a question. Too, the question expecting a "no" answer would be quite ironic: "You don't hold the faith . . . with respect of persons, do you?" On the whole, the reading of the ASV is best. Taken as an imperative the construction means "Quit having faith . . ." James knows that his brethren are guilty.

**the Lord of glory,**—Jesus is either described as "Lord of glory" or as "the Lord, the glory" (apposition). The arrangement of the words makes it difficult to decide; both yield good sense. The first expression means either that He is the Lord of the realm of glory or brightness, where God lives, or it is a qualitative (descriptive) modifier meaning "the glorious Lord." If it is to be taken as an appositive with "the Lord Jesus Christ," it means Jesus "who is the glory." The thought is that of the identification of Jesus (or the transference to Him) of the Shekinah or "glory" of God by which His presence was signified at the tabernacle in the Old Testament. See Exodus 24:17; 40:34; Numbers 14:10.

**with respect of persons.**—Some things are incompatible with faith in Jesus Christ. John taught that one could not love God and hate his fellow man (I John 4:20). Faith in Jesus as Lord excludes partiality or respect of persons. To hold Jesus in proper respect as Lord necessitates the right attitude toward men. So James demands that Christians quit combining faith in Jesus with the wrong attitude toward the poor.

"Respect of persons" in the Greek originally meant to "lift up the face of someone" or to "receive him with favor." So in Malachi 1:8, "Will he accept thy person?" It then came to mean "show favoritism" (see Leviticus 19:15; Psalms 82:2). The noun itself is not used in the Septuagint, but its meaning is clear. It is found in Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9, and Colossians 3:25. One of the laws of the Old Testament was: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor

2 For if there come into your <sup>2</sup>synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing;

<sup>2</sup>Or, *assembly*. Comp. Heb. 10. 25 (Gr.)

the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor" (Leviticus 19:15). The Pharisees and chief priests flattered Jesus that "he did not receive persons," i.e., "show not favor" (Goodspeed) or "pay no deference" (NEB). It is distinctly noted in the New Testament that there is no respect of persons with God (Acts 10:34). For this reason, masters must not threaten (Ephesians 6:9); slaves must not do wrong (Colossians 3:25). God does not even favor the "pillars" of the church (Galatians 2:6). He will judge impartially (Romans 2:11; I Peter 1:17). Using another word of the same meaning, Paul tells Timothy that he is to treat elders impartially (I Timothy 5:21). Thus the importance of the principle is seen. In the context the evil judging of people by appearances or partiality is called "evil thinking," "sin," and "transgression."

James is dealing with the sin of showing partiality because of wealth. In our age it might be the same, or it might be social standing, occupation, nationality, or color. Whatever sociological grounds we may insist on for distinctions and separations in our communities, schools, etc., James would insist that distinctions of persons in the church are sins.

2 For if there come into your synagogue—James dramatizes the sin of partiality by a concrete example: action in the very assembly of the church. "Synagogue" was the technical term for a Jewish congregation or group meeting for worship (Matthew 4:23; Acts 17:1). It was also used by metonymy for the place of meeting (Luke 7:5). The literal meaning of the word, however, had no religious connotation. Compare its use in Genesis 1:9 for the gatherings of water. It means literally a "bringing together" or "assembling" (from *sun*, "together," and *ago*, "I lead or bring"). The use here to describe an assembly of Christians is probably to be seen as a reflection of the situation where the churches (especially the Jewish churches) are still so closely related to the synagogues of the Jews that no great distinction is made between them. Notice how Paul separated the disciples from the synagogue (Acts 19:9). The Jewish Christians would probably continue for some

3 and ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say, Sit thou here in a good place; and ye say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool;

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time to call their own assemblies after their Jewish names. It is certain that the synagogue influenced the early churches a great deal. The organization of the local churches with a plurality of elders seems to have been taken over from the synagogue. So it is not surprising that James still uses the term. An inscription of the early fourth century A.D. is mentioned in Arndt-Gingrich (*Dit. Or.* 608) bearing the reading "synagogue of the Marcionites" from near Damascus.

**a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, . . . a poor man in vile clothing;**—One can almost see the picture of the congregation meeting together in some rented hall or some house belonging to a member and the two strangers (certainly outsiders) entering (not necessarily at the same time). It is implied that they are strangers, for the treatment accorded each is based upon looks, not upon previous knowledge of their characters. The first visitor is a rich man, who comes probably out of curiosity. His gold ring (Luke 15:22) and fine clothing indicate that he is rich. The sources show that the wearing of rings was a custom. Often rings were worn on all but the middle finger. So bad did the ostentation become that some early Christian writers thought that Christians should avoid rings altogether except for sealing documents. "Fine clothing" is literally "bright" or "shining" apparel. Luke uses the same expression for the clothing of the angel who appeared to Peter (Acts 10:30) and for the clothes Herod put on Jesus in mockery (Luke 23:11). The rich man is followed by a poor man in "vile" clothes. James is even more specific; the words literally describe his dress as "dirty" or "filthy" (cf. the figurative use of the word for moral uncleanness in Revelation 22:11).

**3 and ye have regard to**—The verb means "take a look at" (Luke 9:38) or "fix the eyes upon." Then it means to "gaze fixedly on" or "pay special attention to" (NEB). In Luke 1:48 it has a sense of "care especially for." Here the verb calls attention to the fixing of the eyes of the people on the visitor, then to the special attention paid to him as the impression is created by his dress that he is "somebody."

**and say, Sit thou here in a good place;**—This would be the

4 <sup>3</sup>do ye not make distinctions <sup>4</sup>among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

<sup>3</sup>Or, *are you not divided*

<sup>4</sup>Or, *in your own mind*

leader of the congregation, who indicates a place for the visitor, or perhaps the usher. It might even be a member who yields his good place to the rich visitor. There is some discussion as to whether the word rendered "in a good place" really means this or rather "please." At any rate, the suggestion is that of a cordial reception. Our sources mention the custom of designating seats in assemblies: Luke 11:43; 20:46; Mark 12:39.

and ye say to the poor man, Stand . . . or sit under my footstool. —Letting a visitor stand rather than providing a seat (even if some member has to stand) is a mark of discourtesy among most people. To have to sit on the floor at someone's feet is equally a slight, unless it is that of voluntary submission of the student to his teacher, as in Luke 8:35; 10:39 (of Martha at Jesus' feet); and Acts 22:3. The incident which James has recreated is probably just a typical way in which the respect of persons was shown. There may have been other ways (Cf. I Corinthians 11:22).

4 do ye not make distinctions among yourselves,—The verb here has the double sense of making distinctions and of doubting or wavering. This accounts for the margin of the ASV "Are ye not divided in your own mind?" Oesterley takes the verb in the latter sense as indicating a spirit of class distinctions among them which would divide the church, a meaning which is in Josephus (*Wars* 1:27); IV Maccabees 1:14; and in the New Testament in Acts 15:9 ("put no difference between us and them"); and I Corinthians 4:7 ("who maketh thee to differ"). Compare also Acts 11:12, "Go with them, making no distinctions." Mayor is similar but suggests the idea is that of inner divisions, the double mind of 1:8. This means that there is a sharp distinction between what one thinks at one time (profession) and what one thinks or does at another (practice). This is, then, a form of "wavering, doubting, or hesitating." This meaning for the verb seems to have been used first in the New Testament. Goodspeed translates "waver." Either meaning of the verb is well attested and will fit the context. The meaning "make distinction" seems to fit better; at least it goes better with the next word "become judges." At any rate, the idea

of James is that their actions represent a vacillation, either of a group among its members or of individuals in consistency or inner approval of a course of action. The end result is judging the worth of men by appearances.

judges with evil thoughts?—The Greek has literally “judges of evil thoughts.” The possessive is a descriptive or qualitative use (as in 1:25, “hearer of forgetfulness” = “forgetful hearer”) and is equal to “evil-thinking judges.” Mayor translates “wrong-considering judges.” In 4:11 James says that the one who speaks against his neighbor judges him. Jesus said that evil judging rises from the heart (Matthew 15:19) and is one of the things which defile the man. In making distinctions on outward appearances they were judging. Jesus had judging from appearances in mind when he said, “Judge not that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1). Only God is qualified to judge; even when we see evidence of evil deeds, human judgments are not correct, because we cannot know the heart. Judgments on the basis of the kind of clothing worn is even less judicious and hence “evil” or sinful.

The argument of verses 5-12 runs as follows: God judges by different standards from those being used by James' readers. He has selected as His own the poor of the world, for as a group they possess the faith to be heirs of the kingdom. The rich, on the other hand, oppress the poor and blaspheme the name called upon the Christians. It is assumed that some claim that in their action they were fulfilling the royal law given by Moses to love the neighbor. If this is so, it is well so far as it goes. But the principle of justifying ourselves by the law demands that every law be kept. It takes only the breaking of one law to make a lawbreaker. The same law that teaches to love the neighbor teaches also not to respect persons. So the appeal to the law fails as long as partiality is shown.

All the Christian's acts are to be judged, as James had already shown, by the law of liberty. This law actually frees him from the law as such and judges him by the law of love. Such a law implies mercy and procures for the one showing mercy the mercy of God Himself. So the one who speaks and acts as one to be judged in this way may be happy and confident in the face of impending judgment.



5 Hearken, my beloved brethren; did not God choose them that are poor as to the world *to be* rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him?

5 did not God choose them that are poor as to the world—This verse sets forth the proof that the action of the readers is wrong. Their favoritism is both inconsistent with God's attitude toward the poor and also with the attitude of the rich themselves toward God's people. The Jew was confident that he was God's chosen. Deuteronomy 14:1-2, "You are sons of the Lord your God . . . because you are to the Lord your God a holy people, and the Lord your God chose you that ye might become a people of his own possession." Back of the thought is the idea that it was not any intrinsic merit or wealth that caused the selection, but the promise of Israel's fulfilling God's purpose in their faith. The New Testament adopts this as fulfilled in the church. Christians are God's elect (Ephesians 1:4; I Peter 1:1). A lack of worldly pride is seen in the fulfillment: "But God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world that he might put to shame the things that are strong" (I Corinthians 1:27). This same concept lies behind James' words. God has chosen those who are poor in some respects (i.e., in regard to the world) but rich in another (i.e., in regard to the faith) to be His own and to be the heirs of His promises. This does not mean "rich in faith" as though they had faith in abundance, nor does it mean that their faith is their riches. The dative is the dative of relationship, like "fair in respect to God" in Acts 7:20 and "powerful in respect to God" in II Corinthians 11:4. The wealth that is connected with the faith of the Christian is the same as that to which he is heir—the kingdom, the salvation which is in Christ.

Whether the ASV is right in taking "rich in faith," etc., to be an implied predicate (supplying "to be" rich) is open to question. What the language says as it stands is that God chose the poor, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. These are the kind he chooses. When one becomes these, he is one of the chosen. This does not make the poor as a class destined to become rich in faith and heirs, nor does it exclude the rich. It merely observes that there is a condescension in God's choice. Poverty and election usually coincide. God knew that the world would be so constituted

6 But ye have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgment-seats?

that those fulfilling his purpose would largely fall among this group, and so it has happened (I Corinthians 1:26). The rich themselves may qualify, as James has indicated in 1:10. (See also I Timothy 6:17ff) But riches are a danger for one and make his way to salvation difficult (Matthew 19:23ff).

James' point is quite plain: Of the two visitors to the service, the poor is much more likely to become a Christian and become an heir of the heavenly kingdom; yet the Christians so look upon worldly appearances that they favor the other man. It is not that they ought to be discourteous to either person; but they should not dishonor either, especially the poor. In mistreating the poor they are mistreating the same kind of people as themselves.

From this James turns to the way the rich generally treat the Christians.

6 But ye have dishonored the poor man.—The action of the church in showing partiality and giving the rich man the good seat and making the poor stand or sit on the floor simply because of his poverty was a dishonor. "Despised" is a possible meaning (Cf. Field, *Notes on the Translation of the New Testament*), but by etymology and usage the word usually meant to "dishonor" or "show disrespect to." The verb usually means "to insult or degrade" (Mark 12:4; Acts 5:41). "The poor man" is the generic use of the singular noun with the article, not merely "this poor man," but the poor as such. See James 5:6 for what is probably a similar usage.

Do not the rich oppress you,—The verb means to "dominate" or "exercise power over," almost always in a bad sense. It is at times used of the tyrannical rule of the devil or evil spirits over men (Acts 10:38). It signifies also exploiting people, often being used in the Old Testament of exploiting widows and orphans (Micah 2:2; Amos 8:4; Zechariah 7:10; and Jeremiah 7:6). The verb is past tense in Greek (aorist), which may be the aorist of proverbial or general statements (gnomic).

and themselves drag you before the judgment-seats?—The pronoun "themselves" is emphatic and points to the fact that it is the very people who do this that are being respected. They are the

**7 Do not they blaspheme the honorable name** <sup>6</sup>by which ye are called?

<sup>6</sup>Gr. *which was called upon you?* See Acts 15. 17.

ones guilty of dragging or having Christians dragged before the judgment-seats.

James is probably thinking of the rich Sadducees who persecute Christians (Acts 4:1; 13:50). The Sadducees, though small in number, controlled the Sanhedrin with its wealth acquired from the tribute money from Jews all over the world. They were the chief instigators of the early persecutions of the church. Christians because they were despised may also have been often singled out by the rich merchants and landowners and prosecuted for their debts. "Drag" implies force and is actually mentioned in cases of arrest in Acts 9:1; 16:19; 21:30. Such is the kind of action Jesus had forewarned his disciples about (Matthew 10:7; John 16:2). The judges were the Jewish courts which the Romans permitted (Matthew 10:17; 9:2; 26:11; I Corinthians 6:2, 4).

**7 Do not they blaspheme**—To "blaspheme" is to "revile" or "speak disrespectfully" of something that is honorable or sacred. The word is usually translated "blaspheme" when it is something holy or sacred (Acts 19:37; Romans 2:24) and "revile" when it is directed toward man (Titus 3:2; Romans 3:8). Literally the word means to "speak evil."

**the honorable name,**—The name meant is undoubtedly (in view of Biblical usage) the name of Jesus. The Jews would not ordinarily blaspheme the name Christ (Messiah), which was a title sacred to them, except as they might do so by ironically ridiculing the claim of Jesus to be the Christ (as in Mark 15:32). "Blaspheme" here implies the desecration of the name in the knowledge that Christians considered it a worthy or sacred name. I Corinthians 12:3 ("Jesus is anathema") shows that some cursed the name of Jesus. Pliny's letter in the first century shows that rulers put Christians on the stand to "curse Jesus," which it was understood "no true Christian would do." A writer tells of being brought to his senses in this respect by the look on his Arab guide's face when he thoughtlessly used the word "Allah" as a byword. Zahn and others think the reference is to rich Christians who apostatize and in persecution curse the name of Jesus as Lord, the idea being that the rich were more easily induced to do this. This Plummer and

Mayor reject, pointing out that "upon you" (rather than "upon them") differentiates the readers from those who do this. Luke speaks of the unbelieving Jews (Acts 13:45) as "contradicting, speaking blasphemy."

by which ye are called?—The passive (as in the ASV margin) is to be read: "which is called upon you." The proper background for the phrase is Amos 9:12, quoted in Acts 15:17: "I will build again the tabernacle of David . . . that the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called." The passive of the verb here is used with the noun "name" as in the Old Testament to designate the latter as the property of the one wearing the name. See II Samuel 6:2 (of the ark); I Kings 8:43; Jeremiah 7:30 (of the temple); Jeremiah 14:9 (of Israel); and also Numbers 6:27; II Chronicles 7:14; Isaiah 63:19; Jeremiah 25:29. It is even used of the wife assuming the husband's name (Isaiah 4:1) and of the children (Genesis 48:16). Actually it makes little difference whether the active or passive translation is given, since, after the name is called upon one, it is assumed by him and he is called by it (Isaiah 43:7). This does not mean that the Israelite wore a form of Jehovah's name; it was fulfilled in his acknowledging that he belonged to Jehovah. So James had said, "James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:1). This is the meaning of the NEB translation: "The honored name by which God has claimed you," which gives the significance of the wording rather than the translation.

In view of this background the probability is that the reference is to the invocation of the name of Jesus Christ upon the believer at baptism (Acts 2:38, "in the name of Jesus Christ"; and see 8:16; 10:48).<sup>1</sup>

From this it is very unlikely that the reference is to the derogatory use of the name "Christian."

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<sup>1</sup>"Calling upon the name of Jesus" (Acts 22:16) is different. This signifies calling upon God or Jesus (Cf. I Samuel 12:17f) or their name (Genesis 13:4; 21:33) in worship (prayer). This may be in a plea for help (II Samuel 22:7) in recognition of authority (as is probably Acts 3:6; 19:13). Stephen dies "calling upon the name of the Lord" (Acts 7:59); his actual words were "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" and "lay not this sin to their charge." The concept occurs often: Acts 2:21; 9:14; Romans 10:13f; I Corinthians 1:2; and especially II Timothy 2:22. Compare "If ye call upon God as father" (I Peter 1:7).

8 Howbeit if we fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, <sup>9</sup>Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well:

<sup>9</sup>Lev. xix. 18

8 **Howbeit if ye fulfil the royal law,**—This section has some difficulties of interpretation, but the sense seems to be as follows: James anticipates that some of his hearers will justify their showing favors to the rich by referring to the commandment which said that the Jew was to love his neighbor as himself. It may be that James knew that this was already being used as an excuse. He shows that such an attempt fails as a justification of the action on the grounds that it falls short of fulfilling the whole law.

“The royal law” is identified by James as summed up in (“according to”) loving one’s neighbor<sup>1</sup> (Leviticus 19:18). Why is this called the “royal” law? It is either because of its transcending importance among the laws of the Old Testament (Cf. Jesus’ saying that this was the “second” like unto “Love God with your whole heart.”) or because it is from the King (Compare “royal country” = “the King’s country,” Acts 12:20). Knowling and Ropes favor the idea that the meaning is “supreme”; but Arndt-Gingrich take the other meaning. At any rate, the appeal is to the law of love as that of first importance. James’ critics are saying, “Surely an action which fulfills such a law could not be wrong.”

**ye do well.**—James has no quarrel with fulfilling the righteousness of the law. Nor does the New Testament ever have. What was morally right under the law is an expression of God’s will and is the object of achievement under the gospel (Romans 7; 8:3; 13:10). There is little difference between the morality of the law and the gospel, though there is a difference in application. If one actually was trying to fulfill the concept of love as laid down in the law, he would be doing excellently.

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<sup>1</sup>Adventists often make “the royal law” mean the Ten Commandments. The expression may mean (with Ropes) not merely this passage, as “law” is not used in the sense of specific commandments, but of the whole Law of Moses of which Leviticus 19:18 is a part, and a part whose perfect keeping implies the keeping of the whole law (Mark 12:31; Romans 13:8).

9 but if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors.

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is become guilty of all.

9 but if ye have respect of persons,—James assumed that this is so, just as he had assumed that they were attempting to fulfill the royal law. (In both places he used a condition assumed as fulfilled.) The respect of persons had been demonstrated in the favor to the rich. The excuse involved the readers in an inconsistency which James goes on to explain. "Ye commit sin" means (compare note on 1:20) "Ye practice sin," become guilty of sinning. The reason that this can be said so specifically is that the law plainly forbade this. As has been pointed out, partiality is prohibited in the same chapter which speaks of love of neighbor, Leviticus 19:15: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty." Compare Deuteronomy 1:17; 16:19. Thus the law points to the one who respects person as a transgressor. By an appeal to the law, nothing but sin can be made of their action toward the poor.

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law,—This verse is difficult, but it is usually interpreted as follows. It states the principle which makes the former argument valid. The keeping of the whole law is useless as a matter of justification unless it is kept perfectly.

and yet stumble in one point,—The verb "stumble" here, as in James 3:2, means to "sin" (See Romans 11:11; II Peter 1:10; Jude 24). "In one *point*" means "one precept or commandment," with the word "point" or "precept" understood.

is become guilty of all.—This means to become guilty of violating the law as a whole—of becoming a lawbreaker. One does not need to go to rabbinical parallels to illustrate this. Paul stated the principle to the Galatians: "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them" (Galatians 3:10). Nor is this a strange rule even in civil law. If one murders, he becomes a lawbreaker and may pay the supreme penalty, though he may have kept all law for many years. Paul explains in Romans 7 that the law of sin in our members brings us into sin even if we desire to keep the law. So we all sin (Cf. James

11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou dost not commit adultery, but killest, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

Ex. xx. 13f. Dt. v. 17f.

12 So speak ye, and so do, as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty.

3:2). This is the reason that one cannot be justified by the law; he cannot keep it perfectly as he must do to be declared innocent (be justified).

Thus James is saying that those who appeal to the law to justify their partiality are condemned as transgressors because they are guilty of breaking another precept in the same action. James is not saying that the law is still binding upon Christians as such; he is answering those who appeal to the law of love to justify their sin. This is clear from verse 12. Christians are under the law of love. Under this they are really free from the *law* to love their neighbor (Galatians 5:13) but have become slaves to Christ and their neighbors out of love.

11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery,—Commentators labor explaining why James chooses these two commands (perhaps because they offend most against the law of love?). These are likely chosen as typical laws. The law is an expression of the will of the lawgiver. One cannot pick out the law which pleases him and let the others go. The only way to be approved by the law is to keep the whole law.

Paul in Romans 2 pointed out the inconsistency of the Jews, who took pride in themselves as “teachers” or “guides of the blind”: they only taught the law but did not keep it, or they kept one part and neglected the other (Romans 2:17ff).

So if one keeps some laws but breaks others, he “becomes a transgressor of the law.” Thus by the appeal for a judgment by the law, those showing partiality condemned themselves as sinners.

12 So speak ye, and so do,—James uses imperatives in the present tense, of continuous action. We are to live continuously both in our words and speech in view of the way we are to be judged.

as men who are to be judged by a law of liberty.—Jesus emphasizes the urgency of the Christian life. The Christian expects the Lord at any time. He must be ready at any time to give account. At the time when the world expects not, the Lord will come. The con-

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13 For judgment *is* without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment.

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struction used in Greek<sup>1</sup> was one that replaced the Classical future in some circumstances. It was used of things which were sure to come to pass. It was a favorite construction in expressing decrees or what was fixed by necessity (Matthew 25:31; II Corinthians 5:10; Acts 11:28; 24:25; 27:10). "Judged" here does not mean, as in some other passages in James, "condemned" (Cf. 4:11), but it means to be confronted by the judge to be assessed as guilty or justified according to law. Christians understand that they are to be judged by the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 2:16). "By a law of liberty" is a reference to the description of the "word of truth" or the "implanted word" (1:18, 21), as "the law of liberty" in James 1:25. For the meaning of the expression, see the comment on that passage. It seems most likely that James repeats his reference to this term by way of contrast with the law or test being proposed by those who were guilty of partiality. They had implied that they justified their action by appealing to the royal law of Leviticus 19:18. James has countered by showing that that provision is a part of the whole of the Jewish Law, which included the Ten Commandments. Justification under that law demands a consistency of action in keeping the whole law; one cannot just choose which he would keep and let the others go. Partiality is condemned by the same law, so no appeal to the law can be made to justify something it condemns. Having shown that this device will not work, James then in our present verse says, in effect, that Christians are not judged by the Law of Moses anyway, but by the perfect law, the law of liberty. Remembering the free yoke which we have assumed to the will of Christ, out of the debt of gratitude which we owe to Him, we ought to act toward the poor as that law of love (freely assumed and no longer a burden of law) indicates that we should. The exact stipulation of that law, of course, is that we are all one man in Christ Jesus: whether Jew or Greek, bond or free, rich or poor. Our judgment as Christians will not be as a matter of law, but as a matter of obedience to this law of liberty.

13 For judgment is without mercy—The "judgment" referred

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<sup>1</sup>*Mello* with the infinitive



to is that implicit in the expression of the previous verse "judged by the law of liberty." The judgment which Christians will be subjected to is that of the gospel of Christ. Christ's teaching about that judgment shows plainly what basis will be used to justify his followers, those "blessed of the Father" who will be welcomed into the "joys of the Lord." But those who have not ministered to the unfortunate will be told, "Depart from me, ye cursed" (Matthew 25:24, 41). Even under the law of liberty no mercy will be shown those who do not meet the test of mercy to others.

to him that hath showed no mercy:—"Mercy" in such an expression as this is virtually a synonym for the right attitude toward the poor. "Pity" or "compassion" on those without the necessities of life (the widow, the fatherless, the one without food and clothing), as we saw in 1:27, is a vital part of Christ's law of love. This teaching is quite plain. This Jesus illustrated in the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:23-35), the story of a servant forgiven of an enormous debt who in turn refused compassion on a fellowservant who owed him a small amount. The principle of reciprocity is basic to forgiveness. He who is not forgiving cannot be forgiven. But the classic expression is Jesus' own picture of the last judgment, in which the disciples are separated as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats on the basis of whether "ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren" (Matthew 25:31-46). John asks how one could claim that the love of God dwells in him who sees a brother hungry and does not feed him (I John 3:17). Love must be not merely in word but in deed. This is James' climax to the discussion of the sin of judging. Those who take the attitude of despising the poor, as they were doing, will face the judgment under the law of liberty without mercy, for they have shown the poor no mercy.

mercy glorieth against judgment.—This states the opposite and favorable side: Those who have shown mercy under the law of liberty may face that judgment with confidence. Mercy "glories" or "boasts" against the threat of judgment because it leaves the judgment with nothing to condemn. The man who has loved the poor and has shown mercy toward them (all other things being equal) will be justified in the last judgment and will receive the blessing of Christ. Just as "love casteth out fear" (I John 4:18), so having

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mercy relieves the Christian of the fear of judgment.

Thus James deals with the sin of partiality in the church. He has shown that it is a sin clearly inconsistent with the Christian's profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## SECTION FOUR

## THE RELATION OF FAITH AND WORKS

2:14-26

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The last half of James 2 constitutes one of the best-known and most controversial sections of the epistle—indeed, of the whole Bible. Martin Luther thought that James here was in direct opposition to Paul's teaching on justification by faith in Romans; and, since he considered Paul's doctrine as the touchstone for interpreting the New Testament, he considered James an inferior part of the canon—a "right strawy epistle." At the proper point the relationship of James and Paul in their teaching on justification will be examined.

The relation of this section to the earlier parts of the letter should not be lost sight of. James has insisted that true religion must show itself in proper response. It is not merely the hearer who is saved by the word, but the doer. Religious works or acts of service which do not find accompaniment in works of love and moral living are vain (James 1:22-25). Faith toward Christ must not be held with respect of persons, or the Christian becomes a sinner (James 2:1-8). James now shows that faith as the foundation attitude of the gospel must find expression in works of obedience if it is to be a saving or justifying faith. If it does not, it is a dead faith; and the man who thinks that such faith will save is vain. There must be more than faith; works must help faith for it to achieve its purpose of justification. But one will not understand James 2:14-26 unless it is remembered that with James, no less than with Paul, faith is the necessary foundation or ground of salvation.

Some have wondered if James was refuting Paul's language in Romans 3-4. This can hardly be true if one accepts both letters as inspired. The Spirit of God does not refute itself. It is quite possible to demonstrate that there is no necessary contradiction between the meaning and application of the two passages. Others think that James may have been correcting a wrong use of Paul's teaching by some of the early Christians. This is only barely possible. Paul wrote the Roman letter in the year 58 A.D., and James

died in the early 60's. We do know, of course, that some of Paul's teaching was abused, such as his teaching of grace, which was used to teach antinomianism (Romans 6:1ff). Thus some may have excused their lack of obedience to the law of liberty by seizing upon Paul's teaching that justification was by faith as the merit apart from the works of the law.

Other commentators, however, feel that it is unlikely that Palestinian Jewish Christians would have appropriated and misused Paul's doctrine. They feel that James is simply writing against the tendency of Jews to feel that their racial and religious position with the superior knowledge and beliefs put them in a more favorable position with God and, in fact, guaranteed them salvation even without adequate response to the teaching. This was the shallowness which had been refuted by the great prophets of the O.T. There would still be such pride and shallowness in some Jews who were attracted to or embraced Christianity. Nicodemus thought that by accepting Jesus as a teacher come from God he could join forces with Jesus. He was taught that he must be born again even to see the kingdom (John 3:1-5). James has already shown that some looked into the word or were hearers and did nothing.

Another question which is often raised by way of introduction to this passage is whether James is speaking about the initial act of justification in primary obedience to the gospel (becoming a Christian) or whether he is speaking of the fruits of good works in the Christian's life (as in James 3:17). The question is important because some would apply the principle of James to the discussion about baptism as a saving act of obedience (I Peter 3:21; Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16) as proving that the faith of the alien must be expressed in a work of obedience to be "perfected" and justifying. Others argue that Paul had taught that justification is by faith without any work of obedience in being saved and that by "justify" in James 2 the author means "the declaring of righteousness" which belongs to the saved and that this is done by such works or good deeds as are the fruits of faith in the Christian's life, for example, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked.

This question is somewhat difficult to answer. Ropes thinks that James in 1:19-21 is speaking of a Christian's attention to the knowledge of God's word and not to initial acceptance of the gos-

14 What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?

pel. But Ross applies it to such hearing of the gospel as that of the Bereans in Acts 17:11. The use of the word "justify" is thought by some to favor the idea of primary obedience, but in a passage like Galatians 5:4 it seems to refer to the activities of Christians. Too, Paul seems to speak of "salvation" to those members of the church (Philippians 2:15) as something dependent upon works—continued obedience to the will of Christ during the course of the Christian life. Strictly speaking, a Christian's justification or pardon from sin is conditioned in the N.T. upon repentance and confession of sins (I John 1:7-9; Acts 8:22f). But his continual acceptance by the Father is dependent upon his fruitful obedience to the truth. Hence it really makes little difference whether the passage is taken one way or the other. Paul's salvation without works included the obedience of faith (Romans 1:5; Galatians 2:27). Though it seems that James and Paul are using the term "works" in different ways, still, if James is speaking of activity of the Christian life, he is talking about the principle of justification, which works in both areas.

14 What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, —James begins his refutation of the erroneous idea that faith can save without works by pointing up the issue sharply with a series of questions to state his fundamental position that faith which does not result in works is vain or useless, just as religion which is not lived out is vain (1:26).

"What doth it profit?" means "What good is it to the man?" Compare Jesus' "What shall a man be profited?" (Matthew 16:26). Paul asked the same question about his suffering. If there is no resurrection, "What is the profit?" The adjective is found in the LXX in Job 15:3. It is not that there is no profit in faith. James would never affirm this. Nor does James deny that one might really have faith without works. But he affirms that faith alone is without profit for a man, because it cannot result in his salvation.

One should not emphasize the "say he hath faith" to imply that James means that one claims to have faith but really does not. It is essential to James' argument that one may be assumed to be a believer without being a worker. A faith which is not active may

be unworthy of the name and of no value, but that does not mean that it is insincere. "Faith" is introduced without definition as the basic ingredient of the Christian life. A "believer" is a frequent name in the Bible for a Christian (Acts 16:1; I Timothy 5:16). James has already emphasized faith in his letter (1:3, 6; 2:1). He uses it in a general sense without regard to the subtleties or implications of meaning (e.g., "trust" or "endurance").

**but have not works?**—By "works" James means any obedience to the law of Christ as a Christian, but generally the term refers to "good deeds" or "conduct," the fruits of the Christian life (Matthew 5:16; 23:3; Romans 2:6; John 3:20). In Titus 1:16 Paul uses it of conduct, consisting of many deeds over a period of time. James has already emphasized that the word of truth must continue to be looked into and "done." He has mentioned specifically such things as "visiting the widows and orphans" (1:21, 25-26). Later he will say that the wise teacher must show "by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom" (3:13), and he specifies "full of mercy and good fruits" (3:17). Thus the reference is to such works which fulfill the law of liberty and by which men will be judged. James is using the same word as Paul in his statement that man is not justified by works (Romans 3:28; 4:2), but he means something altogether different. Paul means meritorious works, such as those performed under the law, which have no relation to the blood of Christ and are performed as the basis or merit of justification in themselves. With James the idea is that a Christian who accepts Christ as his sacrifice and thus has God's righteousness imputed to him must live in obedience of faith to the law of Christ, manifesting his faith in works. Paul would have no quarrel with this. As a matter of fact, Paul is just as insistent on it. The Christian must work out his salvation (Philippians 2:12). He is created unto good works (Ephesians 2:9). He must present his members as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13). Paul warned his readers who were Christians that "If ye live after the flesh, ye must die" (Romans 8:13). The Christian must bring forth fruit unto God (Romans 7:4). Paul himself is the one who coined the phrase "the obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5 and 16:26). Paul would never have denied that works of obedience to the law of Christ are necessary to make a Christian's faith perfect and saving.

**can that faith save him?**—James uses the word "faith" here with

15 If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, 16 and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit?

the article so as to mean "the kind just mentioned," that which has no works, or "faith alone." The question is asked in Greek in such a way as to expect a negative answer: James emphatically is asserting that such a faith (one which has not works) cannot save. "Save" here is to be taken in the same sense as the word in 1:21 "receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your soul." James means the future salvation which is still to be worked out by the man born again (Compare 1:18 with 21 and also II Thessalonians 5:23; II Peter 1:5).

15 If a brother or sister be naked—James begins his discussion of the merits of the claim for a non-working faith by an illustration in which he supposes a fellow Christian, a "brother or sister," did not have the necessities of life. Hereby he emphasizes in a strong and concrete way the necessity of the work of faith. A Christian is under obligation to work that which is good toward all men, but especially toward those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10). We must not love in word only, but in deed as well (I John 3:17-18). James has just demonstrated that works of mercy are necessary toward the poor (2:13). "Naked" does not mean no clothes absolutely. The word is often used for scanty clothes (John 21:7) or clothes which are virtually none at all.

in lack of daily food,—The lack of clothing and food emphasizes the destitution of the fellow Christian. A Christian who does not rise to help his brother in such condition has not the love of God (I John 3:17).

16 and one of you say unto them,—James is thinking of any Christian who might speak these words of seeming concern for brethren. It is not to be thought that James means that those who argue that faith alone is sufficient for salvation are the ones who act this way. He is simply using an illustration to show such people that faith expressed in word only would be worthless. There are many who say and do not, just as there are many who look into the perfect law and do not obey it.

Go in peace,—A similar farewell greeting occurs in Judges 18:6 (Ms. B); II Samuel 3:21; and Acts 16:36. The phrase means something like our English "Keep well" (Arndt-Gingrich). The

17 Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself.

phrase indicates a real concern for the welfare of the needy.

**be ye warmed and filled;**—Huther takes the verbs as reflexive (middle) as meaning “warm and fill yourselves.” This is possible from the form of the verbs, as the forms can be interpreted two ways. But Ropes correctly shows that the context demands the passive. “Warmed” means warmed by good clothes (Job 31:20; Haggai 1:6). Thus James’ words might be translated, “Keep well. Dress warmly and eat well.”

**ye give them not the things needful to the body;**—It is to be noted that James had begun by supposing that this should be done by a member of the church. So he says, “Ye give them not.” The necessities are, of course, the food and clothing necessary to life.

**what doth it profit?**—What value would your good blessing and farewell be? They would not only be useless, but somewhat of a mockery. The application to the thought of the context is given in the next verse.

17 **Even so faith, if it have not works,**—James thus applies the illustration to the contention. Just as the answer to the needy man without deeds of charity would be profitless, so also faith if it have not works is useless. Faith’s “having works” is to be thought of in the sense of something having or including something in itself, and thus bringing it about or causing it (Arndt and Gingrich). James has talked of patience “having perfect work” (1:4); compare “fear hath torment” (I John 4:18) and “boldness which hath great recompense of reward” (Hebrews 10:35). Thus James means that faith may or may not lead to or be characterized by works or good deeds. Compare Paul’s “work of faith” (I Thessalonians 1:3). If it does not produce works or good deeds, it is of no value.

**is dead in itself.**—A faith which does not cause works is dead. James does not contrast faith and works, but a faith which is active and a dead faith which is not. The dead faith is idle or vain (verse 20). This sense of “dead” to mean “idle” or “without value” is common: Revelation 3:1 (“having a name that you live and are dead”); Hebrews 6:1; 9:14; Romans 6:11; 7:8. James says that “of itself” it is dead, thus not able to accomplish anything. “In itself” probably means “as long as it remains or continues by itself” or alone (Arndt and Gingrich). This is the usual meaning of the Greek



18 <sup>8</sup>Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from *thy* works, and I by my works will show thee *my* faith.

<sup>8</sup>Or, *But some one will say*

phrase (Cf. "to live by one's self," Acts 28:16). This is more likely than Ropes' idea that it means "within itself," referring to the inward power. As long as faith is strictly by itself, it is valueless; the moment it acts it is no longer without works and is no longer dead or useless.

18 Yea, a man will say,—The meaning of this verse seems plain, but it is difficult to explain in detail. Some commentators take the whole sentence as the saying of one contending that faith alone will save. Others take the first part to be the contention of such a one, but they take James' answer as beginning with "show me." In this view the man is simply a supposed objector, as in I Corinthians 15:35. Still others see the speaker as different from either James or the "faith only" man of verse 14. Lenski makes the speaker someone who comes to James' readers and says that "you" (some Christian) have faith, and "I" (James) have works. It does not appear important to the thought to settle this point. It is clear that James is refuting the idea that one may be saved in one way, another by a different way.

Thou hast faith, and I have works:—The point of this statement is that one person may excel in one thing and another in still something else, but this does not mean that both may not be acceptable. Each man has his strong points. One man may be saved by his faith, another by his good deeds. Huther and others cannot see these words as coming from an objector who argues for "faith only," since, in this regard, the objector ought to say, "You have works and I have faith," instead of "You have faith and I have works." To avoid this he understands the speaker (like Lenski, above) to be someone different from both James and the man of verse 14. This man on the side might say to James' opponent, "You have faith and I (James) have works." Either way James is rejecting the contention that a one-sided insistence on faith or works will benefit.

show me thy faith apart from thy works,—Whichever way the former part of the sentence goes, this seems to be the reply to the contention that one may have faith and another works. The challenge is to demonstrate or prove the existence of faith without

19 Thou believest that <sup>o</sup>God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder.

<sup>o</sup>Some ancient authorities read *there is one God*.

works. How can it be done? If a man tells me that he will kill me if I don't surrender my wallet, how can I demonstrate that I believe him? I might believe he meant it and still value the contents so much that I would try to avoid parting with my wallet, but it would be hard to prove the presence of faith except by obeying the thief. There is a semantic sense in which some would argue that "real" faith must act and that, unless faith acts, it is not genuine. This is probably not James' point. Faith is demonstrable only through works.

and I by my works will show thee my faith.—This is the logical and (to James) the only way to prove one's faith. The man who professes the faith of Christ and really works at the job of producing fruits to the name of Christ will never be doubted as being a sincere believer. He proves his faith by his works. One who boasts of his faith but never does anything about it would be doubted.

The use of the "you" in the refutation of an idea, in which the writer turns aside to address an imaginary opponent, is supposed to be the evidence that James is patterning his document on the Greek Diatribe style. But it is doubtful that James had ever seen or heard any such in reality. There are too many other possible parallels. Note what is said on the point in the introduction. Metzger points out that the style is well known in rabbinical writings. The Old Testament style of the prophets in addressing their enemies could be James' model, if one is needed (see on 5:1).

19 Thou believest that God is one;—Having taken care of his objector, James now goes to the heart of the argument over the relation of faith and works. Some commentators suppose that in this first concrete instance James touches on the idea that any Jew would claim for his justification—that he believed in the one God of Israel. Had not this belief in Monotheism been the basis of Israel's salvation? This was the fundamental proposition in the Jews' confession of faith or *Shema*, which they prayed daily: Deuteronomy 6:4; Nehemiah 9:6; Isaiah 45:6; Matthew 23:9; Romans 3:30; I Corinthians 8:4,6; and James 4:12. Compare Hermas, *Mandates* 1, 1. 2, "Believe this first of all things, that God is one." This

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20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren?

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is the great and fundamental truth of all the Hebrew-Christian religion. But the belief of this alone is not enough.

**thou doest well:**—James does not despise faith. It bears repeating that James, as Paul, takes faith to be the foundation and meritorious basis of our salvation. James would never belittle faith or any claim to faith. One who believes God is doing well. If he lets that faith do for him what it should, he is on his way to salvation. If not, then he is no better than the demons.

**the demons also believe, and shudder**—“Demons” were “evil spirits” under the service of Satan. They possessed people and in the gospel age were subject to the power of Jesus and the apostles acting in His name. The Gospels show that they recognized Jesus as the Holy one of God and were tormented in His presence. They also believe. But there is no evidence that they can or will repent or express their faith so that they may be redeemed. If a man only believes, in what way is he better than the demons? The verb “shudder” originally meant to “bristle” (as Job 4:14f). But it is used simply of one who stands in awe or reverence (Daniel 7:15). Here it may refer to the demons’ fear of impending punishment.

On the teaching of the Bible on demons the student may consult R. C. Trench, *On the Miracles* (chapter on the demoniac at Capernaum), Unger’s *Biblical Demonology*, and the article by Sweet in the *New International Bible Encyclopedia*. We are not to attribute the statements of Bible about demons to superstition or mental diseases. God’s word affirms their existence. It is no more difficult to believe in demons than to believe in God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, angels, or the devil. For passages that mention and assume the existence of such, see: Luke 8:30; Matthew 11:18; Luke 7:33; John 7:20; 8:48f; Matthew 12:24. The Bible hints (though it does not state plainly) that the demons were to be consigned to the abyss (Matthew 8:29; Luke 8:31). In I Timothy 4:1ff the false teaching is attributed to the influence of demons.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man,—The language calls upon the believer in “faith only” to be willing to recognize or acknowledge the truth. Compare comment on 1:3 and on “would be a friend” in 4:4. James is so confident of the truth of his position and of the force of his reasoning that he calls upon the errorists to

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?

concede. The term "vain man" is an expression somewhat equivalent to "foolish one." The man who will argue in such fashion as the above is "vain" in James' mind. Thus James indicates his vexation at him. From this verse James is presenting his argument's proof, beginning with Abraham's justification.

**faith apart from works is barren?**—"Apart from works" is a variation of "faith if it have not works." Cf. Hebrews 4:15, "apart from sin" (without committing sin). Thus it is a faith which does not express itself in works. The MSS. vary between "barren" and "dead," but "dead" is probably a scribal change to make it agree with verse 26. "Barren" comes originally from a word which means "unemployed" or "idle" (Matthew 20:3,6; Titus 1:12). Then the word comes to mean "lazy" and "useless." It has no connection with the idea of fruit. "Useless" is probably the meaning here. Cf. II Peter 1:8, "barren (useless) unto the knowledge of Christ." It is useless to have faith if it does not express itself in obedience. Some commentators who think that James is refuting Paul refer the expression "O vain man" to Paul. But James certainly did not have Paul's teaching in mind.

21 **Was not Abraham our father**—James' first example is Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. The use of Abraham is due to his historical place in the Bible and also to the fact that he is the father of the Jews. His example of faithfulness was mentioned by Jewish writers. Ecclesiasticus relates: "Abraham was a great father of many nations who . . . when he was proved was found faithful" (44:19f). We also find in I Maccabees 2:52, "Was not Abraham found faithful in temptation, and it was imputed to him for righteousness?" Such quotations show that the matter of Abraham's faith was a familiar one to James' audience. New Testament writers also hold up the faith of Abraham as an example. See Hebrews 11:8ff; Galatians 3:6ff; Romans 4:3. As has been stated, it is possible that the point is raised because the Jews felt that being a descendant of Abraham or an orthodox believer was sufficient for salvation.

**justified**—The word is a key one here. It had two general meanings: (1) "to vindicate" or show that one's course is wise or just.

This was a frequent meaning in the Old Testament, where God, by giving Israel victory in battle, justified her cause. Compare Matthew 11:29; Luke 7:25; 7:35 ("Wisdom is justified by her children"); I Timothy 3:16. (2) "To be acquitted or pronounced and treated as righteous" or innocent. This is termed the forensic or legal use of the word. This was also a frequent use in the Old Testament. Cf. Exodus 23:7 ("I will not justify the wicked"); Deuteronomy 25:1; I Kings 8:32; Isaiah 5:23; 50:8 (of Jehovah); 53:11 ("my righteous servant shall justify many"). N.T. passages which have this meaning, besides James and Paul, are Matthew 12:37 ("For by thy words thou shalt be justified") and Luke 18:14 (the Pharisee "went down to his house justified").

It has been contended that the first meaning is that of James here and that he means that Abraham was merely declared or proved righteous; that the course of God in blessing him and selecting him and giving him the promise earlier was vindicated or shown to be right by his action in offering his son. But this hardly does justice to James' argument. James is talking about faith saving a man (verse 14). It is not contemplated merely that one already just or acquitted is proved or declared righteous, but the action of God in declaring him righteous is referred to.

**by works.**—These words declare the grounds or reasons for which Abraham was declared righteous. James used the plural word as he had previously done (verses 14, 17, 18) because he is still thinking of the category of things by which one is saved ("works" along with "faith"), and the offering of Isaac is an instance of the category. It is not Abraham's general conduct or whole life that is in point, but the one act of offering.

**in that he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?**—In the Greek text the verb is a participle used in an adverbial (causal) sense. Other examples of Abraham's faith are mentioned: believing the promise of a son (Romans 4:17-21); the departing from his native land (Hebrews 11:8-12); the sacrificing of Isaac while thinking that he would be raised (Hebrews 11:17-19). In Genesis 22:9ff there is nothing said of "justification." But the offering was followed by a blessing's being pronounced upon him that his seed would be multiplied and all nations blessed through him "because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:17-18). Cf. verse 16, "be-

cause thou hast done this thing." From this James could easily infer the blessing of justification which had been connected with the earlier faith (Genesis 15:6). Genesis 15:6 also does not mention "justification," but in Paul's use of the passage he infers justification, as James does here in 2:21. Later in Genesis it was said that the promise were reiterated "because that Abraham obeyed my voice" (26:5). Thus James could see that (though is it not specifically stated) the Old Testament record indicated that acts of obedience had led Abraham to another declaration of righteousness before God. Thus the act ("works") is shown to be the basis of his justification. This is not to say that his works alone saved him, which James would not have affirmed. James mentions only what has been left out or neglected by some in man's justification. The two worked together, as James goes on to show.

In Greek James' question "Was not Abraham justified by works?" is introduced by the negative particle (*ou*) which expects a "yes" as an answer. James is saying in a most emphatic way that works were the basis of Abraham's being justified.

As has been shown, Abraham's offering of Isaac was the cause of a later or additional justification to that of Genesis 15:6. But Paul's use of the Genesis passage in Romans 4:2,5 to affirm that Abraham was not justified by works and that "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness" raises the question as to whether James and Paul contradict each other in their use of the words "justified by works" and "faith." This question must not be avoided. Schrenk (*Bible Key Words, Righteousness*, p. 40) says that Paul could never have stood for the contention that Abraham was justified on the ground of the work which accompanied and authenticated his faith.

It must be admitted that Paul and James use the word "justify" in the same sense (though talking about a different occasion of declaration of righteousness). But a contradiction is avoided by seeing that they used the word "works" in a different context or meaning. Paul is thinking of the works of the Law of Moses as the basis of justification. Notice Galatians 2:16; 3:11; 5:4, where Paul adds "the law" to his denial that one is justified by works. He insists that Abraham's justification was before the Law and apart from it, just as he insisted (Romans 4:10ff) that it was before cir-

22 <sup>11</sup>Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect;

<sup>11</sup>Or, *Seest thou . . . perfect?*

cumcision. James is thinking of works of faith or obedience. That Paul would have denied this in the sense that James means it no one can say, for Paul did not deny it. Further, in Titus 3:5,7 Paul combines being "justified by his (God's) grace" with being saved by baptism as "the washing of the new birth." Thus it is not beyond Paul's thought that a work of obedience growing out of one's faith in God or Christ is the basis of justification.

22 Thou seest that faith wrought with his works,—This statement may well be a question as the margin indicates, though it is impossible to tell from the original. Either makes good sense in the context. As it stands in the text, it forms a conclusion to the deduction that Abraham was justified by works in offering Isaac. If it is a question, then James is asking the reader if this does not follow. James asks if the fact that faith "worked together with works" is not proved by the incident just mentioned. James demonstrates the mutual dependence of faith and works. Abraham's faith "cooperated with" or "aided" works (that is, to achieve their desired end—justification). The verb means to "cooperate with" or "help" someone. Thus Paul used it when he said that God works together all things for good to those who love Him: "In everything God helps (or works for) those loving him in obtaining that which is good" (Romans 8:28). Cf. also I Corinthians 16:16; II Corinthians 6:1.

and by works was faith made perfect;—Some would take the verb to mean "declared or proved" complete. But Huther is right in saying that the word does not mean this. It means to be "completed" or "perfected" (Luke 13:32; Acts 20:2f). James does not mean that Abraham had a faith which was imperfect or defective in itself so that real faith came about only after he had obeyed God's command. His faith was real before. But he means that Abraham's faith was not perfected or completed so that it did for him what God had intended it to do until after the obedience. The faith that he had was complemented or helped along by his work of obedience; they went hand in hand (Knowling), with faith being made stronger by the tests to which it was put until in the great test of offering his

23 and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, <sup>12</sup>And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; <sup>13</sup>and he was called the friend of God.

<sup>12</sup>Gen. xv. 6.

<sup>13</sup>Is. xli.8; 2 Chr. xx.7.

son it reached perfection. Faith and works give each other elements of character that neither has alone. James does not teach works alone any more than he teaches faith alone. There is a work of faith (I Thessalonians 1:5; Galatians 5:6) or an obedience of faith (Romans 1:5; 16:25). When the two aid each other, faith accomplishes its end—justification.

23 and the scripture was fulfilled—The scripture referred to is Genesis 15:6, which relates that when God told Abraham that Eliezer of Damascus, his adopted heir, was not to be the one through whom the promise was to be fulfilled Abraham “believed and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.” What does James mean by “fulfilled?” Some say it means “confirmed” and that this statement was only confirmed in the offering of Isaac, not that justification actually took place then. But “confirmed” is not a meaning which can be ascribed to the verb. In such a context the verb refers to the fulfillment of God’s predictions or promises in some future event. Even in the O.T. this was its meaning (I Kings 2:27). Its N.T. usage is abundant (Matthew 1:22; Luke 1:20; Acts 1:16). Even the promise of Jesus is said to have been fulfilled (John 18:9, 32).

It is true that the statement as it occurs in Genesis is not a prediction but a statement of fact. But James deduced (as we have shown) from the statements of Genesis 22:16-18 that a justification had taken place “because he had done this.” Huther says: “But as it notifies facts which point to later actions in which they received their full accomplishment, James might consider it as a word of promise which was fulfilled by the occurrence of these later actions.” It is possible that a thing spoken at one time and fulfilled in a measure at one time may later receive another and more complete fulfillment. So one must consider some of the passages quoted in the N.T. See comment by J.W. McGarvey on the passages quoted in Matthew 1 in the note at the end of his first chapter in *New Testament Commentary on Matthew and Mark*. So James sees that the perfection of Abraham’s faith in the offer-



24 Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith.

ing of Isaac and the justification which is implied following it fulfill the statement of Genesis 15:6 of Abraham's faith and the reckoning for righteousness. It is no contradiction that Paul saw justification as taking place at the time of Genesis 15:6 also.

Abraham believed God,—This passage originally referred to Abraham's belief that he would become the father of a seed. But it is also a general statement of Abraham's trustfulness exemplified by his whole life, as James sees in subsequent events.

and it was reckoned to him for righteousness,—The verb "reckoned" is frequently used in the Septuagint "to express what is equivalent to, having the like force and weight as something mentioned" (Knowling). Cf. Isaiah 40:17 ("count as nothing"); Romans 2:26 ("uncircumcision regarded as circumcision"). The verb also has the meaning of crediting something to one's account which does not (properly) belong to him (Psalms 31 [32]:2). Either of these senses will satisfy the meaning here. God took Abraham's faith instead of righteousness (which he did not have in the absolute, being a sinner); he thus credited to Abraham's account the righteousness which he did not before possess. This is equivalent to saying, as Paul had seen (Romans 4:2ff), that he was "justified" or declared righteous. This is practically the same as saying that he was forgiven of his sins because of his perfect faith. This remains with James, as well as Paul, the meritorious basis of man's salvation. Ours is the faith in the sacrifice of Jesus as God's son for us. James' point is that this faith reckoned for righteousness was fulfilled (at least in an additional measure) by the offering of Isaac.

and he was called the friend of God.—Abraham became the friend of God as a result of his exercise of faith. He was not called the friend of God (at least not in Scripture) until much later (Cf. the margin: Isaiah 41:8; II Chronicles 20:7). His becoming the friend of God was a result of the expression of his faith in offering Isaac. He was justified by the deed and as a consequence also was referred to as God's friend.

24 Ye see that by works a man is justified,—This is the conclusion James thinks all can see from what he has presented. He has fully demonstrated that it takes both faith and works to procure

man's justification. Especially does he think that he has shown this from Abraham's case. It is clear that works growing out of his faith were the cause of the justification which followed his offering of his son. It was "because you have *done* this" that the blessing followed. So works justify, not in themselves alone, but still they justify.

and not only by faith.—To a man wishing to be saved by the "word of truth" (James 1:21) faith alone is not enough. Faith "in itself is dead," "is useless" (verses 18, 20). As in Abraham's case faith must cooperate with works, and the works must complete and bring faith to its goal of justification. The stress is on the word "only." James could not deny that faith justified Abraham; the very passage in which he saw Abraham's work of offering as the "fulfillment" emphasized that "Abraham believed." James is thinking of a faith which exists "in" or "by" itself and apart from any expression or work. Since such a faith is "idle" and "useless," it cannot justify. Hence salvation or justification in the sense that works perfect faith is "by works" and not "by faith alone." Paul's use of "faith without works of the law" is quite different but perfectly in harmony with James.

#### NOTE ON "FAITH ONLY"

The doctrine of "justification by faith only" has become a loaded expression in modern denominational theology. It is a real bone of contention. The modern denominational doctrine (at least in some groups) is that in conversion man is saved at the instance of faith, when he puts his trust in Christ as his personal Savior. This leads to the denial of the efficacy of other acts of obedience, especially baptism. The Bible plainly teaches that baptism as an act of faith is a condition of salvation or remission of sins (justification). See Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16. This does not mean that baptism is sacramental in the sense in which sacraments are generally understood. A sacrament (as used in Catholicism) is an act which has its efficacy in itself and in the validity of the administrator (an authorized person) and requires no faith on the part of the one on whom it is administered. In such an act faith does not "work together," for there is no faith.

But this use of the term "faith only" is not the historic meaning

of the term. Martin Luther did not mean this by his formula, and to attribute the rise of the term in its denominational sense to him (as is so often done) is an injustice. Luther meant that faith is the only meritorious ground of justification—salvation or remission of sins can never be obtained on any grounds apart from faith in Jesus' blood. There are only two means of salvation as Paul stated them in Romans 3:27: "the principle" (law) of faith and the "principle" (law) of human works of merit (such as those under the law). See New English Bible on this verse. Since Paul rejected the principle of works, it follows that, unless one is to be saved by the principle of faith, he cannot be saved. This expression did not originate with Luther; others had used it before him (Cf. Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, pp. 164f). But he stoutly defended the translation of Romans 3:28: "Man is justified without the works of the law through faith only." To deny this (to Luther) would be to deny the whole teaching of Paul and to affirm that one can be saved by his own works without the Lord Jesus. In this understanding Luther is correct.

But Luther himself emphasized the importance of baptism. He is quoted as saying, "We are justified by faith alone, but not by the faith which is alone." Some of the harshest things which Luther ever said were said in one edition of his commentary—against those who deny the place of baptism in the New Testament.

Thus we see that "faith only" can be used in two senses. It can be used compositely as the principle of justification. But it can be used analytically, where the process of obedience is broken down into its component parts. In the first sense, salvation is by "faith only"; in the second sense, it is "by works and not by faith only," for here faith is only one of the conditions of pardon: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16); "Repent and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Thus the denominational doctrine of salvation at the moment of faith—without obedience—is not a Biblical teaching, and it does not take its roots from the reformers. It is rooted in the conversion experience theology of early American revivalism. It sets aside the plain teaching of the Bible on the doctrine of obedience and works of faith.

It is easy to see, therefore, that there is no contradiction between Paul's use of justification of faith (only or "without works") and

25 And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way?

26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead.

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James' teaching that justification is by works and not by faith only. Paul is thinking of the composite nature of faith as the principle of justification by faith rather than by the works of the law (or of human merit). James is thinking analytically of faith as a condition of justification and insists that it must obey the conditions of the teaching of Christ and perfect itself in works.

25 And in like manner was not also Rahab . . . justified by works, —James now adds a case drawn from people other than the family of Abraham. The reason for this probably was to broaden the principle and to show that it operated outside the chosen family in the Old Testament. The principle includes every race, sex, and condition of life. Paul argues that anyone who comes to accept the principle of faith upon which Abraham was justified becomes in this sense a "child of Abraham" as he becomes "the father of all them that believe" (Galatians 3:7-9).

Rahab was a Canaanite, a woman fallen under the weight of sin. Yet by believing in the God of Israel, of whom she had heard (Joshua 2:9ff), and receiving the spies and sending them out another way, she walked in the steps of the faith which Abraham had (Romans 4:12). In this way her acceptance with God is proved. She is listed among the Old Testament worthies of faith (Hebrews 11:31) and appears among the genealogy of Jesus Christ the Savior Himself (Matthew 1:5). Thus believing in the God of Israel and showing her faith through deeds, she was justified by her works and became listed as an ancestress of the Messiah.

she received the messengers, and sent them out another way? —The details are given in Joshua 2 and 6:23. Hebrews 11:31 says, "By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that were disobedient, having received the spies with peace." Thus the writer of Hebrews, as well as James, emphasized that her faith was demonstrated in "obedience" in receiving the spies. Her justification by works is therefore proved. Her faith cooperated with, or helped, her works and was perfected by what she did.

26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead,—James sees

the whole case as made out and concludes the argument with another illustration. The "for" is added as a particle of conclusion. This is grounds for saying what has been said already about faith and works. He is drawing the same conclusion as in verse 24. But he also repeats the statement of verse 17 that "faith apart from works is dead" and adds to it the illustration which gives it vividness.

"The body" is the human body, and "the spirit" is the animating principle of life. As in Ecclesiastes 12:7, "The dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it." When the spirit leaves the body, it dies and returns to the dust. From then on the body is nothing. So James insists that apart from works faith is dead. Faith not expressed in works is like the body which has been left by the spirit; it is a dead body. The sense of "dead" here is probably like that of "idle" or "barren" in verse 20; it is to be taken in the sense of "useless," unable to profit.

Let us all take heed to James' admonition. Let the sinner respond to the commission to heed, what Jesus says to those who ask, "What must I do to be saved?" And let the Christian (to whom this is written primarily) remember that a life of genuine obedience to the will of Christ in worship, service, and morality is necessary to perfect the faith with which he began to live for Christ.

## SECTION FIVE

## ADMONITION TO TEACHERS

3:1-18

## 1. BRIDLING THE TONGUE

3:1-12

1 Be not many of *you* teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive <sup>1</sup>heavier judgment.

<sup>1</sup>Gr. *greater*.

Chapter three treats of two subjects directly related to each other: The bridling of the tongue (a metonymy for "speech," compare "word" in verse 2) and the analysis of true wisdom. These subjects both refer to the teacher; the first part relates to his responsibility and control of his speech (3:1-12) and the second to the teacher's wisdom (3:13-18). That verses 1-12 are to be interpreted in this manner is quite plain. But the second point must be deduced from the context. It appears that "the one wise and understanding" of verse 13 also describes the teacher. For the evidence see the commentary on verse 13. Ropes says, "Chapter 3 relates to the teacher and wise man. That the two are treated as substantially identical is significant." Wisdom and speech are connected in Proverbs 31:26, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and the law of kindness is on her tongue." James is demanding that the Christian allow the gospel of Christ to impose this rule upon him.

In James 3:1-12 James returns to a subject mentioned in Chapter 1:16,26. There he had said, "Be swift to hear, slow to speak." In a sense, Chapter 1:19-27 is a development of proper hearing; in the present section the proper attitude toward speech is developed. In 1:26 lack of control of the tongue is mentioned as proof of the absence of practical application of religion that made religion vain. The whole subject is now enlarged. There may also be implied (in the view of the plea for consistency in verse 9) that this proper use of the tongue is to be connected in development with the consistency in faith (partiality) and demonstration of faith (faith and works.) Self-control and meekness of wisdom are further indications of pure religion or a part of the works as a Christian by which justification is achieved. As Paul would have said it, this is a part of working out our salvation as obedient children (Philippians 2:15).

1 Be not many of you teachers,—The King James has "masters,"

an older usage in English, for example in "schoolmaster" or "headmaster" of a school. The Greek work is *didaskalos* (from which comes our word "didactic"), which means "teacher." "Master," therefore, is not to be taken as master of a slave. (Check Malachi 2:12 in the King James and see the article "Master" in *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*.)

"Teachers" here must certainly be seen against the background of Jewish Rabbinical tradition. "Teacher" here equals "Rabbi." The Rabbis were local teachers in the synagogues. They were also called "lawyers" and "scribes." The contemporary records show that the position was esteemed as one of honor and prestige and desired as an end in itself. Jesus criticized those "who loved to be called Rabbi" (Matthew 23:7-8). The criticism is probably due to the fact that the position was used to exercise power over others. Jesus saw the charge that he was in league with Beelzebub as an attempt to turn the multitude against him and thus considered it a misuse of the tongue. He said, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:37). Compare also Romans 2:19f.

Some form of the title Rabbi was often applied to Jesus: Mark 9:5; 11:21; 14:45; John 1:38; 3:2; 4:31; 6:25, etc. In the church the office of teacher seems (as in our modern Bible classes) to have depended upon ability to teach (Titus 2:3-4) and not on official appointment. Teachers are mentioned in I Corinthians 12:28; Acts 13:1; and Ephesians 4:11. In I Corinthians 14:26-40 we have a passage which is especially instructive. Teaching (v. 26), along with the exercise of spiritual gifts, seems to have been the privilege of those wishing to rise to speak. The author of Hebrews insists that all disciples by reason of time "ought to be teachers." The exercise of the right in the assembly was denied women (I Corinthians 14:34; I Timothy 2:12), but opportunity for the exercise of the ability to instruct by them must have been found in several other places (I Corinthians 11:5; Titus 2:3f). Teachers were distinguished from prophets only in that the latter were inspired teachers.

With all the encouragement to teach in the N.T., it is evident that the prohibition here against "many becoming teachers" is not due to an excess of teachers or to any discouraging of the proper ambition to teach. James is warning of the dangers inherent in the

responsibility of teaching, especially in view of the confusion and vileness (verses 13ff) resulting at times from the misuse of the position. All teachers, among whom James classes himself, will bear heavy responsibility for their influence, which is due to their power in the eternal destiny of men whom they affect for good or ill. James, therefore, is saying in effect, "Don't many of you become teachers, if you are not certain that you can control your tongue, unless your teaching ministry will yield peaceable results and unless you are willing to shoulder the responsibility for your work."

**knowing**—a causal participle, calling attention to the fact that Christians who aspire to teach should already be aware of the great responsibility of teaching. Compare again Jesus' words in Matthew 12:37.

**heavier (margin, greater) judgment.**—The word "judgment," which may be either good or bad, has the adverse meaning in passages like Mark 12:40, where Jesus warned that those who devour widows' houses and make long prayers will receive heavier judgment. The word may here signify censure for failure in duty, as it seemingly does in Romans 13:2 ("He that resisteth the ruler shall receive judgment") or I Corinthians 11:29 ("He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment unto himself"). In these passages, of course, the censure may be accompanied by penalty. Thus this passage may mean that the offending teacher may be condemned at the last judgment for not having lived up to his stewardship as a teacher. The one who knows and does not will receive heavier judgment (Luke 12:47ff). One in the position of teacher is certainly assumed to know the Master's will. Hence, the teacher must be prepared for greater censure and penalty for failing. The teacher proclaims God's will and must proclaim it as God desires (I Peter 4:11; Galatians 1:10f). He will be judged on how well he does this. Of course one who does not teach (though he might be judged for his neglect) is not judged for wrong teaching.

Note: The damage wrought by wrong teaching in the world is colossal. In the light of the pointed instruction of the New Testament we must be concerned about teaching not founded on the express revelation of the Scriptures. Paul taught the seriousness of this matter (Galatians 1:6-10) in promising an anathema on those



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2 For in many things we all stumble. If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also.

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who teach a different gospel. I Timothy 1:3ff shows how strife and questionings follow such teaching. In modern times the lack of restraint in teaching heresies and hobbies continually divides and keeps the church in turmoil. Such unscriptural things as dispensationalism (premillennialism), instrumental music, and the extreme legalism which spawned the "anti" spirit in the Restoration Movement cannot be looked upon in indifference. There are those who are so anxious for peace and harmony in the church that they would let such false teachers with their undisciplined tongues take over. But Paul said, "Their mouths must be stopped" (Titus 1:11). Some unthoughtful people blame the defenders of the sound doctrine, rather than the man of party spirit, for the discord which develops. James puts the responsibility for the damage where it belongs—on the shoulders of the teacher whose tongue is not controlled by the law of Christ. Who is to decide what is false? This is done by an appeal to the truth of the Bible. This means free discussion, free exegesis, which should be carried on in a spirit of goodwill and brotherly love. This process results inevitably in the formulation of a consensus or understanding of the truth on questions. The resulting conclusion is not a creed and should not be treated as such. But it is represented in the attitudes of elders and memberships of the local churches. To be out of harmony with this understanding and to press one's dissenting views is to run the risk of dividing the church and being the cause of strife. This is partly, at least, what James is hitting at. Usually, opposition to a false teacher's ideas reveals further that false motives and attitudes of jealousy and faction lie at the root of the trouble. So Paul also unmasked the motives and characteristics of the false teacher (I Timothy 6:3ff). A teacher should be careful of his teachings and motives. All who listen should be neither gullible nor intolerant of views.

2 For in many things we all stumble.—(The King James "offend" is less accurate.) James says that we all are guilty of many kinds of faults and offenses. Literally, "We all stumble with respect to many things." For the use of "stumble" see 2:10; II Peter 1:10; Jude 24. That sin is universal is an almost axiomatic asser-

tion of the Scriptures. It is also of universal admission. "We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:24). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (I John 1:8). There is no human infallibility. James' point is that, since this is true, it is clear that we should avoid (on any but the noblest motives) the taking up of the calling which brings the greatest responsibility and the greatest temptation of all to sin. Lenski makes a difference in this word "stumble" and the word "fall," that is, to bring the effort to live as a Christian to an end.

**if any stumble not in word,**—The sins of the tongue seem to the writer to be the most prevalent of all sins and the most difficult to avoid. There is probably a bit of hyperbole (exaggeration for emphasis) in the following verses of James, just as there is in Paul's representation of the love of money as "root of all evil" (I Timothy 6:10). If a person could be found who does not make a mistake in word (in his speech), he would indeed be a remarkable man. Either in teaching or in wicked or empty speech we have all sinned. For the thought compare the non-inspired Jewish work, "Who is the one not sinning with his tongue?" (Ecclesiasticus 19:16).

**the same is a perfect man,**—Compare the comment of James 1:4, where it is said that the man who lets patience have its perfect work is perfect and entire, lacking in nothing. As explained there, the word perfect means "attaining its end or purpose, complete, nothing lacking." Ethically it means a "mature," a "full-grown," "well-rounded" person. Specifically it means that as a Christian the kind of character which God is trying to develop in all of us as we grow into the image of Christ has been achieved. This does not necessarily mean a sinless man, though in this passage in view of James' idea of its difficulty, it approaches that. The idea is that the man who has mastered the most difficult task can certainly do the others which are less difficult. Hence the one not sinning in word must be all that God desires in a Christian. Compare I Corinthians 9:27 for Paul's statement of the difficulty of keeping his body under and using it in the intended way.

**able to bridle the whole body also.**—This is further amplification of the principle just explained. It is almost apposition. Since one has controlled what James will describe as the most unruly

3 Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also.

4 Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, are yet turned about by a very small rudder, whither the impulse of the steersman willeth.

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member, he certainly must be able to subject all the other members of the body—eyes, hands, stomach, etc. The figurative use of the term "bridle" suggests the illustration of bridling the horses in the next verse. In Matthew 5:29 we have another use of one member at odds with the whole body.

3 Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also.—This verse is a simple illustration. As one controls the body of a horse by controlling his mouth, so, if we can control our speech, we can regulate the entire body. There is some difficulty, however, with the text. Some commentators take the whole verse as a protasis (a dependent clause): "If we put bridles. . .and (if we turn). . ." This leaves the sentence unfinished.<sup>1</sup> This would demand that we complete the sentence mentally with some such conclusion as, "then we should do the same with our tongues, that we may control the whole body." However it is permissible to translate the Greek as the ASV does, making the sentence read, "If we put the horses' bridles into the mouths, then we are able to turn their whole bodies also." This means that, when we have controlled and directed the horse's mouth, we control his whole body. The application of the illustration is left unexpressed but it is plain from the context.

The change of the King James "Behold" to the ASV "If" is based upon different manuscript evidence (following the Vatican MS and the Latin versions).

From this commonplace illustration of a larger instrument controlled by a much smaller one, James goes on to develop in reverse the way the tongue is a little member but influences the whole body (even the whole circle of existence) for evil.

4 Behold, the ships also,—The particle serves to enliven a narrative and to call attention or consideration to something. James uses it six times: 3:4, 5; 5:4, 7, 9, 11. The "also" calls attention to a second illustration: "In addition to horses, consider ships, too."

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<sup>1</sup>The technical term is *anacoluthon*.

5 So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, <sup>2</sup>how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!

<sup>2</sup>Or, *how great a forest*

Ships were a common sight on the seas of the Mediterranean world. In Palestine they could be seen on the coast, as well as on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus crossed over the latter in a small boat, with his twelve disciples. Luke records that there were 276 persons aboard the ship taking Paul to Rome (Acts 27:37). The ocean-going ships were called triremes because they had three decks of oars. Such ships also made use of sails when the winds were favorable.

**so great**—They are large in fact—to carry so many people, as shown above, but even larger in relation to the small rudder.

**driven by rough winds**,—For the strong winds on the seas, consider Jesus' experience (Matthew 14:24) and Paul's on the Mediterranean (Acts 27-28). A blowing wind in a storm is indeed rough or harsh. Paul's ship was driven for fourteen days and nights out of control. Yet a ship uncontrolled in the face of such powers may be controlled by a small instrument.

**are yet turned about by a very small rudder**,—The verb "turn about" in James' characteristic style repeats the verb of verse 3. Even in winds which may blow unfavorably a ship may make progress by the use of the sails and rudder (by what is called "tacking"). The rudder was a steering paddle or oar (not a helm, as in the King James). It worked in the back of the ship or through a porthole. An interesting illustration of a small boat with its rudder is given in the *Illustrated World of The Bible* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1961) Volume V, page 257. In Acts 27:47 (as in P. London, 1164, h, 8) the word is plural because the ship often had two paddles fastened by a crossbar and was worked by two men (See the word for "rudder" in Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*).

**whither the impulse of the steersman willeth**.—The word "impulse" means "desire," "inclination," or "impulse." It is the word whence our English word "hormone." Wherever the steersman intends for the ship to go, the rudder can direct the boat. The word "steersman" is a substantive participle: "the one guiding straight." The technical word for a "pilot" or "governor" of a ship is not used by James. The one who holds the rudder can turn the ship

6 And the tongue is <sup>3</sup>a fire: 'the world of iniquity among our members is the

<sup>a</sup>Or, a fire, that world of iniquity: the tongue is among our members that which etc.

<sup>a</sup>Or, that world of iniquity, the tongue, is among our members that which etc.

about and thus control it.

5 So the tongue is a little member,—The "tongue" here is the literal member of the body, a small unit indeed of our bodies. But the tongue is used here by metonymy for the thing it does; it is the organ of speech. The tongue is little, like the rudder of the ship; but, just as the rudder can determine the course of the large ship, so the tongue has power to influence man's whole course and destiny. There is more on this in the following verses.

and boasteth great things.—The damage such a little member can do is so great that it can boast of its power and influence. Like the bramble in Jephthah's fable which asked the mighty trees to take refuge in its shade, so the tongue might say to all the larger members of the body, "I can determine the course of all of you. Let all take note of my power." James shows that unfortunately such a boast is not an idle one. For the use of such a personification by which one member of the body (like the tongue here) is individualized and shown to influence the whole body compare (with Mayor) Matthew 5:29f (of the right hand), Matthew 15:19 (of the mouth), I John 2:16 (the eye).

Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!—The margin has "how great a forest," and the word can have this sense (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18. 357, 366). The Greek literally has the following play on words: "What size fire kindles what size forest!" It is left to our knowledge that the fire is very small on the one hand, but the thing burned is very large. One has only to envision a small match, a spark, or a cigarette lighting a fire which may burn over a whole forest of possibly millions of acres to grasp the vividness of the illustration. Many Old Testament passages as well as Classical passages utilize the same figure: Isaiah 9:18; 10:16-18; Zechariah 12:6; Psalms 83:14. Little things often have great power. So a careless word can consume a whole church. Compare Paul's figure of a church devouring itself (Galatians 5:15).

6 And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members.—The editors of the Greek texts and translators differ slight-

tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of <sup>6</sup>nature, and is set on fire by <sup>7</sup>hell.

<sup>6</sup>Or, *birth*

<sup>7</sup>Gr. *Gehenna*

ly over the way the words are to be arranged: Whether we should render "The tongue is a fire. The world of iniquity among our members is the tongue" (two complete thoughts) or "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is that which defileth the whole body." The thoughts are the same; but, since the original MSS. had no punctuation, either arrangement is possible. In either arrangement the language describes the tongue as a fire and a world of iniquity.

Like the small fire which kindles a whole forest, so the tongue is a fire (a use of a metaphor rather than a simile, "like a fire"). The tongue may as completely destroy the whole body as the fire a forest.

"The world of iniquity" is very expressive. Just as we say, "There is a world of wisdom in that statement," so that phrase means there is a very large sum here (perhaps even the entire sum total), that is, the whole universe or compass of the thing. Bauer quotes the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (17:2), "Christ the one suffering for the whole world of those who are saved." Thus James says that the tongue is the whole world of iniquity. The phrase "of iniquity" may mean "world composed of iniquity"<sup>1</sup> or "characterized by iniquity."<sup>2</sup> Taken either way, the phrase is an assertion (somewhat hyperbolic) that the tongue is a universe of evil in itself. It voices every evil feeling and every kind of sinful thought; it sets in motion or gives concreteness to every kind of sinful act. Nothing evil is beyond its power of accomplishment. Thus the tongue is not merely a world of iniquity in itself (which would be vivid enough), but it is the world of iniquity. As has already been pointed out, this is comparable to Paul's thought of the love of money (I Timothy 6:10). Both illustrations are to be understood in their contexts as slight hyperbole. Some people think of sex as the principal motivation of human activity. James and Paul do not contradict each other. The fault which each is combatting is so powerful as

<sup>1</sup>Genitive of substance or content

<sup>2</sup>Genitive of description

a source of evil that figuratively it may be said to constitute the whole story.

among our members is the tongue,—“Is” is somewhat weak here as a translation of the Greek word. The verb means “be appointed,” “be constituted,” “made,” or “caused to be.” Compare James 4:4, “Whoever therefore wishes to be a friend of the world is made (constituted) an enemy of God” and II Peter 1:8, “This makes you to be not barren.” Thus the tongue is made to be or is constituted a world of iniquity among our members, being so made that it is able to produce all the sins of the catalog. Knowling prefers to interpret the verb as middle (reflexive) “maketh itself,” saying that it is not so constituted by God. But it is not every tongue which is thus constituted. It is the “tongue defiling”; the verb “defileth” is a descriptive participle modifying “tongue.”

which defileth the whole body,—One member is able to bring the whole body to contamination or stain. The verb is used elsewhere only in Jude 23, where Jude says that we should snatch some out of the fire having mercy with fear, “hating even the garment *spotted* (defiled) by flesh.” Fire is not thought of usually as defiling or staining; thus there is some mixing of metaphors. James’ point is that as the fire can destroy the whole, so the tongue can defile the whole by inflaming the whole body and bringing it to sin.

and setteth on fire the wheel of nature,—The Greek has all this in modifying participial phrases all descriptive: “the fire, the world of iniquity—the one defiling the whole body, both setting on fire . . . and being set on fire.” It is hard to reproduce the vividness and expressiveness of the original. It has often been remarked that James was a close observer of natural phenomena.

The words “wheel of nature” are difficult; they seem to mean “the whole course of life”: “the whole round or course of life is set on fire or inflamed by the tongue.” This is a way of saying that the evil spreads from the tongue like a fire to all the members, appetites, and passions of man’s whole nature or life. Lenski interprets: We are a part of the wheel of existence; we do not live isolated lives but affect others by what we do or say. Hence the tongue of one person sets in motion a flame (for example, gossip, lying, profanity) which then spreads destruction to others like a house in a city which catches fire and by spreading burns the whole town. (So also Mayor, who thinks that the meaning is “to stir up

one person against another, one class against another, one nation against another, etc., until the entire complex of existence is affected.) Some such idea is what is meant.

The complexity of interpretation is due to the fact that the terms used by James may have more than one meaning. "Nature" (margin, *birth*) may mean "birth" or "origin" (Luke 1:14) or "existence," as in James 1:23 ("the face of his existence; his natural face"). The other term may be accented in two ways in Greek and may mean either "wheel" or "a course" or "path." It was used (compare Arndt and Gingrich) in the Orphic Mysteries with the sense of "the wheel of human origin," where men were thought of as being caught up in a continuing repetition of reincarnations as a succession of renewings of the world would occur. Others, like the *Concise Bible Commentary*, think of the Indian idea of the wheel of life which regards man's endless existence through a series of transmigrations. But such ideas could hardly be attributed to James. He must refer to the whole course of one's existence, the whole course of life about him, or the whole circle of his own members. In some way he is saying that everything around man seems affected by the tongue.

The translations of the phrase are interesting: Phillips, "It can make the whole of life a blazing hell." Schonfield, "The tongue . . . is the inflamer of the process of generation." NEB, "It keeps the wheel of our existence red-hot." Moffatt, "Setting fire to the round circle of existence." Goodspeed, "Setting fire to the whole round of nature."

and is set on fire by hell (margin *Gehenna*).—Such a fire as that just described could have its origin only in the fires of Hell. This is a figurative use of the word "hell." Only fire such as that pictured in the lake of fire, the second death, could light such a destructive fire as that spread by the tongue. Compare James' use in 3:15 of the wisdom producing strife, etc., as being demonic (ASV, "devilish") or Paul's description in I Timothy 4:1 of the teaching of false teachers as being inspired by demons. Jesus traced evil speech to the heart (Matthew 15:19). James shows that the evil heart is influenced by hell.

This is the only use of the Greek *Gehenna* outside of the Gospels (Matthew 5:22; 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5). The King James Version translated three words by



the same English word "hell": *Hades* ("the unseen world, the intermediate state where the spirit awaits the resurrection), *Gehenna* (literally, "the valley of Hennon," but signifying a place of torment after death for man's spirit), and *Tartarus* (In Greek and Jewish thought, the lower part of Hades, where the wicked dead are punished, cf. Job 41:20; Enoch 20:2; Josephus, *Against Apianus*, 2:240. The word occurs only in II Peter 2:4 in the New Testament). The Greek thought regarding these places differed from that revealed in the New Testament only in that they knew of Hades and Tartarus alone (with the latter as the place of punishment for the wicked) and in that they thought of the states of the dead in these places as permanent (with no hope of a resurrection). Like the concept of Paradise (II Corinthians 12:4; Luke 23:43), the Greeks thought of the good as enjoying happiness in Hades. The New Testament enlarges upon the use of these terms by showing that the states are only between death and the resurrection. The new term *Gehenna* is used of the final and eternal place of torment.

#### NOTE ON GEHENNA

Gehenna is the Greek form of the Hebrew *ge-benom* which means the "Valley of Hennom," (Joshua 15:8; 18:16). It is also called Topheth (II Kings 23:10). The word appears in the form *Gaienna* in the Septuagint in Joshua 18:16 (B). The word was transferred in Jewish thought and used as the metaphorical name for the place of the torment of the wicked after the final judgment.

The valley of Hennom was the place of the idolatrous worship of Molech, the fire god ("Ahaz . . . burnt incense in the valley of the sons of Hinnom and burnt his children in the fire," II Chronicles 28:3). Compare Jeremiah 7:31; 32:35; II Chronicles 33:6 and Leviticus 18:21. As a result it became "polluted" by King Josiah (II Kings 23:10) and became a place of refuse and abomination.

The association with the valley was not the source of the idea of a place of eternal spiritual punishment by fire. That concept occurs throughout the Old Testament. Compare Deuteronomy 32:22, "A fire is kindled in mine anger, and burneth into the lowest Sheol." See also Leviticus 10:2; Isaiah 30:27, 30, 33; 33:14; 66:24; Daniel 7:10; Psalms 18:8; 50:3; 97:3. Jeremiah prophesied evil

against the valley of Hinnom (Jeremiah 19:2-10) and the concept of punishment by fire combined with this to develop a belief in a place of spiritual punishment to which the dread name Gehenna (already conditioned as a place of abomination) was given to it. Gaster (*Interpreter's Bible Dictionary*) suggests that the application of the place name follows the analogy of using such Palestinian places as Armageddon (Revelation 16:16; Zechariah 13:11), Jerusalem (Galatians 4:26; Revelation 21:2), or Sodom (Revelation 11:8) to spiritual concepts.

Jewish literature shows that the idea was prevalent (Enoch 10:12-14, "sinners . . . will be led to the abyss of fire in torture and in prison they will be locked up for all eternity."). Compare also 18:11-16; 27:1-3; 27:1-3; Judith 16:17; II Esdras 7:36; Ecclesiasticus 7:17; Sibylline Oracles 1:10:3; Talmud, Aboth 1:6; I Qumran M 2:8; Assumption of Moses 10:10. Some Jewish writers thought the chosen people would be exempt and that the duration would be limited. Philo taught, however, that evil Jews would be included and that the punishment was eternal (De Proem. et Poen. 921). The spiritual nature of Gehenna is shown by the fact that the Jews placed it in the Third Heaven (Ascension of Isaiah 4:14; II Enoch 40:12; 41:2).

But it is in the teaching of Jesus that the doctrine is most explicitly identified and affirmed. He spoke of Gehenna as a place of future punishment. He spoke of "Being cast into Gehenna" (Matthew 5:29; 18:8-9; Mark 9:45, 47; 12:5); of the "Gehenna of fire" (Matthew 4:22); of destroying both body and soul in Gehenna (Matthew 10:28); of the "condemnation of Gehenna" (Matthew 23:33); of making one "a son Gehenna," i. e., one worthy of its punishment (Matthew 23:5). It is used elsewhere in the New Testament only in James 3:6, our present passage. But the concept of this eternal spiritual punishment of the wicked is found frequently: II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Romans 2:7-9; II Peter 3:7; Hebrews 12:29; Revelation 14:10; 19:20; 20:10, 14.

The New Testament clearly teaches that the punishment suffered in Gehenna will be eternal (Mark 9:47-48; Matthew 25:46; Revelation 14:11).

7 For every <sup>7</sup>kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed <sup>8</sup>by <sup>9</sup>mankind.

8 but the tongue can no man tame; *it is* a restless evil, *it is* full of deadly poison.

<sup>7</sup>Gr. *nature*

<sup>8</sup>Or, *unto*

<sup>9</sup>Gr. *the human nature.*

7 For every kind of beasts and birds . . . is tamed, —All creatures are subject to being controlled and tamed, but by human efforts the tongue seems to be uncontrollable. Animals, birds, and fish are all included. The “for” points to the fact that this statement contains the evidence for the preceding statement of the hellish source of the tongue’s evil. That it (of all creatures) cannot be tamed by man is proof of the tongue’s perverseness. It is more vicious than any of the wild creatures. In the “are tamed” and “have been tamed” James unites the present and perfect tenses of what is now going on and what has long been going on. The art of taming is as old as man and is continuing. The verb “tamed” is used elsewhere in the N.T. only in Mark 5:4, of subduing demons.

James says “every kind of” meaning “every individual nature” (qualitative) of beast, etc. The Greek word is *phusis*. The manner of speaking is tautological; the word means “species” and as such often is not translated: “The *phusis* of the stars” simply means “the stars” themselves. So the expression means simply “all animals, birds, and fishes.” The enumeration of living creatures in this way (classifying all living creatures except man) is based upon the Greek Old Testament (Genesis 1:26; 9:2; I Kings 4:33).

by mankind:—The margin has (as the Greek) “by the human nature” (using the same word as in “kind of beast”). Other species are in subjection to the human species. This is as God said it would be (Genesis 1:26).

8 but the tongue can no man tame;—Nothing in the human species is able to subdue the tongue as it can wild creatures. Augustine interpreted this to mean that if it is ever done it must be done by divine help. Such help from God may be had by prayer. Only in this way may we hope to “refrain our tongue from evil” (Psalms 34:13; cf. I Peter 3:10). So David prayed that God might “set a watch before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips” (Psalms 141:3). Johnson interprets somewhat differently: “cannot control

the tongue as a whole. Some may rule their own, but the organ itself as a whole does its evil work still in the world." Augustine's view seems to bring out the force of the "no one of man" accurately.

it is a restless evil,—“Restless” here is the same word James used in 1:8 of the unstable man. The sense “unstable” or “inconsistent” could apply here as agreeing with the inconsistent action of both blessing and cursing in verse 9. But the vividness of the figure of the tongue as a wild and restless evil, which like a caged beast never is still but walks back and forth, back and forth, is striking and is probably the meaning. How like this is the wagging tongue of gossip, of profanity, or the mouthings of a conceited hobbyist, speculator, or false teacher. But the restlessness is not mere restlessness; it is restless evil. Not merely disagreeable or destructive, the tongue is evil, bringing sin. Hermas (*Mandate* 2:3) says, “Slander is evil; it is a restless demon.”

Grammatically “restless evil” could be taken as an appositive with “tongue”: No man is able to tame the tongue, “a restless evil.” But the ASV is perhaps correct in taking it as the predicate nominative of an independent sentence: “It (the tongue) is a restless evil.” Some commentators (e. g., Erdman) read “uncontrollable” with some witnesses (C, the Koine, Peshitto Syriac), but ASV text (the better attested reading) makes good sense.

full of deadly poison.—“full of deathbearing poison.” Compare “full of adultery” (II Peter 2:14); “full of envy” (Romans 1:29). Undoubtedly the term is drawn from Psalms 140:3 (58:4) quoted in Romans 3:13, “The poison of asps is in their lips.”

This is the last of James' vivid metaphors describing the great influence of small things as the tongue.

In verses 9-12 James points to the inconsistency of the tongue (as he has just demonstrated its wickedness). We bless God with it and thus profess ourselves His children. Yet as Christians we curse men who are made in His likeness and are His children in another sense. Even nature is more consistent than this. James chooses this inconsistent cursing of our fellowmen as one of the improper uses of the tongue. He might have chosen many others.

9 Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God:

9 Therewith—that is, with the tongue.

bless we the Lord and Father;—Mayor cites the custom of the Jews when they spoke God's name of adding "blessed (be) He." From this arose the name for God—"the blessed." Compare Mark 14:61, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" If James is not thinking of this custom specifically, then the verb means customarily to "praise or extol someone," as in a eulogy, prayer, or song of praise. See Luke 1:64, "He spoke blessing God." It also means "to give thanks" (Mark 14:19; 26:26; I Corinthians 14:16). The opposition with "curse" probably shows that the meaning of "praising" or "extolling" is the proper one.

curse we men,—To curse is to put someone under an imprecation, to invoke evil or, even sometimes, damnation upon him. This is what we do when we damn someone. The incongruous combination of blessing and cursing is often noted: Psalms 62:4, "They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly." See Romans 12:13, "Bless and curse not." Compare I Corinthians 4:12. An example of cursing men is the bitter description of the chief priests and Pharisees who spoke of the common folk as "this crowd who knoweth not the law are accursed" (John 7:49).

who are made after the likeness of God.—By this the inconsistency is made to stand out. The Greek echoes the exact wording of the Greek Old Testament (LXX) "Let us make man after our image and *likeness*" (Genesis 1:26; cf. 5:21; 9:6). James uses the perfect tense, "has been made and remains in his likeness."

The argument is that, since man bears the image or likeness of God, to harm him is in a sense the same as harming God. So for this reason one must not kill (Genesis 9:6), oppress the poor (Proverbs 14:31; cf. Matthew 25:35, "Ye did it unto me"), or hate his brother (I John 4:20).

Interpreters have argued as to what sense man is made in the likeness of God. The consensus is that it is in his being a partaker in such attributes as reason, conscience, knowledge, the power of dominion, and the capacity to assimilate the moral and spiritual holiness of God. Man even in his fall is still an immortal spirit. Mayor says that, though such an image is traceable in every child

10 out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

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of God, only in Christ as the perfect image of God (Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:15; II Corinthians 4:4) do we see the perfection of this image. It is our task as Christians through the Gospel and the indwelling of the Spirit to transform ourselves more and more into such an image (Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24; II Corinthians 3:18). The process is progressive (II Corinthians 7:2; Romans 8:29; II Peter 1:4ff) and will be completed at the Second Coming of Christ (Philippians 3:21; cf. I John 3:1-3; I Corinthians 15:51f). Then indeed we shall bear the perfect image of God and Christ. But even now unregenerate man bears the impress of that image. Some have thought of Jewish Christians cursing Gentile Christians in order to get the "one made in the image of God" to mean a Christian. It could be that this is the cursing that James has in mind, but the principle of the likeness of God remaining in fallen man is certainly sustainable from Scripture (I Corinthians 11:7; Genesis 1:26; 5:1; 9:6; Malachi 2:10). James includes himself ("we") as the representative of the people guilty.

**10 out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing.**—Mayor has a long note as to why the Old Testament allowed many curses (Proverbs 11:26; 24:24; Genesis 9:25; 49:7; Joshua 6:26; Judges 5:23; 9:20, 57), since cursing is not allowable by James. He finds the answer in the combination of cursing and blessing here. The mixture of cursing proves the unreality or insincerity of blessing. Cf. Matthew 12:34, 23f. But Lenski seems to be more nearly right when he argues that no curse of our own can be pronounced by a Christian upon a fellow man without reflecting the curse upon the God whose image man bears. Only the curses which God Himself has pronounced upon the men whom He has had to curse may a Christian repeat (such as I Corinthians 16:22; Galatians 1:9). Otherwise he usurps God's place as judge and reviles God. "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?" (Numbers 22:8)

**these things ought not so to be.**—The "so" is somewhat redundant, but it sums up what James has said about the combining of blessing and cursing with an uncontrolled tongue. Inconsistency ought not to exist in such a fashion.

11 Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet *water* and bitter?

12 can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? neither *can* salt water yield sweet.

11 **Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening**—As is characteristic James enforces his argument with illustrations drawn from nature. Nature is not so incongruous that one may expect contradictory produce from the same sources. He begins his Greek sentence with an introductory interrogative particle which expects a negative answer: “A fountain doesn’t send forth . . . does it?” Compare the use of the same particle in 2:14, “Can that faith save?” Thus James pointedly rejects his own hypothetical illustration. Such could not be; yet Christians were doing what was comparable to it.

**sweet water and bitter?**—The words are usual ones for a spring of water (Revelation 8:10; 14:7; 16:4) or a cleft or opening (compare Hebrews 11:38). “Bitter water” means “salty” or “brackish” water (cf. Exodus 15:23), of the waters of Marah; Revelation 8:11). James is probably thinking of the Dead Sea, which is so salty one floats in it. Into its waters flow springs which give off both kinds of water, but not from the same source. The word for “send forth” above is more commonly used of the bursting forth of flowers or of spring. “Sweet” (water) is pure or fresh water.

12 **can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs?**—James, as in the last verse, begins with the particle expecting a negative answer again, using the same verb as in 2:14: “A fig tree cannot, can it . . .?” The fig, olive, and grapevine were all very common in Palestine and the area of the Great Sea. It was a common saying that a tree must bear fruit after its kind (Genesis 1:11; and compare Matthew 7:16, 20; 12:33). One would not expect to find a mixture of fruit on one tree. Yet the fruit of James’ readers’ lips was a mixture of blessings and cursings.

**neither can salt water yield sweet.**—The Greek word for “salt” (water) may mean “a spring” (Arndt and Gingrich), but elsewhere in the Bible it is used only as an adjective describing the Dead Sea as the “Salt Sea” (Numbers 34:12; Deuteronomy 3:17). The text of the last clause of the verse is quite uncertain, with some MSS. reading “thus neither” and others reading “no salt

spring also." But the sense is not materially affected by these differences.

## 2. THE TRULY WISE TEACHER

3:13-18

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom.

This portion of the third chapter of James is best interpreted as a continuation of the subject begun in verse 1 on the influence and use of the tongue. After mentioning the teacher in the first verse, James digresses in a sense to the more specific subject of the tongue's influence and evil. In verse 13 he reverts to the subject of verse 1 (the teacher). Under the contrast of heavenly and earthly wisdom he sets forth the deadliness of the sins of the tongue of the unwise teacher and the beauty of righteousness as the fruit of the truly wise teacher. There is abundant evidence that the term "wise man" is to be taken in the sense of "teacher." The truly wise teacher will have his fruit in peace and understanding leading to righteousness, and not in faction, jealousy, and vile deeds. This is an admonition which every individual who teaches or preaches God's word needs to study and take to heart. He should ask whether the fruit of his ministry indicates that his wisdom is from above or below. He may be sure that if faction, strife, and division follow his work, the source is not the "wisdom from above."

13 who is wise and understanding—These words are connected<sup>1</sup> in Deuteronomy 1:13, referring to judges. The term "wise man" was frequently used of learned men such as philosophers and teachers (Romans 1:14, 22; I Corinthians 1:19, 26ff; 3:20). It was used in the New Testament for the Jewish teachers (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21) and by Jesus to describe the teachers whom He would send out (Matthew 23:34). Jesus' use in the latter passage is in the same sense as that of James in this passage.

This usage does not mean that James infers that wisdom is the possession of the teacher alone, but as a rule the teacher posed and gained the reputation of having more skill and knowledge than the ordinary man. The argument is that, since this is true, he should

<sup>1</sup>"Rhetorical pleonasm" (Easton).



show by his conduct that it is true in fact. An analogy might be drawn between this and the use of the word "widow" in I Timothy 5:3ff, where the term widow is from the root "need." Thus there is a play on the word in that some widows would be widows "indeed" (destitute) and some not (having an income from relatives). The word "understanding" means "skilled" or "scientific" as opposed to what is untrained or unskilled (cf. Hebrews 5:14, "unskilled in the word of righteousness"). James' point is that the reputation of Christian teachers as wise and skilled men is to be justified in a practical way by the right kind of deeds and influence. Compare the reputation of Apollos as a teacher (Acts 18:24).

**let him show**—The sense of the verb (as in 2:18 and Acts 10:23) is "prove" or "demonstrate." A tree is known by its fruits, a principle which James has alluded to in the preceding verses.

**by his good life**—The King James "conversation" is older English which has changed its meaning. The Greek word means "conduct," or "manner of life" (literally one's turnings or "meanderings" in life). In Latin the word *conversatio* meant the same and from this came the term "conversation." It earlier in English meant "conduct." It is now limited to speech, so the rendering is no longer adequate (see also I Peter 2:15 and Galatians 2:13). The term translated "good" means "excellent," "noble," "beautiful or ideal" conduct. This is the kind expected of all Christians. The same adjective describes Jesus (John 10:11) as the Good Shepherd. We should excel in conduct as He does in his work. The sense of the passage would be that of conduct which manifests real goodness.

**his works in meekness of wisdom.**—Goodspeed renders "show that what he does is done in the humility of wisdom." The sense is "Let him prove by his conduct that he has meekness, doing what he does in the kind of meekness or humility that comes from wisdom. If the teacher's deeds are the right kind (and James goes on to develop this), they will be characterized by meekness and such meekness as will demonstrate that wisdom is present. A lack of meekness proves a lack of wisdom.

As an ethical attitude "meekness" means "gentleness," "humility," "courtesy," and "consideration toward others"; it is the opposite of a rough, egotistic, unyielding attitude. Notice how James elaborates on the right attitude in verse 17. The key words are "peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy." Passages

14 But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth.

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elsewhere in the New Testament which illustrate the usage include I Corinthians 4:21; II Corinthians 10:1; Titus 3:2; Galatians 6:1; and II Timothy 2:25.

On the word "wisdom," see comment on 1:5. It is used here against the background of its Old Testament use for practical good judgment or common sense in the face of the concerns and duties of life, especially as those judgments are shaped by the teachings of God's word. Meekness is coupled with teaching in the Old Testament: Psalms 25:9. It is not only the wise who know how to receive instruction (Proverbs 12:15), but the wise teacher also knows both what kind of counsel to give and how to give it (Proverbs 11:14; 17:28; 29:9).

14 But if you have bitter jealousy—The man whose conduct reveals jealousy and faction shows by the absence of meekness that wisdom is missing. Notice that James assumes that jealousy and faction are opposite in character to the deeds of wisdom. The wise man will never produce such fruits.

"Jealousy" in Greek is a neutral word and may have either a good sense of zeal or ardor (II Corinthians 7:7; 11:2) or the bad sense of envy or jealousy (as in I Corinthians 3:3; II Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:20). The use of the descriptive adjective "bitter" and the connection with "faction" (verses 14, 16) show that James has the bad sense in mind here. The word "bitter" means "harsh" and refers to the feeling of anger or animosity inherent in such jealousy. James likely refers to the jealousy between the teachers in the local churches (his so-called "wise men") in their vying for positions and seeking for honors and the praise of their hearers. Or one might think of the following chapter and the questions concerning the sources of wars and fightings among the readers. Jealousy can certainly provoke bitter feeling and strife. The modern proverbial speech sees jealousy as green-eyed. The attitudes of jealousy and strife were much in evidence among the Jews on a national level, especially politically in the party bickerings and cleavage in the years preceding the outbreak of the Jewish wars. The rise of the Zealot party and the revolution which brought on the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Roman army sharp-

ly divided the Jewish people and produced bickering and strife. See Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 135ff, for the story of the rise of this party. And see Introduction pp. 22ff.

**faction in your hearts.**—This is a word of uncertain meaning. NEB renders "selfish ambition." Moffatt and Goodspeed have "rivalry." It has been customary to derive the word from *eris* meaning "strife" or "discord." In Galatians 5:20 and II Corinthians 12:20 this word is found with *eris* and thus it has been argued that they are not related. But some writers (Dibelius, Leitzmann, and Sichenberger, according to Arndt and Gingrich) still hold to this meaning and would translate "strife" or "contention," especially in view of the use in Philippians 1:17 and 15. On the other hand the Classical meaning (Aristotle, *Politics*, 5.3p. 1302b, 4; 1303a, 14) is that of unethical political seeking. This seems to fit the context of all the New Testament uses: Philippians 1:17; 2:3; Romans 2:8; II Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:20) (In the last passage the plural would mean "disputes" or "outbreaks of selfishness." See Arndt and Gingrich and see Funk, Section 142).

**"The heart"** (compare 1:26, "deceives his heart") is used in the Bible as the seat of the faculty of thinking and so of moral and religious actions. See also James 4:8 and Matthew 15:19. If a man has these attitudes in his heart, they will come out in "confusion and vile deeds" (verse 16). Actions proceed from the heart. The pretense of wisdom when the heart and life are not right is valueless and under such circumstances is a lie.

**glory not and lie not against the truth.**—The word "glory" means "boast" or "brag." The idea seems to be that a pretense of wisdom is a boast, especially if it shows itself in a gloating over another on grounds of superiority. Such in effect is the wearing of the name "wise man" as a designation of a teacher. But if one does not demonstrate the wisdom in actual life, he should not bear the title or pretend to be wise; such a boast is really then a lie against the truth. "Truth" here means either simply "what is true"—his actual condition (the article being used with the abstract noun) or "the Gospel truth". "The boast would be lying to the great injury of the Gospel Truth, and this must stop" (Lenski). The former explanation seems preferable. For one to pose as a wise man is a lie against reality when the fruit of foolishness is so plainly manifested.

15 This wisdom is not a *wisdom* that cometh down from above, but is earthly,<sup>10</sup>sensual, <sup>11</sup>devilish.

<sup>10</sup>Or, *natural* Or, *animal*

<sup>11</sup>*demoniacal*

15 This wisdom—A “wisdom” which produced jealousy and selfish ambition (or strife), if it could be called wisdom at all, would be wisdom of the wrong kind. James is here ironic—this would not in the terms of Biblical teaching be wisdom. A man with great learning and knowledge and with potential skill in imparting his ideas might be exceedingly wicked in his heart. Any wisdom which might be attributed to him would (like the fire which sets the tongue aflame from hell in verse 6) be from the lower regions.

is not a wisdom that cometh down from above,—The phrase “cometh down from above” is a descriptive participle. It defines the kind of wisdom a teacher ought to have: it is a “coming down from above” wisdom; it is a God-given wisdom. Wisdom has already been described as God’s gift in answer to prayer. Jewish thought often personified wisdom (as in the early chapters of Proverbs, where she “cries aloud in the streets”) and pictures her as coming from God. But with the “not” James affirms that the wisdom of the factious is in opposition to this heavenly wisdom.

but is earthly, sensual, devilish.—James describes positively the nature of a “wisdom” which produces jealousy and selfishness. First, it is “earthly.” This word is usually used in opposition to what is heavenly and often has the sense of “human” as against something divine. Thus Hermas, a second century Christian, (*Mandates*, 11:6) uses the adjective to describe the human and false prophet as opposed to the divinely commissioned and inspired one. Compare Paul’s description of those who “mind earthly things” (Philippians 3:19) and the “wisdom which is of this world” (I Corinthians 1:20). Thus James means that the wisdom from which jealousy and selfishness come is a product of fallen human, earthly sources.

The word “sensual” (Note margin “Or *natural* Or *animal*”) is derived from the word *psuche*, which is ordinarily translated “soul.” That a word derived from it may have a bad meaning, as here, may seem strange. But the word often had a meaning connected with natural life as opposed to the spiritual or supernatural. Thus it might mean the “unspiritual” or “merely human,” as in I

Corinthians 2:14, or the physical man and the physical body, as in I Corinthians 15:44 ("sown a *natural* body"). Perhaps "carnal" could often translate the sense as in James here. The phrase has been explained as "man as he is as a result of Adam." While the root word is often translated "soul," the adjective form in this passage could not rightly be rendered into English by a derivative of that word, as "soul" usually expresses the spiritual and higher nature of man. In this sense "soul" is equivalent to "spirit." When the three terms "body, soul, and spirit" are used together, the soul is probably to be thought of as the life of man which he has in common with natural life around him. It is from this, then, that the meaning in the present passage is derived.

"Devilish" should be "demonic" or "demoniacal" as in the margin, as the word is connected with the word "demon" and not "devil." Demons are evil spirits in the service of Satan (the prince or ruler of demons, the same as Beelzebub, Matthew 12:24). British translators for some unknown reason (the Revisors as well as the NEB) persist in mistranslating the term "demon" by "devil." The term "devil" without the article is always merely an adjective, "slandorous." There is only one devil. I Timothy 4:1 ascribes false doctrines to the influence of demons. They may influence others to be the instruments of the spread of heresy, but this is the real work of demons or of such as they are. So it is the work of demons to spread jealousy and selfish ambition and every vile deed. Those who possess these in their hearts are acting, at least, as demons do. The wisdom which begets this action is then demonic.

Note: This writer is amazed that students often express surprise that he as a teacher of the New Testament should believe that there were such things as demons really in existence. Much of our modern world is like the Sadducees of Jesus' day who "did not believe in spirits." It is often asserted that the belief in demons in the New Testament was merely an accommodation to a popular current superstition or was a part of the so-called "human element" in which they were involved. But one can hardly read the New Testament documents without seeing that Jesus actually acknowledged the existence of these unclean spirits. They showed superhuman knowledge of the sonship of Jesus. Jesus taught that power to cast them out was a sign of the coming of the Kingdom (Matthew 12:28). To attribute the power by which they were cast out to the

16 For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle,

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devil was a blasphemy, a sin which was unforgivable (Mark 3:29-30). While at times Jesus seemed to connect sickness and demon possession, at other times he distinguished between them. The Bible does not offer an explanation of the origin of demons (whether they were fallen spirits or the spirits of the wicked dead who were allowed to return and possess people). Nor does the Bible give any hint as to whether we may still be faced with the phenomenon and unable to recognize it at present. Some have thought that the statements about the demons being sent back into the abyss (Luke 8:31) and being tormented "before their time" imply the termination of their power to affect men. For a good discussion of the subject of demons see R. C. Trench, *On the Miracles*, on the healing of the demoniac at Capernaum; also Unger, *Biblical Demonology*; and the article by Sweet in the *New International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.

16 For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed.—Jealousy and faction, which have already been mentioned as being in the hearts of the false teachers, produce their natural fruits of confusion and vile deeds. This is the proof (compare the use of the particle of conclusion "for") that the wisdom behind these attitudes is earthly, sensual, and demonic; confusion and vileness are the natural fruits of the evil world and the underworld. The word rendered "confusion" has the sense of disturbance, disorder, or unruliness. The New Testament instances of its use are I Corinthians 14:33; II Corinthians 6:5; 12:20, "insurrections"; Luke 21:9. The passage from Luke refers to political tumults; those from the epistles have to do with church disturbances. Notice the opposition to the word in this passage is "peace."

The word "vile" in "every vile deed" means evil in its "good-for-nothing" sense. It is what is opposed to the "good." The antithesis here is with the "full of mercy and good fruits" of the following passage. The basic meaning is "worthless," but it can also have the meaning of "wicked" or "bad," "malignant." (Romans 9:11; Titus 2:8).

17 But the wisdom that is from above—True wisdom is now described. It has already been mentioned in verse 15 in a negative

easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without <sup>12</sup>variance, without hypocrisy.

<sup>12</sup>Or, *doubtfulness* Or, *partiality*

way. The wisdom which truly becomes a teacher (and any other Christian) proceeds from above, being a gift from God (James 1:5). This is, of course, the kind that James recommends, though he is content with definition and leaves the admonition to the reader himself. Notice that the wisdom from above has seven characteristics, as does the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22f) and the Christian graces (II Peter 1:5-9). Perhaps seven is thought of by James as the typical or complete number.

**is first pure,**—The prime quality (above everything else) of wisdom is purity. Both God (I John 3:3) and His word (Psalms 12:6) are pure. What is pure is dedicated to God and hence is holy. Therefore the wisdom from above is chaste and without defilement. True wisdom produces only what is holy and pure (not the evil things mentioned in the context). The adjective often has the quality as an ethical term of the "clean" or holy inward moral attitude: Philippians 4:8; II Corinthians 11:2; I Peter 3:2. Lenski comments "It is pure wisdom, unmixed. Clean in all respects."

**peaceable,**—The word here is used of orderliness as opposed to confusion (compare I Corinthians 7:15; 14:33). It means "not given to conflict," "that which is harmonious and unifying" as opposed to the strife and vile deeds of the earthly wisdom. Much is said by Paul (in whose churches there was doctrinal and personal strife) of this harmony and unity. In a striking passage in Colossians Paul said that peace should "be the umpire" in our lives, like the official judge at the races (Colossians 3:15). This is the meaning of the word translated "rule." Paul urged the Ephesians to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). This is connected to, but it is also different from, the full meaning in the New Testament of peace to express the Messianic salvation, that is, peace of mind flowing from a consciousness of peace with God through the forgiveness of sins. (Compare Philippians 4:7).

**gentle,**—This is another word in Greek which is hard to render into English. It is variously defined as "kindness," "being yielding or forbearing" (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 3:2; I Peter 2:18). The corresponding noun appears in Acts 24:4 (of the governor's gra-

sciousness). In II Corinthians 10:1 it is the "graciousness" or "gentleness" of Christ. It is rendered "forbearance" in Philippians 4:5. The commentators like to mention the phrase coined by Matthew Arnold "sweet reasonableness" in connection with it. It sometimes has the meaning of "yielding" when one does not need to, that is, to inferiors: not insisting on one's rights. Trench illustrates with Matthew 18:23 as an opposite characteristic in the man who was forgiven and was himself implacably harsh. Thus it is seen that the word carries the idea of "reasonableness" and "graciousness," the absence of bad manners and quick temper.

**easy to be entreated,**—This word ordinarily means "obedient," or "compliant," "openminded," "yielding to entreaty." Its etymology leads back to the meaning "of good, i. e. easy, persuasion." In a teacher, as here, it would be the opposite of dogmatic and unyielding. The teacher must himself be teachable—ready to be taught and guided in turn. It is a poor teacher who does not learn from his pupils. The word is not used elsewhere in the New Testament.

**full of mercy and good fruits,**—in opposition to "vile deeds." "Mercy" means "compassion" or "pity" and is generally used in the Bible as a description of a human attribute associated with deeds of charity toward the poor and sick (James 2:13; Luke 10:37). "Good fruits" refers to deeds or acts, the "produce" or "effects" of the Christian religion that are "good" rather than evil. The use of "full of" to express the presence of something in large degree in a person's character is common. Compare "full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matthew 23:38), "full of all unrighteousness" (Romans 1:29), and "full of goodness" (Romans 15:14). James would insist that not only in the disposition to avoid confusion, but also in the practical results of life the teacher must demonstrate true wisdom. His life must be one of moral and spiritual usefulness. It was said of Jesus that "He went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). If pure and undefiled religion is to do such things as visit the widows and orphans in their affliction, it is certainly to be expected that the teachers of that religion excel in demonstrating this fruit in their lives. Compare Paul's advice to Titus, "Showing yourself a pattern of good works" (Titus 2:7). Especially can they use their tongues as productive of good works and acts of mercy, rather than to sow discord. "A tongue controlled by divine grace can be a mighty influence for good."



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18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace.

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without variance,—The word means “a lack of discord,” then “lack of uncertainty or partiality.” Here the word seems to mean “not vacillating,” “not acting one way in one circumstance and another in a different one.” James is saying that a teacher in his attitudes should be consistent. Paul often charged Timothy and his helpers to do nothing with partiality (I Timothy 5:21). The leader loses the confidence of his followers if they get the idea that there is no consistency in his words and deeds or in his attitude toward others.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace—The “And” (Greek *de*) indicates an additional thought. But this is not a part of the description of wisdom. It is an enlargement of the “full of good fruits.” That fruit might also be described as “the fruit of righteousness.” The expression is equivalent to “and the fruit, righteousness” or “the fruit is righteousness, which is sown . . . .”<sup>1</sup> For the expression, compare Proverbs 11:30 and Amos 6:12. Knowling calls attention to Old Testament parallels where “fruit of righteousness” is used opposite to “bitterness” (Amos 5:7; Hosea 10:12; Proverbs 9:21; and Isaiah 32:16f). Thus a righteous life of good deeds or fruits is what is reaped by the one who sows in the right way. The construction logically is one where the produce is put for the seed sown.<sup>2</sup> “In peace” stresses that the sowing which produces this fruit is done under conditions of peace (not jealousy and faction leading to confusion and vile deeds). Under these conditions alone will the preaching and teaching of God’s word grow and develop into a life of righteousness. Peace is assumed as the climate necessary for producing righteousness.

Note further that “righteousness” here evidently means “good fruits or deeds.” It is conduct and action pleasing to God as in Matthew 5:6; I John 2:29; I Timothy 6:11; II Timothy 2:11. Compare the note on 1:20.

for them that make peace.—The phrase, as in Ephesians 2:15, means to establish or bring about peace, to so act that peace will result. Compare our word “pacifist” which originally meant the same. See the noun form of the word in Matthew 5:9. James em-

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<sup>1</sup>A possessive (genitive) of apposition.

<sup>2</sup>A “pregnant” construction.

phasizes that righteousness is produced in the atmosphere of peace and is produced only by those who are peaceable.

In conclusion it might well be stressed that this is a gripping and instructive passage. Its full force perhaps is too little grasped (if it has been correctly interpreted here), because the connection in the context with the activity of the teacher is not generally understood. Its message of peace is applicable to all Christians, for we must all seek peace and pursue it. But understood as applicable in a special way to teachers, it becomes a powerful rebuke and a stern admonition to those who "would be teachers" and who thus bear "heavier judgment." It emphasizes that greater responsibility for peace and harmony that those who take up the yoke of Jesus to impose it upon His disciples are under. Elders need to look into the records of those whom they employ as teachers and preachers. A trail of disturbed churches and divided classes given to agitation and confusion are bad signs. No matter how "wise and understanding" one might be in reputation, if one's life is not righteous, if the sowing is not in peace, he ought to be avoided as a teacher.

## SECTION SIX

## WORLDLINESS IN THE CHURCH

4:1-12

## 1. THE SOURCE OF WARS AND STRIFE

4:1-10

1 Whence *come* wars and whence *come* fightings among you? come they not hence, *even* of your pleasures that war in your members?

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Chapter four begins with a warning against strife and contention. A connection may be seen between this and the previous section in the third chapter. Divine wisdom leads to peace and righteousness. But since there is strife and fighting among the readers, what is the source of such? James answers by identifying the source as the lusts and desires which crave worldly satisfaction. Prayers are unanswered or avoided. But friendship with the world means enmity against God, whose Spirit longs for the undivided loyalty of His children and who gives grace to achieve the purpose. A call to repentance and humility is needed to bring the readers back into the favor of God.

This section, while it may not be pleasant to read and contemplate, is one which ought to be studied and taught. Worldliness is one of the continual problems in the church. Christians are in the world, but they are not of the world (John 17:14). God has accepted them as His children or sons. He justifies them and accepts them as though they were as spotless as angels, but He leaves them here in the world. The final transformation into the image of God Himself will come when Jesus is seen in the resurrection and His followers become like Him. But God expects them to grow gradually into that image by continually purifying themselves while here on earth as they wait the hope of the resurrection (read I John 3:1-3, where these ideas are set forth). This divine sonship in the heavenly family calls upon the Christian to break the ties which he had as a sinner and alien. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If a man love the world, the love of the father is not in him" (I John 2:15). This is the problem that James is concerned with here.

Some critics think that this passage is exceedingly harsh and

even unrealistic. It presents, if taken literally, a picture of sin within the scattered church which is unbelievable to some. Can it be possible that the church would have grown so worldly in such a short time? Some even use this passage to prove that the book was not written to Christians but is a purely Jewish book which some Christian had later worked over to make it into a Christian document. Note especially the sins of war and murder. Is it thinkable that Christians were actually guilty of these sins? It will be seen that it is not necessary to take these as actual fightings in carnal battles. Even if this were so, it would not have to be assumed that all Christians were acting in such ways, though there is evidence that some did walk the low road (e. g., the Corinthians). If it had been written to Jews, one would not assume that they all were guilty of these sins. Others think that, if the literal meaning is insisted on, James may (as in the fifth chapter) have been writing to the Jews (Christians and non-Christians) whom he hoped would read his book and that he had the Jewish situation politically in mind.

1 **Whence come wars and whence come fightings**—The meaning of "wars" and "fightings" is crucial here. Does James mean literal fightings and wars? Some assume that he does, and it seems unrealistic to them that this should be so among Christians. Actually the language does not demand this assumption. Arndt and Gingrich say concerning the word "fightings" that in the literature covered by their lexicon the word is used always in the plural and always of battles carried on without weapons. In other words, the meaning is always figurative. Its other uses in the New Testament bear this out: II Corinthians 7:5; II Timothy 2:23; and Titus 3:9 ("strife about the law"). The word for "war" (*polemos*) also has a well-established figurative use. Again Arndt and Gingrich assert that since Sophocles' time the word has been used in the figurative sense of quarrelling, conflict, or strife. It will be seen that "murdering" in the same context will fit into a figurative interpretation. Some commentators argue that this is taking the easy way out of the difficulty, but it is also true that they may be closing their eyes to the obvious contextual meaning of the language. It is possible, of course, that James means engaging in actual carnal conflict, and this can be explained in the context of the book, but it is more likely that James means internal bickerings and strife,

leading to hatred.

among you?—Does James mean Christians, i. e., his readers? As pointed out, some commentators have doubted the probability of this. In answer it has been supposed that this is addressed not directly to the Christian part of James' readers, but to the larger circle of Jewish people who (James still hopes) respected him enough that they would read his letter.<sup>1</sup> It is well known that such activity as the Zealot revolutionary movement from Galilee was going on. Many Jews were engaging in this, which was a form of robbery, plunder, and murder. James may have had this circle of readers in mind. Obviously in 5:1ff he is addressing readers outside the church. Perhaps some Christians still belonged to these bands of rebel fighters. If so, their fighting spirit may have spread into the churches. In America during our Civil War, many Christians did engage in carnal war and against each other. But it is still better to suppose that if James is speaking to Christians, he speaks in a figurative sense.

come they not hence, even of your pleasures—"Pleasures" is from the word from which we get our "hedonite," one who lives for pleasure. The word in a bad sense means "evil desires for gratification of the flesh." Thus here it is a metonymy for lusts. The selfish desires of 3:14 reflect this. They do not reflect the purity connected with the wisdom from above (3:13-17) and so do not have the peace which goes with it. This is not far different from the "desires" or "lusts" which James had identified as the source of sin in temptation in 1:14. These pleasures were the giving away to the desires of the flesh in a selfish, wanton, and lascivious way, though some think that money basically is meant (Huther). For the use of the word "pleasure" in a bad sense elsewhere see Luke 8:14; Titus 3:3; and II Peter 2:13. The strife or conflicts were the direct results of such pleasure and satisfaction.

that war in your members?—Such pleasures were at war in their members. Does this mean among the members of the physical body (as in 3:6) or among the members of the church? If the latter, then James means that the different Christians seeking to gratify their pleasures find other disciples standing in their way. From this, conflict naturally arises. But more likely James means that such

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<sup>1</sup>e. g., Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, pp. 339ff.

2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and <sup>10</sup>covet, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war; ye have not because ye ask not.

<sup>10</sup>Gr. *are jealous*

pleasures fight among the members of the individual's body. So in 3:2 the tongue is set over against the whole body. Paul speaks of the law of sin and death which works in his members (Romans 7:23). The verb means "to campaign," "to serve in a war as a soldier." Pleasures (or really the lusts, the satisfaction of which brings pleasure) using one part of the body as a base of operations carry on war with everyone and everything which might seek to block their gratification. James does not spell out the figure to say that the hand is at war with the foot (for instance). But this is the general idea. Some part of man's nature may seek to curb and control and keep under other parts, bringing conflict.

James may be still thinking of the strife caused by the teachers (chapter 3). Or beginning with this he may be thinking of the many different ways that Christians might allow their interests to lead them to strife. Such may have spread from their Jewish background, but enough of such is seen in the church today to prove that James may be speaking realistically of Christians of his day. In verses 11-12 we see that they were speaking against and judging one another.

2 Ye lust, and have not:—The words of this verse are further explanation of why Christians were fighting. "Lust" is another word suggesting strong desire for gratification of the instincts. It is a verb form of the word "lust" in 1:14. It means "desires" and here "bad desires." When men live merely to satisfy their desires, they never realize their goal. He who lives for the satisfaction of his pleasures and desires will always "have not." The more he gets the more unsatisfied he will be. Sensations lose their pleasantness when indulged in too frequently. The only way they can then be fulfilled is to heighten the kind of attempted satisfaction. Solomon in the long ago learned all this when he gave himself to worldliness to see what was good for man. He learned that "all was vanity and vexation of spirit." Man's whole (duty) is to fear God and keep his commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Tacitus' description of the progressive nature of Nero's passions in his *Histories* is a good example of the way such living develops. If self-control is

not exercised, soon there is no satisfaction at all. Indulgence leads to unsatisfaction.

**ye kill,**—Or “murder.” It is hardly likely that James means this literally, though some Christians may have gone so far as to do such a thing. We have all perhaps known some professing Christians who have done such a terrible deed. But there is scriptural background for thinking that James means something else. Jesus in Matthew 5:22 had taught that hate in the heart is equal to murder from the Christian point of view. John taught the same thing in I John 3:15: “whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.” It could hardly be more specific (in view of the established figurative meanings of the words “wars” and “fightings”) than this. In addition, it is possible that the verb may mean no more than the desire to kill (a tendential present). Jesus spoke of those who were killing him, when actually they had only wished or attempted to do so (John 10:33). Parallels exist. Knowing points to Deuteronomy 24:6, where it is said that one takes his neighbor’s life who takes his mill as a pledge. In the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus (34:21f) we find: “The bread of the needy is the life of the poor: he that taketh away his neighbor’s living slayeth him.” That jealousy and envy lead to murder is argued by Clement of Rome (I Corinthians 4:7-9).

**and covet,**—This is not the ordinary word for “covet.” It has a double meaning of either “be jealous” (“bitter jealousy,” James 3:14; Acts 17:5, “the Jews moved with jealousy”; I Corinthians 13:4, “love envieth not”) or “to desire earnestly,” “to strive for” (whence “covet”) e. g., “desire earnestly the best gifts” (I Corinthians 12:31). These facts are evidenced by the marginal reading. The King James says, “Ye kill and desire to have.” Arndt and Gingrich take “ye are jealous” as the correct meaning. Between the idea of desire (covetousness) and jealousy there is not a great deal of difference. The King James adopted an inferior reading “Ye envy and desire to have.” Westcott-Hort margin suggests a full stop or period after “ye kill,” with “You covet and are not able to obtain” beginning a new sentence. Meyer supports this. This is possible; the MSS. have no punctuation. But it is merely a rearranging of the same ideas. The language of the whole passage is abrupt, broken into sentences that contain verbs with no con-

nectives.<sup>1</sup> This is a style of colloquial speech (but also of orators and comedy; compare Funk, Sec. 494). The brevity of the sentences heightens the points of the description. The best solution is to translate "Ye are jealous" and begin the new sentence with this.

**and cannot obtain:**—In spite of your strong jealousy or desire, your virtual murder, you do not get what you want. Just as the "wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20), so neither do jealousy, hatred and lust lead to God's blessings. The verb means "to attain one's goal or purpose" (cf. Romans 11:7). God answers prayer, but not all prayer, especially not in giving the ungodly the ingredients for selfish gratification.

**ye fight and war;**—James uses verbs in the continuous sense, "go on fighting and warring." The verbs represent the same words as in verse 1. He has rounded the thought and returned to the question "Whence come wars?" The whole thought is "Since you lust but don't have, you kill and envy (or covet) and still do not succeed, so you go on fighting and warring." All this is because of pleasure seeking in the bodily members.

**ye have not because you ask not.**—The nuance of this sentence is "You cannot obtain what you desire. Since you do not succeed in getting it, you cannot have (hold) it." The failure to have their desired objects related directly to their unsuccessful prayer life. Either they did not pray for what they desired or (verse 3) they asked amiss. For some, their attitudes and actions were such that they would not pray. Perhaps they realized that their desires were such that their prayers would be a mockery. Hence they went about trying to get what they wanted without prayer, without taking God into their thoughts.

"Ask" here and in the next sentence are the same verb, but they are in different voices. The first has a reflexive (middle) idea, "ask for one's self." The other is active. Some commentators doubt that James intends any great difference in the meaning. In Classical Greek the middle meant "to ask for something as a loan." But James uses it here to mean "pray for something for one's self." Literally we have: "Ye ask for yourselves . . . ye ask, and receive not." The thought, then, is: "Because you cannot pray for the blessings

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<sup>1</sup>A style called *asyndeton*.



3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend *it* in your pleasures.

4 Ye <sup>11</sup>adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God.

<sup>11</sup>That is, *who break your marriage vow to God.*

which God as a loving Father will give (Matthew 7:11), you do not pray; and thus God does not give you His blessings."

3 Ye ask, and receive not because ye ask amiss,—James had just said that they did not ask. His style has no connectives. He means "Some do not ask and do not receive, while others ask amiss; and so their prayers are not heard." God does not answer all prayer. His rules for prayer must be met. James has already said that a prayer must be in faith (1:6). Further, it must be according to His will (I John 5:14). There are other conditions.

The thing that was wrong with the prayers of those who did pray was that their prayers were evil. The word "amiss" means literally "in an evil manner," that is, with wrong or wicked motives. What those motives were is explained in the next verse. Illustration of the meaning of this word in John 18:23 "If I have spoken *evil* (*evilly*), bear witness," and Acts 23:5, "Thou shall not speak evil (*evilly*) of the ruler." Some prayers are evil or wicked. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Proverbs 28:9).

that ye may spend it in your pleasures.—The verb means "to spend," then "to spend freely," and finally "to wear out or exhaust." In Luke 15:14 it is used of the Prodigal Son who "spent all." The connotation of wastefulness is often in the word. "In your pleasures" represents the area or realm in which the blessings would be spent. Rather than in the family, in the kingdom of God, or even in civic or social causes, the money was desired that it might be spent in the cause of pleasure.

4 Ye adulteresses,—Now that James has stated the problem of worldly strife and war and pinpointed the cause as their living in the realm of pleasure, he begins a rebuke and prescribes the corrections which such a situation demands.

He calls such unfaithful or worldly people in the church "adulteresses." Here obviously he is not speaking of the sin of fornication or literal adultery, addressing directly the evil women involved

in the sin (*Expositor's Greek Testament*). This is a figurative or ethical use of the term, just as "murder" is in the same context. Some copyists thought the masculine should be added to make those addressed read "Adulterers and adulteresses." This late reading is in the King James but does not belong. The whole church is the bride. In both the Old and New Testament God's people are pictured as the bride of God or Christ (Isaiah 54:5; Hosea 2:19; Jeremiah 3:14,20; II Corinthians 11:2; Romans 7:1ff). Unfaithfulness to the husband is adultery (Jeremiah 3:9; Psalms 73:27; Matthew 12:39; 16:4; Revelation 2:22) In this figurative use, the feminine form is the correct one. For God's people to live in the realm of pleasure, which in turn leads to envy, lust, and fighting, is to betray the relationship of a faithful spouse as a partner in marriage betrays a husband or wife in adultery. In the Old Testament the unfaithfulness was usually idolatry.

**know ye not,**—How often have the guilty heard these words: "Don't you know better than this?" Cf. Matthew 6:24 ("No man can serve two masters"). James appeals to the training and conscience which instruction in discipleship should have created in his readers. The New Testament often mentions the instruction which has put Christians in possession of the basic knowledge about their lives (I John 2:27; II Peter 1:12). The latter passage emphasizes that such knowledge needs sometimes to be stirred up. Thus James is trying to rekindle in his readers the correct attitude toward the world (cf. Romans 6:16; I Corinthians 3:16).

**the friendship of the world**—"The world" in this context refers to evil, worldly men who are at enmity with God, in sin and lost. In this sense James had used the word in 1:27 ("keep yourselves unspotted from the world"). "The world" in this sense lies in the power of the evil one (I John 5:19). It is condemned by God (I Corinthians 1:20) because it knows not God (John 17:25). Christians have been called out of it (John 15:19); they must live as dead or crucified to it (Galatians 6:14). The world lives for "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and vainglory of life" and Christians are not to love it (I John 2:15).

To be "friends" with this world is to incur the enmity of God. "Friendship" here means affection for pleasures as James has described them. Probably he would include friendship with those in the world (I Corinthians 15:33). If Christians assume the proper

attitude toward the evil world, it will hate them (John 15:18,19a; 17:14; I John 3:13). Hermas, an early Christian writer, (*Mandates* 10.1.4) spoke of the "pagan friendships" of Christians. A pleasure-loving, covetous, worldly Christian is a contradiction. Demas loved the present world and left Paul (II Timothy 4:10).

**enmity with God?**—The word means "hostility or hatred of God." The possessives in both phrases ("the world's friendship; God's hatred") are objective, denoting the object of the friendship and hatred. Thus both nouns are active. This means that one cannot love God and the world at the same time. To love the world is equal to hating or being hostile to God. "If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him" (I John 2:15). Jesus said the same thing of God and money, "Ye cannot love God and mammon (Matthew 6:24). The "carnal mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7).

**Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God.**—In Greek James says, "Whosoever would wish<sup>1</sup> to be or intends to be. The idea is that the choice is made deliberately, involving the will and mind of the Christian. Compare I Timothy 6:9: "Those minded to be rich," and passages like I Timothy 2:8; 5:14; Titus 3:8. Another possible thought that James may be expressing is (as Knowling observes) that some feel that they cannot afford to be at enmity with God, but deep down they could wish that they were (cf. Paul, Philemon 13, "I could wish to keep him with me"). Such a choice or desire is father to the real thing, as God looks upon it, for He knows the heart.

**maketh himself an enemy of God.**—"Enemy of God" makes clear the abstract "enmity" (same root) of the previous sentence. The verb "maketh" means "constitutes himself." It is a middle (reflexive) form of a verb which means "to establish" or "cause one to be." See the comment on James 3:6. One who deliberates the way just mentioned thereby establishes himself an enemy of God. He has made the choice, and thus he has made himself an enemy. This is why we must love God with the whole heart, mind, and soul (Matthew 22:37). Paul said, "Set your affections . . . on things above" (Colossians 3:2).

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<sup>1</sup>A conditional relative clause, equivalent to the so-called future more probable condition.

5 Or think ye that the scripture <sup>12</sup> speaketh in vain? <sup>13</sup>Doth the spirit which <sup>14</sup>he made to dwell in us long unto envying?

<sup>12</sup>Or, *saitk in vain*. <sup>13</sup>Or, *The Spirit which he made to dwell in us he yearneth for even unto jealous envy*. Comp. Jer. 3:14; Hos. 2:19f. Or, *That Spirit which he made to dwell in us yearneth for us even unto jealous envy*. <sup>14</sup>Some ancient authorities read *dwelleth in us*.

5 Or think ye that the scripture speaketh in vain?—A glance at the marginal readings will indicate how difficult this verse is. We commend part of the American Standard translation and disagree with part of it. Let the reader study each of the alternate readings carefully.

James starts with the same verb he used in 1:26, "If any man thinks (seems) to be religious." If any of his readers *knew* the truth about the friendship with the world, then he must simply think that the Word of God has not meant what it said. "In vain" means "emptily" or "to no profit." If one can be friends with both the church and the world, then what God has said in the Scriptures is in vain.

"The scripture" in the singular usually means a single passage of Scripture, though there are a few passages where the sense approximates the collective sense. Passages where the collective sense is considered the correct meaning by Arndt and Gingrich are Acts 8:32; John 7:38, 42; Romans 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; Galatians 4:30; I Timothy 5:18; and the present one. If such is the meaning here, then with Lenski we interpret James as meaning merely that, if man can love God and the world together, then what the Scriptures as a whole teach is untrue. In this case, the following statement, beginning with "Doth the spirit . . ." is not meant to be taken as a quotation of Scripture. This is evidently the way the ASV takes the language, and it is the best solution of this point. If this is not true and it is considered a quotation from Scripture, then there is a difficulty, for there is no single passage in the Word of God which contains the exact words of James.

Doth the spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying?—Here the real difficulty is reached. The ASV has made the sentence into a question. This is possible, but there is no reason to take it as such. The King James does not consider it a question. The ASV has also translated "spirit" without the capital, thus making it refer to the human spirit rather than the Holy Spirit. But in the

two ASV marginal interpretations "Spirit" is rendered as the Holy Spirit. But in one, "Spirit" is subject; in the other, object. There is a variant reading of "dwelleth" for "made to dwell" (which is the King James reading) but it is not the best-attested reading. The main difficulty is that in Greek the word for "spirit" is a noun which has the same form in the nominative case (subject) and the accusative (direct object). So only the context can guide and it is not conclusive.

Accepting the reading of Nestle, Westcott-Hort, and most modern versions, "which he made to dwell," we have four possible interpretations (the three of the ASV and one other).

(1) The (human) spirit which God put in us longs unto the point of envy. (a) If this is a declarative sentence, it is a statement of the perverseness of the human spirit. It longs (for the world) in envy. This would be an observation on the dispositions of the worldly Christians James has been discussing. (b) If it is a question (as the ASV takes it), then James is rejecting that idea. He is saying, "You don't think that God put a spirit in us that lusts or desires to the point of envy, do you?" His point is that the readers were acting as if this were true.

(2) God (taking Him as the subject of the verb) yearns for the (human) spirit (that is, for its loyalty and devotion). James would be saying that, whereas the Christians were cool toward Him, His feeling is warm toward them with love.

(3) God yearns for the (Holy) Spirit which He made to dwell in us to the point of envying for us. The ASV gives this sense in the first alternate reading and cites Jeremiah 3:14 and Hosea 2:19f as illustrations. But they throw little light on the idea. They speak only of Jehovah's love for his betrothed. They do not explain in what sense or why one member of the Godhead longs for another. To this writer it yields little meaning.

(4) The (Holy) Spirit which God made to dwell in us yearns for us (for our loyalty and devotion to Him) to the point of being a jealous or envious Spirit.

The choice is between (2) and (4) and the substance of teaching in each is not far different. In either case a member of the Godhead is said to yearn or long for man or his spirit. The teaching of either is an emphasis of the Old Testament idea that God is a jealous God, loving and craving the affection and devotion of His

bride. The fourth interpretation is to be preferred because it is more natural to take the verb "made to dwell in us" as referring to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a doctrine that is a central part of the teaching of the New Testament (Romans 8:11; II Timothy 1:14; Galatians 4:6; Acts 5:32). On this see the note at the end of this verse.

The translators are divided: (1a) NEB; (1b) Phillips, *Living Oracles*; (2) Moffatt, RSV, Schonfield; (3) ASV, Goodspeed; (4) Lenski, Confraternity.

For the comment for which preference has been indicated above compare the following comment from Oesterley (*Expositor's Greek Testament*),

The best reading seems to be that of the RV margin: "That Spirit which he made to dwell in us yearneth for us even unto jealous envy." The words witness to the truth that the third Person of the Holy Trinity abides in our hearts striving to acquire the same love for Him on our part which he bears for us. It is a most striking passage which tells of the love of the Holy Spirit, as (in one sense) distinct from that of the Father or that of the Son; in connection with it should be read Rom. 8:26; Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19.

#### NOTE ON THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the individual Christian is a precious truth of God's word. Jesus promised that He and the Father would take their abode in the man who loves Him and keeps His word (John 14:23). The Spirit that had been with them would be in them (John 14:17). This Spirit is the Comforter, and His presence is to be forever (John 14:16). God promised to give the Spirit to those who ask for it (Luke 11:13).

Paul taught that the promise of the Father and Son abiding in us is fulfilled in that as spiritual stones "we are builded together a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22). This Spirit is received in baptism (Acts 2:38, appositional genitive) and comes by the hearing of faith (Galatians 3:2). It is given to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32) and because we are sons of God (Galatians 4:6). It is God who has given us such a Spirit (I Thessalonians 4:8).

This promise is not realized in some physical manifestation or sense perception of it. It rather is a revelation of God accepted by faith (Galatians 3:14), just as we accept by faith that Jesus is to dwell in us (Ephesians 3:17). It is grounded in the concept that the Spirit resides in the church, which is the spiritual temple or body of Christ into which the Christian comes at baptism. By the Spirit the believer is made one with the Lord in His spiritual body: "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit" (I Corinthians 6:17). The Church is therefore a temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 3:16) because the body of each Christian is also "a temple of the Holy Spirit which ye have from God which is in you" (I Corinthians 6:19). John said that, since we know that He has given us the Spirit, we thus know that he abides with us (I John 3:24). This Spirit is a seal to the Christian (Ephesians 1:13-14) just as Christ Himself was sealed by the coming of the Spirit upon Him (John 6:27). He is warned against grieving this Spirit by whom he is sealed (Ephesians 4:30). He is the Christian's firstfruit or pledge of greater blessings to come (Romans 8:23) and is thus an "earnest" or prepayment of the future blessing of the Christian: "Now he that establisheth us with you in Christ and anointed us is God; who also sealed us and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (II Corinthians 1:21-22). In giving us the Spirit God has thus diffused or spread abroad the love of God in our hearts (Romans 5:5). Here the word "Spirit" is almost equated with "love" because the Spirit in our hearts is evidence of God's love for us. So John said, "If we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us: hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit (I John 4:12-13). Thus the believer is one who has become a "partaker of the Holy Spirit" (Hebrews 6:4), and he may pray for the communion or partnership of the Holy Spirit in his life (II Corinthians 13:14).

The clearest statement of this doctrine is in Romans 8:2-27. Paul had already introduced the subject in 5:5. He affirms that living by the rule of this Spirit in our lives we are able to mortify sin in our bodies and thus accomplish what the law could not do (8:2-4). He boldly declares that, if any does not have this Spirit, he is none of Christ's (8:9). "If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit

of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:10-11). By this Spirit we put to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13).

But what specifically does the Spirit do for us? By Him we are strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man (Ephesians 3:16). He yearns for us with jealous envy and gives grace (James 4:5-6). He helps our infirmities and makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26). Ethical conduct is grounded in this belief, for we are assured that it is by the Spirit's power in us we overcome sin (Romans 8:13). The Spirit leads us as we study His word, the sacred Scriptures, and to walk by His word is to be "led by the Spirit" (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18, 25) and to produce the fruits of the Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:22). Finally, this Spirit gives life and will be our guarantee that we will be raised from the dead as He raised Christ (Romans 8:11).

The Spirit gave the word and He makes use of the word to accomplish these things. But the things pointed out here cannot be affirmed of the word, for they are personal relations and actions. Indeed it is by the Spirit dwelling in us that we guard the word which is the deposit of God to us (II Timothy 1:14). The impersonal word cannot be said to perform the personal actions affirmed of the indwelling Spirit. Does the word yearn for us? Does it interpret the mind of God for us? What are its groanings by which it makes intercession? That the Holy Spirit works in and through the word in conversion is plain. That He works in and through the word in accomplishing His object in the indwelling is also plain. Certainly the Spirit makes no new revelation of the truth to the mind or heart of the individual. The word of God is the word of the Spirit, and it is natural that the leading of the individual by the Spirit is the leading of the Spirit to imbibe and follow His truth.

The teaching of the Bible points to the working of the indwelling Spirit in the transformation of our characters into the image of the Christ. "Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into



6 But he giveth <sup>15</sup>more grace. Wherefore *the scripture* saith, <sup>16</sup>God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.

<sup>15</sup>Gr. a greater grace.

<sup>16</sup>Prov. 3:34.

the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." (II Corinthians 3:17-18).

6 But he giveth more grace.—The subject is unexpressed. It is either God the Father or the Holy Spirit who giveth more grace, depending upon which is meant by the one yearning in the previous verse. If we have interpreted correctly that it is the Holy Spirit which yearns for us, then this passage enforces the concept of the indwelling Spirit's word in us. It is He that gives us the grace, the enabling power and strength to accomplish what is desired for us. This, at any rate, is the teaching of Ephesians 3:16, "that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man." In either case it may be observed that the passage teaches the strengthening power of God's grace in our hearts to accomplish His will if we will but lean on Him.

The margin suggests the rendering "greater" grace (the NEB "stronger"). In either case, why the comparative sense? It might be an intensive (illative) use of the comparative meaning, "very great grace" or "a very strong measure" of grace. But it seems better to interpret it as implying an unexpressed comparison with some other circumstance or person.<sup>1</sup> Hort thought that it meant "better than the world can give." But Mayor is certainly right in considering it to mean "better than you would otherwise have." When we give ourselves over to the yearning of God's Spirit and surrender to let Him have His way with us, He gives us a favor in the form of help and strength which we could not otherwise have. Like His love and peace which pass understanding (Ephesians 3:19; Philippians 4:7) so is His grace which is sufficient for us (II Corinthians 12:9).

On the meaning of "grace" here, cf. the note in Arndt and Gingrich which speaks of effects experienced above and beyond that which disciples ordinarily enjoy. They say,

This brings us to a number of passages in which *charis* ("grace") is evidently to be understood in a very

<sup>1</sup>A pregrant construction.

concrete sense. It is hardly to be differentiated from *power* (of God) or from *knowledge* or *glory*. Cf. II Cor. 1:12, "not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God; I Cor. 15:10c, "and not I but the grace of God with me," "increase in the grace and knowledge of the Lord," II Peter 3:18. Stephen was said to be "full of grace and power," Acts 6:8.

Thus the sense of "grace" seems to be His power enabling us through His Spirit to accomplish His will. This is a powerful appeal to Christians to love and serve God with their whole hearts.

Wherefore the scripture saith,—The verb is impersonal in Greek, with no subject. The Revised sees the previous reference to the "Scripture" as supplying the subject. Other authorities think of God as the one referred to as subject, as in James 1:12 ("which he promised"). One might say simply, "It says . . ."

God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.—This quotation from Proverbs 3:34 in the Septuagint is James' proof that the Spirit gives greater grace, for it shows the direct promise of God to supply grace to the humble. James changes the Old Testament "Lord" to "God" by way of interpreting it. The ASV reads, "Surely he (Jehovah) scoffeth at the scoffers; but he giveth grace to the lowly." If we are right in interpreting what is affirmed in this context as being spoken of the Holy Spirit, then by his use of the O.T. passage, James implies the deity of the Holy Spirit. The meaning is that friendship with the world is pride, because it results from the conceit of man who finds the center of life in himself and sees self-gratification as the purpose of existence. See John 2:16, where another form of the same word is rendered "pride" of life.

The verb "resists" equals "arranges himself against." It introduces the figure of warfare taken up by James in the next verse. When one joins forces with the army of Satan ("the world"), then he finds God arraigned against himself. There is no neutrality. "He that is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12:30). In contrast, "the humble" are those who have denied themselves, forsaken the world, and glory only in the cross of Christ. They are the ones who respond to the yearnings of the Spirit. They are God's friends.

7 Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

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7 **Be subject therefore unto God;**—Because the Lord resists the proud (making certain that they cannot win the battle), James urges his readers to forsake pride and submit or arrange themselves under God's authority. There is a kind of antithesis in the original, where the same root word occurs in the two verbs "God resists" and "be subject": God sets himself against those who do not set themselves under his authority. The verb "be subject" is mostly associated with the idea of rank or order (in an army, for example). Thus it means to put one's self in the ranks as a soldier, resigning his will to that of his chief. The verb is one of Peter's favorite words: I Peter 2:18; 3:33; 5:5.

**but resist the devil,**—To stand in God's rank and submit involves aligning one's self against Satan rather than seeking his friendship. To give comfort to the enemy is treason. The devil is the "ruler of the world" (Ephesians 2:3; John 14:30). As James has already said, "Friendship with the devil's world is enmity with God" (verse 4). Peter, too, urged Christians to resist the devil's attack stedfastly in faith, with the assurance that all Christians partake of the same sufferings and that the God of grace will establish and strengthen them for the trials. There must be no compromise with the enemy, whether he fights subtly by guile or "goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour," thus trying to frighten the timid into surrendering (I Peter 5:8-9).

**and he will flee from you.**—Peter's roaring lion is actually a cowardly beast. This lion is defeated by a stedfast resistance of faith and will flee when resisted. But he must not be given advantage.

This is a wonderful promise from God. He will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear (I Corinthians 10:13). Christians are kept by the power of God unto a salvation ready to be revealed at the last day (I Peter 1:5). To the Christian the devil is bound (Matthew 12:29). God is able to guard us from stumbling (Jude 24f).

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8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded.

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Both "be subject" and "resist" are verbs expressing point action (aorist imperative) in Greek, emphasizing a decisive and "once for all" action of commitment. Also grammatically the imperative followed by a future is equivalent to a conditional clause, with the last verb containing what amounts to a promise. Christ in His temptation resisted the devil, and the result was that the devil left him. So the Lord promises it will be with us.

8 Draw nigh to God,—The condition of that successful resistance of the devil is walking with God. If we are to do this successfully, we must get right with the Lord and get close to Him. "Drawing nigh" (close) is a figurative use of the verb and is associated with spiritual worship or service to God. In the Old Testament it is used of the priestly service, of those who drew near to God at the altar or temple to purify themselves and serve (Exodus 19:22; Ezekiel 44:13; Leviticus 10:3; Isaiah 29:13). It is used of the Christian's approach to worship under the new covenant (Hebrews 7:19), especially through prayer (Hebrews 4:16). Here it is virtually an admonition to worship God sincerely.

Cleanse your hands,—This is based originally on the practice of ceremonial purification which was necessary for the priest before worship (Exodus 30:19-21). Compare the custom in Jesus' day (Mark 7:3). From this arose a figure of moral cleanliness akin to our expression of innocence: "My hands are clean." See Psalms 24:4; 26:6; Isaiah 1:16; and "lifting up holy hands" (I Timothy 2:8). In the last passage the idea is that, since the customary stance for prayer among Jews was to stand or kneel and lift up hands to heaven, only men were to be chosen to lead in the prayer who could lift up pure or holy hands. They are to be men of character and purity of life. It is the Christian's duty to cleanse himself from all defilement of flesh and spirit (II Corinthians 7:1; I John 3:3). In our present passage the emphasis is upon those who have become backsliders. They are admonished to repent and purify themselves and worship the Lord.

sinners;—Those addressed are undoubtedly Christians (see comment on verse 1). Those addressed are considered sinners because their friendship with the world has made them God's enemies.

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

Consider James 5:19-20, where those who have erred from the truth face death.

**purify your hearts,**—The heart must be set right as well as the life. Compare Peter's "having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth" (I Peter 1:22), of initial obedience to the gospel. Note that in verse 4, one who "would be" or "wishes to be" (a friend of the world) thereby constitutes himself an enemy of God. God knows our hearts or thoughts. We must be sincere, setting our hearts and hope perfectly on him. He knows if we are disloyal in mind.

**ye doubleminded,**—The word used here is the same word that describes the doubting praying man in 1:8. Here the doublemindedness is in holding onto the world and the Lord at the same time, or perhaps serving him with the outward appearance ("seemeth to be religious," 1:26) while one's heart is not right. The one who is so divided is a spiritual Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde.

9 Be afflicted,—Probably "be wretched" is a better translation, as the verb used intransitively usually means "to endure sorrow" or "be in distress." The transitive verb means to "afflict somebody with something." The noun in Romans 3:16 means "wretchedness, distress, or trouble," and in the plural in our next chapter (5:1) means "miseries." The adjective means "wretched" (Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am!"). Mayor thinks it pertains to some voluntary abstinence from comforts or luxuries referring to a withdrawal from the love of worldly pleasures under discussion. From this he advances to an application of buffeting the body (I Corinthians 9:27) and the accompaniments of repentance in the Old Testament of fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. But though James was austere in his life, there is nothing else in the New Testament to indicate that Christ demands such abjection from those who repent. It seems better to think of mental wretchedness brought about by the realization of their sinful condition. The verb nowhere else appears in the imperative, so the exact sense is obscured. It is plain, though, that James considers their condition serious. Realization

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you.

of that condition ought to bring a soberness akin to wretchedness. The aorist is probably ingressive, expressing the coming about or beginning of conduct different from the previous; so "become afflicted."

**and mourn, and weep:**—Jesus warned that those who laugh will weep and mourn (Luke 6:25), but those who weep now shall laugh (Luke 6:21). He also pronounced a blessing upon those who weep, saying that they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4). The thought of these passages is contrition over sinful condition. Peter, when he realized that he had sinned, "went out and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75). So did the sinful woman (Luke 7:38). When the enormity of sin strikes home, the penitent is sorry for his wrong. This is godly sorrow which works repentance (II Corinthians 7:10). For the idea see I Corinthians 5:2. The rich are told in 5:1 to weep for the things coming upon them. Felix was terrified when he heard of "judgment to come," but he did nothing about it (Acts 24:25). It is better to weep and mourn in contrition than to weep too late at the judgment.

**let your laughter be turned to mourning,**—The laughter is the glad sound of their worldly pleasures. The Christian life is not one of frowning; it is to be a happy and rejoicing life. James is describing here the condition of the sinner convicted of sin who realizes his wrongs are still held against him. This realization ought to wipe these outward signs of gaiety and laughter from him. To laugh under such a realization would be indicative of a hard heart and seared conscience.

**your joy to heaviness.**—"Joy" here is the inward condition of the sinner, as the laughter is the outward. Many grieve that they are laden with a sinful habit; but to take delight in sin is a sign of perversity. The world's joy is therefore a joy of its own, quite different from the Christian's (Hebrews 11:25). In Jeremiah the Lord spoke of the voice of mirth and gladness which would cease from the land (16:9).

The term "heaviness" means dejection or "being downcast." It is the hiding of the face in shame; it is opposed to the proud look (verse 6). The publican, realizing he was a sinner, "would not lift up so much as his eyes" (Luke 18:13). Philo said, "The eyes of the sorrowful are full of remorse and dejection."

10 Humble yourselves—James is not speaking of humility as a

trait of character so much as he is as an act of resignation, of self-humiliation, of bowing to the will of God. The use of the tense (aorist) shows that he means a definite act, a decisive and full self-surrender such as we see in the prayer and confession of David in Psalms 51. Virtually the same words are found in Luke 14:11; Matthew 23:12; and I Peter 5:6.

## 2. JUDGING OUR BRETHREN

4:11-12

11 Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

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This section deals with the matter of speech, as do 1:26 and 3:1ff. But it is hardly a reversion to that theme. The passage is to be connected with the previous one (4:1-10) on worldly strife. James corrects a specific sin growing out of this strife—evil speech against brethren and judging brethren. When they become proud and pleasure-seeking, they end by criticizing their own brethren and emphasizing their faults. We cannot have a wrong attitude toward our brethren and be right toward God (I John 4:20f). A second possibility is that James is addressing another group of brethren who have not engaged in the sins mentioned and who are disposed to criticize sharply those who do. Huther thinks the use of “brethren” here and the milder tone indicate that is the case. Rebuke of one another is not to be couched in harsh terms as though the one rebuking were God himself. (Galatians 6:1; I Timothy 5:1).

11 Speak not one against another,—The command in Greek means “stop speaking evil, or slandering.” The habit was already there. Too, the word is much stronger than the ASV translation indicates. It refers to defamation of character, or slander. See its use elsewhere in II Corinthians 12:20 and I Peter 2:1. People who do wrong often accuse and slander others to take the spotlight off themselves. Others self-righteously are intolerant and accusing of those who err as though they themselves are immune from mistakes. “Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1) is an admonition to be remembered.

He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth—Slander and judgment go together. The judgment is the condemnation of one brother by another. In Greek there is only one article before the two nouns, indicating that the one doing both things is the same and that, to some extent, the act of slander involves the act of judging. Paul taught that one must not judge another's servant (Romans 14:4). In slandering or running down a brother the critic sits in judgment on another and pronounces the verdict of unworthiness on him. This is a violation also of the teaching of Jesus (Matthew 7:1). There is, of course, a fine line in the New Testament between this and the recognition of sin in the lives of others and proper admonition and rebuke of those who sin. We certainly are not to condone sin or wink at it. But neither are we to act from suspicion or from mere appearance or personal dislike. Our own attitude toward those who have been in error is naturally critical. Let us remember that "love thinketh no evil" (I Corinthians 13:5). Jude had some things to say about how the righteous are to rescue those overtaken in error (vv. 22-23).

speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law:—"The law" under consideration is the teaching of the word of God, probably (if any one teaching is in mind) Jesus' law of love. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Jesus re-emphasized this to say that we are to love others as God in Christ has loved us (John 13:34). This is Jesus' unfailing sign of His disciples. It is Jesus' own "new commandment." If one refuses to obey the law and stoops to slander and evil speaking, he is, in a way, condemning the law and saying that it is no good. Thus he is speaking against the law and judging it.

Another interpretation is suggested by Oesterley and Carr: That the language concerns strife brought on by wrangling over the keeping of the Law of Moses. Carr thinks the question would naturally arise as to the permanency of the Law. Some would judge their brethren for continuing to keep the law (as in Romans 14, concerning the keeping of days and the eating of meats). He thinks James, on the other hand, is defending the continued keeping of the Law of Moses and calling those who so argue judges who set aside the law. His idea would be that only God, who gave the law, could set it aside. At this stage of the revelation of the gospel He has not spoken to tell Jews that they should no longer keep the laws de-



12 One *only* is the lawgiver and judge, *even* he who is able to save and destroy: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?

livered to their fathers. If He wants the customs no longer kept, He himself must set these laws aside. Oesterley, on the other hand, thinks the specific quarrels may have been over what is involved in keeping the law. This would assume that both sides of those in the dispute agreed in the keeping of the law, but some would hold to the rabbinical interpretations, while others would disallow them. Neither of these suggestions commends itself to this commentator as James' meaning in this context. It is conceivable that either of these issues might have been raised in Judaistic Christianity, but there is nothing in this context to suggest them. "Slander" usually refers to lies told on people whom we resent, to faultfinding, and the like. As indicated above, it is more likely that the law of love, the "royal law" of James 2:8—Leviticus 19:18 is meant.

but if thou judgest . . . thou art a doer of the law, but a judge. —He who sets aside a law to say that there should be no such law becomes a critic of that law. But the position of a Christian is one of obedience to the divine will; he is a doer of the law of Christ—not a judge or critic of its worthiness to be kept. This is the essence of the kingdom (reign) of God.

12 One only is the lawgiver and judge,—There is only one who is able to legislate and say what should be done. To judge the law as they were doing was to usurp the place of God. A human is treading on dangerous ground when he willfully sets aside God's law and judges that it is not for himself. He is, in a sense, setting himself up as God. Emphasis in the phrase is on the "one."

even he who is able to save and destroy:—The powers of life and death establish God's right as sole lawgiver and judge. God created man; he upholds and sustains him (Acts 17:28); it is through Christ He has provided redemption for man according to His will. Thus in the judgment it is He who will have the say as to who is saved (will enter heaven) or who is to be destroyed (condemned to eternal death) (Matthew 25:46). Emphasis here, as elsewhere on the law and God as sovereign, is not intended to picture God as harsh and arbitrary; nor does the emphasis upon "law" intend to picture the gospel as a rigid, strict legal system. James has already said that man is under the "law of liberty" (see on 1:25).

But even in a system of grace and faith which grants freedom from the law, the response of faith and love demands a voluntary slavery from love (Galatians 5:13-14) to the will of the one loved; it demands the "works" by which faith is perfected (James 2:14ff).

but who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?—One might say, "Puny man"! Will you pronounce judgment upon your neighbor when you have no power to save or destroy? Compare again Paul's condemnation of judging in Romans 14:4, 13 with that of Jesus in Matthew 7:1 and Luke 6:37.

Let it be emphasized again that the sin of judging rebuked here has nothing to do with the duty to rebuke sin from the pulpit (Titus 1:13) or in the proper place to rebuke the sinners (I Timothy 5:20), Brethren may correct one another (James 5:19-20), but in all cases the rebuke is to be with proper restraint and with introspection (Galatians 6:1; I Timothy 5:1). Judging which is completely out of line is that of attacking one's reputation and good name by sitting in judgment on appearances and attributing motives which cannot be known. Too often we suspect that people will do things or are guilty of them, and we say why they have done them, when we actually do not know and probably because we simply do not like them.

## SECTION SEVEN

## DIRECT ADDRESS TO THE UNBELIEVING RICH

4:13-5:6

## 1. THE PRESUMPTUOUS USE OF TIME

4:13-17

James now seems to turn to another subject, that of the sins of rich Jews. If we are correct in interpreting this section and the first paragraph of chapter five as going together, then the two subjects are The Sin of Presumption in the Planning of Life and The Withholding of Wages from Poor Laborers.

With their involvement in the business and commercial enterprise of the ancient world, the Jews seem to have been guilty of planning their activities without thinking of God and His rulership of their lives. Typical of this were the merchants who planned their journeys and profits with no thought that God might say, "This day thy soul is required of thee." James teaches that life is brief and uncertain and that everything ought to be done with the attitude "if God wills." Since the Jews had possession of the revelation which taught them what their life was and thus knew what the good life is, James calls their living their lives in this fashion a sin.

With many commentaries (See Huther in *Meyer's* for details) verses 13-17 are to be taken with 5:1-6 as an apostrophe, or a section in which the author turns away from his readers addressed to speak directly to a more remote audience. The arguments for this are (1) the idiomatic "come now" repeated; (2) the absence of the "brethren" in the address; (3) only the practices mentioned with no corrective or call to repentance added (as in 4:8). This is not conclusive, but it is stronger than any evidence for separating the two parts of the section and considering 4:13-17 as addressed to Christians.

The style of this section (apostrophe) is somewhat like the Stoic diatribe, in which the preacher debated in the speech with his imaginary opponent. This has been considered by Easton as definitely identifying the author as one familiar with that device of Greek literature and is used by him (on the assumption that James the

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13 Come now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain:

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Lord's brother would not be familiar with such devices) as an argument against the genuineness of the letter. Metzger, however, shows that the same style was very familiar as a part of the rabbinical literature of the Jews see "Language of the New Testament," *Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. VII, p. 51).

13 Come now,—Others translate "Go to now." The Greek could be translated either "go" or "come." The phrase (also used in 5:1) is an imperative (command), but it has no sense of actual going (travel). It is a set phrase, an interjection to gain attention, especially to call attention to what one is going to say. It was used in Classical Greek from Homer's time. It is somewhat like our, "Come, come now," when we appeal to someone. James is saying, "Had not you who are doing what I am about to discuss better take a second look at your action?"

ye that say,—This nominative of address (vocative in Greek) singles out directly those who are to be admonished. Though the admonition is applicable to all Christians as well as non-Christians (and Christians are probably often guilty of the defect), evidence presented above seems to indicate that those addressed are the rich also addressed in 5:1. There are many passages in the Bible which warn against the presumption which James is about to discuss.

Today or tomorrow—Some texts have "and" instead of "or." This would make the time more definite, equalling a journey of two days. Instead, the correct reading "or" implies an indefinite number of days or amount of time: One will start one day, another on a different one. The point is that any direct planning that does not remember that God holds the future in His hand is wrong.

we will go into this city,—The whole thing is indefinite with James. The words which he puts into the mouths of the speakers are simply typical or hypothetical words. One might envision merchants with their charts or maps spread out planning their future trips and transactions. "This city" means "such and such" a city or "some" city.

and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain:—Solomon said, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1). The rich man (Luke 12:19,

14 whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

20) thought that he had "many days" in which to eat, drink, and be merry. But God said, "This night thy soul is required." James knows that the men make their plans without consideration of God. They have their schedule worked out, even to the gain or profit which they will make from their transactions.

The Jews of the first century were much employed in the business and financial life of the world, just as they are in modern times. The Jewish writer Philo in Egypt (1st Century B.C.) gives a picture of Jewish merchants and financiers of his day which shows us how true James' picture was (*Flaccum VIII*). James does not indicate by his language that there was anything wrong with engaging in business or making plans. But James sees them as leaving God out; compare his "If God wills."

There was much moving and travelling among people in the Roman Empire. Roads and communications were well organized, probably better than we moderns would think possible. The dispersion of the Jews gave them connections all over the world which would inform them of opportunities for business. From the personal sections of Paul's letters (e. g., Romans 16) one can get an idea of how much moving around was going on, even among the early Christians. The verb "trade" in this verse is from a root word which meant to "travel," then it came to mean "travel on business" and "to trade." Finally, it came to mean, as Ross shows, "to scheme or connive," to "cheat in trade," and thus to "exploit." But though the overtone may be there, James is pointing more to the presumption in the use of time than to shady business deals.

14 whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.—James' Greek is more dramatic. He has no "whereas." He says, "Ye say . . . Ye who do not know of the thing of tomorrow! what sort your life!" ASV takes this latter sentence as a separate one, and as a question. Nestle and Westcott-Hort make it a part of the previous sentence, as above. We know nothing of what shall be one day, not to speak of a year. We know neither what life is nor what it will be (whichever way the sentence is interpreted). We do not know whether we will be alive or whether we will be able to transact business if we are. Yet those who know so little of tomorrow talk

15 <sup>20</sup>For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that.

<sup>20</sup>Gr. *instead of your saying.*

so. Some texts have the plural "the things of tomorrow."

The "what is your life?" is obscure. It may be a question and a separate sentence, or an indirect question and a part of the previous sentence. It also may be a kind of exclamation. This is a situation where the lack of original punctuation leaves us at sea. But however one takes it, the "what sort" used as an adjective with a noun usually has an ironical meaning as in I Peter 2:12 ("what kind of benefit"). So here it is intended to reduce life to nothingness (Huther). So Funk: "How miserable is your life!" Note the way this is expanded in the following references to vapor. The point is that we have no certainty of life: whether we shall live or not, be in health or ill, have prosperity or poverty. Of course, if the world goes on and we are healthy, etc., man exercises control, and life may be prolonged or shortened. But these are mighty "ifs." In the final analysis we have no control or knowledge of life's issues. Yet what grandiose schemes we make.

For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time,—The word "vapor" means either "mist, fog, breath, or smoke." Any such rendering will preserve the figure. It stands for something seemingly with us which vanishes suddenly and is seen no more. Even a full life is only a moment in eternity. James uses a metaphor instead of a simile ("you are" instead of "you are like"), thus making the comparison more forceful.

15 For that ye ought to say,—The Greek says literally (margin) "instead of your saying." The ASV is a bit of curiosity, with the "that" seemingly used as a relative equal to "what" or "the thing which": "You say this . . . for (instead of) that (the thing which) you ought to say." Further, the "ought to say" is a paraphrase. This is (in ellipsis) what James means: Ye say this instead of saying (as you ought) . . .

If the Lord will,—The Christian ought to realize always that he lives and has his being in God (Acts 12:28). Nothing happens that He does not know (Matthew 10:29). This is not, it seems, an Old Testament expression, though it is several times used in the New: Acts 18:21; 21:18; I Corinthians 4:19; 16:7; Hebrews 6:3. Many

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16 But now ye glory in your vauntings: all such glorying is evil.

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Christians once used the Latin abbreviation D. V. (*Deo Volente*), especially in their letters, to express that what they propose depends on God's will. The attitude is really what counts. The teaching means more than that we merely preface all our statements about the future with words like this as a formula. It means that every plan we make should be made with the certainty that it depends upon the will of God. One may do this without use of this formula, while one might use the formula meaninglessly. God knows the meaning and motive behind our words and deeds.

Lenski registers a strong protest against reading the New Testament with pagan glasses and assuming that such phrases arose by borrowing from the heathen world. Deissmann pointed out that such phrases as "the gods willing" were frequent. The attitude in the Apostolic Church may well have grown out of the uncertainty over the time of the return of Christ.

16 But now ye glory in your vauntings:—James calls such statements as that in verse 13 "glorying" or "boasting." Instead of relying on the will of God, they boasted in their vauntings or "arrogances." The plural may be used as some think because James is thinking of the frequency with which it was happening. But Robertson<sup>1</sup> is more likely correct in arguing that it is an idiomatic way, quite common in Greek, of expressing abstract concept while only incidentally stressing individual occurrence: cf. "Coveting" (Mark 7:22), "respect of persons" (James 2:1), "murders" (Matthew 15:19), "fornication" (I Corinthians 7:2). The word "vauntings" means "boastful pretensions" or "arrogance." Thus James shows that the fault at which he is hitting goes deep. This writer heard a preacher tell of knowing a millionaire who at thirty-five boasted that he would live to be a hundred. He had the world all to his liking. Yet a few years later, he died by his own hand, broken in health, after spending a fortune to regain it. One thinks of Rabshakeh, the messenger of Sennacherib, who taunted Israel that their God was powerless to deliver them from the hands of his king. But in the morning the angel of death had leveled the camp

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<sup>1</sup>*A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1934), p. 408.

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17 To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

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(Isaiah 36). So these people were proud of their pretensions and boasts, daring God to interfere with their plans. These descriptions indicate the attitudes were much more serious than simply saying "We are going to do this tomorrow."

all such glorying is evil.—It is wrong to boast against God. Of course, not all glorying is wrong. We may glory in the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:13f); it is indeed something in which we can take pride that Christ died for us. But such boasting as James refers to here, starting in arrogance and leaving God out, is a sin.

17 To him therefore that knoweth to do good,—The connection between this general statement and the context has puzzled many. Some say that it is merely a proverbial statement which James adds as a general truth without any connection with the context. But it is best seen as a conclusion (compare the "therefore") explaining why the boasting in arrogance is an evil or sin.

"To do good" does not mean "to do the good deed or thing" as in Romans 7:21; II Corinthians 13:7b; Galatians 6:9 (where it has the article and means "good deeds," often approximating deeds of charity, or fruits of righteousness). The phrase "knowing to do good" means knowing how to act in a way that is morally excellent (as opposed to the boastful evil of verse 16). It means the same thing as "knowing how to live right." The man who by knowledge is capable of living a morally acceptable life and who does not do so is sinning. It is sin because the knowledge makes it possible for God to reckon it as sin: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin" (John 15:22 and compare Luke 12:47). The knowledge is not necessarily some distinctive knowledge which the Christian has or something which James is now telling them (that is, of the brevity of life). But the general teaching of this section—that life is a vapor that appears but a little time—is so manifest and universally true to human experience that it is inexplicable for anyone not to recognize it. (So Huther and rightly) Of course, if the Christian did not recognize it before, he has James' specific instruction. So Paul taught that a failure to live up to the moral good that is written in the human conscience brings one into sin (Romans 2).



The man who knows that God demands of him to live the good life and does not do so is a sinner. God commands that men everywhere repent (Acts 17:30).

It is worth observing that here James is not speaking merely of the sin of failing to do some good deed. He is speaking of failure to live a morally and spiritually excellent life when one has the knowledge to do so.

## 2. THE SIN OF SHAMEFUL WEALTH

5:1-6

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James continues his apostrophe, or direct address, of those not Christians and not his immediate readers, with the "come now" as in the section in which the address began (4:13). But he shifts the subject from the arrogant and boastful living of life without God, in the pursuit of wealth, to the unjust and shameful oppression of workers. James foretells the fearful punishment of God for such sin. The use of wealth that is condemned here is not wealth as such. James does not oppose rich men indiscriminately. Those who have understood Christianity as being anti-wealth and anti-property have misunderstood it. It is the wrong use of wealth and the acquisition of wealth in the wrong manner which are condemned, along with the envy and desire for wealth as an end. In this chapter, especially, James is speaking of wealth acquired by robbing laborers of their just wages. One of the sins which Paul listed as barring one from being an elder is that of being "greedy of base gain" (Titus 1:7). The term means obtaining money by an unlawful occupation or getting it in a wrong manner.

As pointed out above, the rich directly in mind are not Christians. They are such as the rich men who were visiting the congregation (2:2) and who dragged them before judges and blasphemed the name called upon them (2:6). They are not the humble rich of 1:10. The section is a warning to any guilty Jew who might chance to read it. Perhaps James thinks that poor Christians might use it as an appeal for justice to their employers. It certainly would be a warning to any Christian who might be tempted to act in the wrong way (just as the preceding admonition in 4:13-17 is). But the probable purpose which James had in mind was to put such unjust people in the proper perspective before the church. Those

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1 Come now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you.

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who suffer as Christians from the hands of such people are not to envy the rich. They are to commit themselves to God as the avenger of His people (Cf. Romans 12:14-21). They are to see these sinful people for what they are in God's sight: wretched people fattening themselves for a day of slaughter. The Old Testament had many similar passages comforting the poor in their oppression (like Psalms 73) as well as such apostrophes in which condemnation is addressed directly to heathen countries and peoples (like Edom, Assyria, or Tyre). It is quite possible that James, with his reputation for righteousness among the unbelieving Jews (attested by Josephus), may have hoped to appeal to this audience as potential secondary readers.

1 Come now, ye rich,—Compare Isaiah 14:31 ("O Philistia") and 13:6 ("Wail ye, O Babylon") for Old Testament examples of this type of condemnation addressed as an aside to an audience not directly contemplated in the address. James in the manner of an Old Testament prophet feels the injustice of the situation and cries out against the wrong. The section is thus not primarily for the people addressed, but for the effect on his readers.

On the use of "come ye," see on 4:13. The Greek has "the rich" with the article used in a vocative similar to our nominative of address, a not uncommon idiom in Greek. The designation is of a class of people. James is not thinking of every rich man, but of a class in their over-all characteristics. Not all rich people committed sins attributed to the class here. But the characteristics of the group as a whole lead Bible writers at times almost to class the rich with the evil and the poor with the good. Most of the members were among the poor; most of Christianity's enemies were from the well-to-do. There was no large middle class as today in our society.

weep and howl—James uses the same word for "weep" as in 4:9, but the meaning is different here. There it was a weeping of repentance and sorrow for sin (addressed to backsliding Christians); here it is bitter denunciation and prediction of the future wrath of God (cf. Revelation 6:16; 18:15). The word "howl" is a touch of vividness; it is a word which reproduces its meaning by

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2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

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its sound (onomatopoeia). It means to "shriek" and is frequently used in the LXX (especially in Isaiah) of the howls of those condemned by God (Isaiah 16:7; 65:14; Amos 8:3). James means that, if the rich understood their coming fate, they would literally shriek over the prospect. Compare Acts 24:25 where the meaning of "terrified," the word used to describe the feelings of Felix when he heard Paul preach to him of his fate, originally meant for the hair to stand on end. The language used in the New Testament to describe the punishment to the wicked is awful to contemplate.

for your miseries that are coming upon you.—The word "miseries" (the word might be translated by "wretchedness, distress, or trouble") is the word in Romans 3:16 in a quotation describing the wicked: "destruction and misery are in their ways." The adjective is used to describe the mental distress of the unjustified man ("O wretched man that I am") in Romans 7:24. The participle used as an adjective, "coming upon you," is always used in the literature of the Bible and early Christians (when referring to what the future holds) of what is distressing or unpleasant (Luke 21:26 and cf. Proverbs 3:25; Job 2:11). Here the trouble which James sees as coming upon the rich is either their final condemnation at the judgment (cf. verse 7) or, as others think, the awful punishment and suffering brought upon the nation of the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem. Perhaps one ought not to omit the thought also that the rich may bring suffering upon themselves in this life by their sins.

Verses 2-3 contain the charge that the riches of the wealthy are corrupted and ruined by non-use. "Your wealth" (as though not everybody's is in the same condition) probably shows that James recognizes that a proper use of wealth could be made (as in I Timothy 6:17ff). But the wealth of these people, being tied up in garments, property, and metal coins, is deteriorating from disuse and testifies against its owners. The stewardship of possessions is a clear-cut teaching of the whole Bible. Luke 16:1ff teaches that our wealth belongs to "another" (that is, to God, cf. verse 12). We are accountable for its use. The rich man (Luke 16:19ff) lost his soul because of disuse of money when an opportunity was laid daily at his door. The rich fool of Luke 12:13ff was a fool for not using

3 Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony <sup>2</sup>against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire.

<sup>2</sup>Or, *unto*

what his grounds brought forth other than for feeding his own "soul." Thus one of the sins of these rich is shown by the corruption of their wealth.

2 Your riches are corrupted,—“Riches” is the Greek word for money, but it also has a general sense of wealth of any kind. “Corrupted” means “rotten” or “decayed.” Since other words for money are mentioned later, this word may refer to wealth which could rot or decay, such as fruits, oils, trees, or vines. Like the rich fool, these treasured up the produce of their lands, but the fruit had not lasted. That it had not been preserved was the fault of the owner in not using it.

your garments—In eastern countries, and even among the Romans, acquiring expensive cloth (e. g., “purple and fine linen”) was a common means of holding wealth (Cf. Genesis 45:22; Joshua 7:21; Judges 14:12; II Kings 5:5, 22; Acts 20:33; Matthew 7:19; I Maccabees 11:24). James had described the rich man entering the assembly as dressed in a fine way (2:2). For the word “moth-eaten,” compare Job 13:28, where Job described his wretched condition (“I am like a garment that is moth-eaten”). In both verbs (“corrupted” and “moth-eaten”) James uses a perfect tense to indicate that these conditions were not new ones. The deterioration had been going on and was still going on.

3 Your gold and your silver are rusted;—Another means of accumulating wealth was metal coins which were in use from early antiquity. These they had kept until they became rusted (again the perfect tense is used). The verb may mean “tarnished” or “corroded.” The Epistle of Jeremy (a Jewish document) uses this word to describe the rotting of the purple cloth with which the idols were clothed (“And ye shall know them to be no gods by the bright purple that rotteth upon them,” verse 72). Silver and gold do not rust, but they may corrode.

and their rust shall be for a testimony against you,—Greek (following the LXX and the Hebrew) often uses the preposition *eis* after the verb “to be” to express the predicate nominative. But the “to be for something” here is different. Here it means “to be

inclined toward some end" or "to be useful" or to "serve for some purpose." There is a difference of opinion as to how to translate the "against you" or "unto you" (margin). Some would understand the meaning "it testifies to you," as if the rich should themselves learn their error from the condition of their possessions. It is better to take it as a dative of disadvantage as in Matthew 23:31 (Cf. Goodspeed's translation) and translate "against." The witness is about the non-use of the materials; the rust becomes the proof of their sin.

and shall eat your flesh as fire.—The "rust" is the subject. It will eat the flesh of the rich. The influence of the rust is transferred by a figure to the rust itself. It will cause the well-fed bodies of the rich to be destroyed like fire devours. Old Testament passages emphasizing God's judgments often liken them to fire: Psalms 21:10; Isaiah 10:16; 30:27; Ezekiel 15:7; Amos 5:6. Solomon says, "A worthless man deviseth mischief; and in his lips there is as a scorching fire" (Proverbs 16:27). The LXX reads here, "he treasures up fire on his own lips." This probably means that such a man destroys himself by his folly (as well, perhaps, as others around him).

There is another arrangement possible for the words of this and the following sentence, though the sense is not materially different. It is possible in Greek that James meant his words to be read (with Ropes, Schonfield, etc.) "Their rust . . . will eat your flesh because you have treasured up fire which shall be in the last days." This has the advantage of defining the fire which is meant as the fire of Gehenna. This makes the Greek of this passage agree (literally "treasures up fire") with the passage in Proverbs 16:27 quoted above. It also makes the verb "treasure up" more understandable; otherwise it has no object. It is not usually used as an intransitive verb. This commends itself to this writer.

If the translation stands as in the ASV, the destruction may refer to either the death of the rich Jews in the Roman wars (destruction of Jerusalem and other towns, A.D. 70, Josephus, *Wars* 5:10, as in the *Abingdon Commentary*) or in the future Gehenna of fire (Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; James 3:6). In either case it is a striking way to put it. The rust of unused wealth testifying against them will bring the rich to destruction. Verse 1 has already indicated that the miseries are coming upon them.

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Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days

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N. B.: There is an awful warning in this to the church today. So many in the churches in our day have been blessed with much of this world's goods. What is being done with it? We cannot give a token to the Lord (even a liberal share) and feel that the rest is ours to live upon in luxury and ease. We must give account to God for all of it (Luke 16:9-12): There are many things that a Christian may use his money for: for his family (I Timothy 5:4), for his own needs and helping others (Ephesians 4:28), for payment of taxes and good deeds (Romans 13:1ff; Titus 3:1,14). One need not give all he has to the Lord. But this should not lead us to think that we are not responsible for it all. "If we have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give us our own riches" (Luke 16:12). We are stewards of it all. Will the rust of our unused blessings eat our flesh as fire in that day, too? This is a serious question for members of prosperous churches.

Ye have laid up your treasure—This translation of the ASV translates one word "ye treasured") in the original. Jesus used a cognate object after the same verb: "Do not treasure up for yourselves treasures" (Matthew 6:19). Even if "fire" is to be taken as the object of this verb (see comment on previous phrase), the context shows that the rich were heaping up wealth which was to testify against them. It is not necessarily wrong to possess and accumulate wealth (i.e., to build an estate). But God's word certainly teaches that it imposes heavy responsibilities and dangers upon those who do. To amass wealth through covetousness or greed is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). Godliness with contentment is great gain (I Timothy 6:6). With the proper exercise of stewardship money can be used to further the kingdom of God. Many Christians with means do this. Yet many die and leave their estates unused and let them go to the state in taxes or to relatives who are not Christians or are not faithful and who will not use them to God's glory. Many desiring fortunes "have pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Timothy 6:9).

in the last days.—If the text of the ASV be followed, then James says that the rich have treasured up treasure in the last days. This might be the last days of the Jewish dispensation (Abingdon, Johnson). Or it may be eschatological and signify that James thinks of the coming end of the world possibly as soon. It may re-

4 Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

fer, as elsewhere (Hebrews 1:1), to the Christian dispensation as the last division of time. On the second of these, see comment at the beginning of verses 7-9. James may have identified the consummation of the age with the predicted destruction of Jerusalem and wondered if he was not living near the end of time. This is what Jesus' own disciples did (Matthew 24:3).

If one takes the translation of Ropes (mentioned above), then it is plain that James means the judgment of fire.

4 Behold,—(Cf. 5:9, 11 and 3:4,5) This is a Hebraistic type of graphic earnestness. James is intense in his earnestness.

the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields,—The word for "laborers" is that used especially of agricultural workers (Arndt and Gingrich). Palestine was rather unique in that fields were cultivated by hired labor. In most countries the work was done by slaves. James is thinking of the wheat and barley harvests where the grain was cut and shocked by hand. The Gospel references mention wages paid to laborers in fields and vineyards (Matthew 20:1ff). The Old Testament contained special safeguards against withholding wages: "The wages of a hired servant shall not abide with thee all night until the morning" (Leviticus 19:13). See also Deuteronomy 24:14. For passages on violation, see Malachi 3:5; Jeremiah 22:13; Job 24:10. Lenski points out that the scene here is set in harvest time when the rich would be more affluent and when oppression of the poor would be even less excusable.

which is of you kept back by fraud,—This is the text adopted by ASV. The other possible reading is simply "which is held out by you." One verb means "to rob"; the other "to hold back." In either case James infers that the wages owed the laborers were not paid and that this contributed to the ill-gotten gain of the rich Jews.

crieth out:—a figurative use of the demand that injustice be avenged. Quite often this expression occurs in the Old Testament where it has almost a poetic touch: the blood of Abel cries out (Genesis 4:10; Hebrews 12:24) or the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20). Compare Job 31:38ff; Revelation 6:10; and Psalms 34:17. Jesus used the figure when he said that if no other testified to Him "even the stones would cry out" (Luke 19:40).

5 Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter.

**the cries . . . have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.**—This is from Isaiah 5:9. As already seen, the idea of men's cry for justice entering into God's ears is frequent. See further in Psalms 18:6; 34:15. "Sabaoth" (not Sabbath) is the transliteration of the Hebrew word meaning "hosts" or "armies." Though it occurs only here in the New Testament (besides the quotation in Romans 9:24), the word occurs some 282 times in the Old Testament (Knowling), being at times translated in the LXX by the term "Lord-almighty." Compare II Corinthians 6:18; Revelation 1:17. The original idea was that of God fighting on the side of Israel to vindicate their cause and give them victory in battle (I Samuel 15:2; Isaiah 2:12; II Samuel 5:10; Psalms 59:5). But the idea was extended to include the hosts of angels which God might send forth to carry out His will (Joshua 5:14; II Kings 6:14ff). The word thus became one of the highest titles for the power and majesty of God (Isaiah 1:6; 6:3). Prayers for help were often expressed to God under this title (I Samuel 1:11).

The reference here then means that the same omnipotent God who fought with Israel and whose word even the hosts of angels carried out in heaven has listened and heard the cries of injustice from the robbed laborers. "Vengeance belongs to me, I will repay saith the Lord." All who are tempted to cheat a fellowman should remember.

5 Ye have lived delicately on the earth,—The wages fraudulently kept back were used to live luxurious and self-indulgent lives, thus adding to the fragrance of their crime. One is reminded of the rich fool's "Soul, thou hast much goods . . . take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." The verb here means "to live a life of ease, to "revel" or "carouse" and carries with it generally a bad sense even in the Classics. It is connected with the word which means "effeminacy." At other times it has merely the sense of "well-fed," "contented." Hermas (*Sim.* 6:1ff) uses it of sheep, figuratively representing luxury-loving men.

The expression "on earth" is possibly James' way of indicating that this condition is temporary. Only on earth (and not for long here) will this indulgent use of ill-gotten gain last. We are reminded of Abraham's answer to the rich man, "Son, remember that



6 Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous *one*; he doth not resist you.

thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." We will take with us neither our money (I Timothy 6:7) nor the pleasures it buys.

taken your pleasure;—Again the verb has a bad history. It generally signifies a voluptuous and excessively indulgent life. In the LXX it occurs of Sodom, "prosperous ease was in her and in her daughters" (Ezekiel 16:49). A compound verb is used in the well-known passage in Amos 6:4. In the New Testament it is used elsewhere only in I Timothy 5:6, of the widow who lives in pleasure and thus "is dead while she liveth." The whole picture of the rich here is one of wasteful, self-indulgent, luxurious living with a hint of lasciviousness and this off money retained by fraud. Their end is now to be told.

nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter.—The thought is not unlike Jeremiah 12:3, where the wicked are said to have been pulled out like sheep for slaying and prepared for slaughter by the Lord (Cf. Jeremiah 25:34; Isaiah 34:2, 61; Ezekiel 21:15). The difference here is that the rich have fattened themselves up for the fatal day. This is as though animals supplied their own food which eventually prepared them for the slaughter. This fattening continued right down to the day of slaughter. This certainly would fit the description of Josephus (*Wars* 5, 10, 2; 13, 4. Cf. Plummer *in loco* and Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, pp. 344f) for the way the rich were killed, often by torture, at the destruction of Jerusalem. More than likely, however, in view of the over-all context, James means the fatal destruction at the final judgment, with the idea of "slaughter" occurring because of the figure of animals used. So James means that they are fattening themselves right down to their death or to the coming of the Lord. Lenski's statement that the preposition *en* does not mean "on the day" is erroneous. The preposition is used regularly with the locative to express "time at which."

6 Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous one;—This is the climax of their sins. The key to the interpretation is the meaning of the term "righteous one." If this (as in Acts 3:14; 7:12; 22:14; I John 2:1) means the Lord Jesus Christ, the picture is that of the

rich Jews (Sadducees), who were in charge of the Sanhedrin which put Jesus to death lest the Romans take the control of the temple and its rich revenue from them (see John 11:48). In this case James sees the same greed and covetousness being extended in the robbery of the poor laborer's wages. If, on the other hand, the expression is used generically ("the unrighteous," as in I Peter 3:18), then the picture is that of the poor Jew, wronged by his evil, wealthy neighbor and condemned for this small bit of means. "The righteous one" then would mean just any good man who was treated in this way and who did not resist. Here one thinks of Ahab and Jezebel and Naboth's vineyard (I Kings 21). The rich in 2:6 were said to drag Christians before judges. On the expression, see Amos 2:6ff. The solution is not easy. Blass-Debrunner (Funk) consider the term to mean here an individual example. The aorists ("ye condemned" and "ye killed") point to a single example (though it could be a timeless use of the tense); yet "he doth not resist you" (present) sees the reaction as still going on. This writer would lean toward the idea that James is thinking of the righteous man in general and not Jesus, though he could have had Jesus in mind as one of the examples. The righteous do not resist. Christians have learned to bear condemnation and death with resignation.

### NOTE ON THE BIBLE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

There is no book which champions the cause of the unfortunate more than the Bible. The laws of Israel demand a fair deal for the laboring and poor classes; indeed this is true almost to the point of seeming unfairness to the wealthy (Money must be lent without interest, etc.). The rich are warned against the accumulation of wealth "adding house to house and field to field" (Isaiah 5:8; Amos 3:10; 11:28). Amos cried out with a passion against the injustices toward the poor (5:11; 8:4-7). It is strange (as Barclay observes) that the Marxists would consider the Bible or the religion based upon it the opiate of the masses, calling upon them to acquiesce in an unjust social structure. It is true that the poor are not encouraged to revolution, but the wrath of God is turned in warning against those who exploit the worker and disregard the rights and needs of the suffering.

Too often, professing Christians have not heeded the cry for so-

cial justice and helping the needs of the unfortunate. But still most of the gains of the workers and most of the hospitals, homes for unfortunates, etc., have been founded under the impulse of people who called themselves Christians. Schools and hospitals and enlightenment have gone with the missionary. The Social Gospel of the early part of this century was a curious example of the uneasy conscience of Christianity. It was based upon the false evolutionary optimism that had lost real faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ and the saving gospel of the Lord. It wanted to see the definition of the Kingdom of God limited to doing good to one's neighbor. It thought the other parts were only the Jewish clothes that the teaching of Jesus wore. Thus it viewed the lack of progress in social benefits in horror and set to work to bring about the kingdom of God on earth. It called on the church to turn from the proclaiming of the gospel of the New Heaven to seeking Heaven on earth. It saw the church's ministry as lying in hospitals, social work, corrective social legislation, and general improvement through the handout. This movement did not bring about its millennium. Its optimism died in the throes of the two world wars. One does not have to reject the theology of the Bible to accept its ethics and responsibilities. But one thing the movement did was to make the churches conscious of neglect of duty.

It is unfortunate that some see any expression of concern for social justice and help for the unfortunate as a revival of the Social Gospel. The church does have its mission, and every congregation must decide where its opportunity to serve lies. One may view with rejoicing the development of institutional care for orphans and old folk. The opportunities for practicing pure and undefiled religion should be multiplied. The works in existence should be supported. A church may think that the more direct spread of the gospel in mission work is more the mission of the church. But they go hand in hand without competition.

The gospel carries its message home to the hearts of the hearers as the preachers sound the words of Christ: "Inasmuch as you did it unto others, ye did it unto me." To teach the wealthy that his unused wealth is a sin and will be a testimony against him and that he ought to "weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon him" is to awaken him to his duty and responsibility. To teach Christians that to visit the widows and orphans in their afflictions

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is to practice pure and undefiled religion is to help accomplish God's will in God's way. The gospel is social in its demands, and we do not need the Social Gospel to remind us of this fact. Nor can we avoid our duty because we reject the Social Gospel.

## SECTION EIGHT

## ATTITUDE TOWARD MISTREATMENT

5:7-12

## 1. ADMONITION TO PATIENCE

5:7-11

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, until the <sup>3</sup>coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until <sup>4</sup>it receive the early and latter rain.

<sup>3</sup>Gr. *presence*

<sup>4</sup>Or, *he*

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This section stresses that Christians (in spite of the wrong suffered at the hands of the rich) are to bear their injustices patiently until the Lord comes, just as the farmer plants his seed and waits for the harvest. It also touches on the question of the expectancy of the Second Coming of Jesus in the First Century.

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.—Brethren are addressed directly because the previous section had had non-Christians mainly in view. Now the Christians are confronted with their own duty to develop the proper attitude toward their persecutors.

This is not the ordinary word translated "be patient." The verb here means to be "long-tempered" (as opposed to being "quick-tempered"). The meaning is to hold the mind in check rather than give way to wrath or wavering (as in verse 12). God is described as longsuffering (same word) in II Peter 3:9; our sins do not provoke Him to destroy us. The command is in the aorist (constative) emphasizing the command categorically until the event referred to, without reference to the interval.

until the coming of the Lord.—The word for "coming" used here is *parousia*, which is literally the "presence" of Christ. The word, which has become an English word (*Parousia*), in secular Greek referred to the presence or arrival of a person, especially of a visit of an important person. Jesus promised when he went away he would be present with His disciples always unto the end of the world (Matthew 28:19f). But the Holy Spirit is the agent of fulfillment of that promise. Christ is in and with us through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:21). The presence of Christ will become manifest

8 Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the<sup>3</sup> coming of the Lord is at hand.

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when he comes visibly at the end. Then every eye will see him (Revelation 1:7). This is the appearance or manifestation which is called the Parousia of Christ. The coming is called his Second Coming (Hebrews 9:28) by contrast with the First Advent. The *parousia* is a frequent New Testament term for the Lord's coming: Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39; I Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; II Thessalonians 2:1; I Corinthians 15:23; I John 2:28; II Peter 1:16; 3:4. Another New Testament expression for the coming is the Epiphany (*epiphaneia*), II Thessalonians 2:9; Titus 2:13; II Timothy 4:1.

Peter defends the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as no myth or fable (II Peter 1:16; 3:3, 10-13). It is a cardinal doctrine of the gospel. The Biblical view of the world is that of time as a straight line from beginning to end. A new age in that line started with Christ's own reign ("the last days") and will end with His coming. He will come in judgment and destruction of this present world and its order. Christians are not to take vengeance for themselves; they are to love their enemies. "Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). Christians are to bear indignities until that coming.

Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth,—Jesus used the comparison of the end of the world to a harvest (Matthew 13:20). A farmer does not expect his harvest on the day he plants. He must labor to be entitled to the fruits of the field (II Timothy 2:6). The precious fruit from the land, the grain which sustains life, comes only after waiting for the season.

being patient over it,—James repeats the verb ("being longsuffering") of the former sentence. The farmer may suffer several disappointments before the harvest. He does not lose his head, even over tares (Matthew 13:29), and root up or plow up the grain. He does not despair that the grain must grow into a shoot and then a stalk, put forth head, and then ripen.

until it receive the early and latter rain.—There are two rainy seasons in Palestine, fall and spring. Grain was planted in the fall and matured with the latter rain of the spring. So must Christians wait.

8 Be ye also patient;—like the farmer. The evil treatment may

9 Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the judge standeth before the doors.

provoke, but toughness of mind will enable one to endure the provocation. Trench translated the word "longsuffering" or "patience" here as "longanimity." A. G. Freed used to call it "stick-to-it-iveness."

**establish your hearts:**—Become "stout-hearted" would be a good way to translate the verb. It means to "confirm," "strengthen," or "fix fast." Compare "Establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints" (I Thessalonians 3:13). A Christian needs to gird up the loins of his mind (I Peter 1:13). Faintheartedness not only never won fair lady; it does not solve the problems of life. Fixed purpose and stout hearts are necessary. Remember Gideon's three hundred.

**for the coming of the Lord is at hand.**—John the Baptist used the same word<sup>1</sup> to declare the kingdom of God at hand (Matthew 3:2). James wrote probably not too long before the destruction of Jerusalem. This was the final event which Jesus had said must transpire before Christians could look for the end. After this there were to be no more signs until the sign of the Son of Man was seen in the clouds (Matthew 24:29f). After that event Christians were told to expect and watch for the coming at any time. This is the late New Testament attitude and the correct one. We still are to live in this mood. Because 2000 years have gone by since the destruction of Jerusalem we are not to say, "My lord delays his coming." The Lord is at hand every day and has been for two thousand years. "Watch ye!"

On the problem of the delay of the Second Coming, see the note at the end of verse 11.

9 Murmur not, brethren, one against another,—The verb means literally to "sigh" or "groan," as in II Corinthians 5:2 ("in this body we groan," i. e., in our afflictions). With the preposition "against" it means to "groan in complaint." Troubles tend to make the impatient complain against even those closest to them. Paul used a different word to describe Israel in I Corinthians 10:10,

<sup>1</sup>*engeken*, perfect of *engizo*.

10 Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord.

11 Behold, we call them blessed that endured: ye have heard of the

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but the sin is the same. Israelites in the wilderness lost their perseverance and murmured against each other and against God. Disciples of Christ must be patient toward one another as well as toward their persecutors.

that ye be not judged:—To groan against our brethren is to risk the Lord's condemnation when he comes. He will judge His own as well as the rich oppressors.

the judge standeth before the doors.—This reflects the very words of Jesus (Mark 13:29 = Matthew 24:33). The judge is Christ, who, just as in His readiness to forgive and receive the erring (Revelation 3:20), so also He stands as judge ready to open the door to see if his servants await His coming. One thinks perhaps of the master or father returning home and entering the house quickly to find the servants or children forgetful of their charges and beginning to complain and quarrel among themselves. We know the Lord stands at the door ready to enter at any moment. Shall we murmur under these circumstances?

10 Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and patience, the prophets—James is still thinking of the readers who are robbed of their wages. Examples are often the best means of teaching. The Old Testament is full of examples of those who bore up under difficulties. "We are not of them who shrink back unto perdition" (Hebrews 10:39). "Example of suffering and patience" is an instance of coordination of two ideas, one of which is dependent on the other.<sup>1</sup> The idea is "patience in suffering." "Suffering" is the Greek word for "misfortune." Compare II Timothy 2:9, where Paul uses it of the wrongs suffered by him to the point of bonds as an evildoer. The keeping back of their wages is such a misfortune. But the prophets also had suffered wrongs and persevered in their midst without complaint (Hebrews 11:33ff; II Chronicles 36:16; 23:37; I Thessalonians 2:15; Matthew 23:29-32).

11 we call them blessed that endured:—James has done so himself (1:12). In Daniel 12:12 (LXX) we have "blessed is he that

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<sup>1</sup>A figure called hendiadys.



<sup>5</sup>patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful.

<sup>6</sup>Or, *endurance*

endures." Paul had described the purpose of the reading of the Old Testament scriptures as "that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

ye have heard of the patience of Job,—His readers had heard of Job in the reading of the Scriptures in the synagogues, but the word is not to be restricted to this. Every child was taught the history of Israel from childhood.

Job is the outstanding example of patience and was well known for this virtue. The Jews were a suffering people from ancient times, and the example of Job loomed large in their memory and discipline. History, of course, was told in the book which bears his name. Especially in the prologue and epilogue of the book is the case history set forth. The body of the book is a deep discussion of the purpose of suffering. Satan was allowed by God to afflict Job with loss of all property and family and then with a painful and loathsome disease. Job knew not the reason for his loss and complained to God of the false accusations of his friends and the injustice of his lot, but he never lost faith in God and held stubbornly to the loyalty expected even when his wife asked him to curse God and die. In all of it, we are told, Job sinned not. For this he became a great example of patience. Both in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 14:14, 20) and in Jewish literature his patience is extolled. It is strange that the author of Hebrews does not include Job in his list of patient heroes (Hebrews 11). Often he stood with Abraham as one of the two greatest of the Hebrew fathers. James includes him and Elijah along with Abraham and Rahab as examples in his book (2:21, 25; 5:12f).

and have seen the end of the Lord,—In Job's case the end is the outcome of Job's experience and what we learn of God's truth from the story. The Lord blessed him more at the end of his life than prior to his trials. This was a great demonstration that God is full of pity and mercy. The "end" which James may have in mind could also be the "purpose" which God had in allowing the events to happen, that is, to demonstrate that through trials steadfastness may be developed. In our case the Bible teaches that this

is the purpose of trials. God works all things so that they work together for our good. (Romans 8:28).

that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful.—The "that" is explanatory of what the "end" of the Lord is: we see in Job's case the demonstration that the Lord is full of pity and merciful. The outcome of double restitution to Job proves the mercy and pity of God. James means to assure the readers that the Lord is no less so toward them, if they will bear their troubles with patience as Job did.

#### NOTE ON JAMES 5:7-11, THE PROBLEM OF THE DELAY OF THE SECOND COMING

The early church lived in expectation of the Second Coming of the Lord. This is not strange because Jesus taught the disciples that they must do so. He told them to wait for the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24 = Mark 13 = Luke 21) and not to take "signs" as the direct indication of that event (Matthew 24:6) but as the beginning of the travail (verse 8). The army surrounding the city was the sign of its immediate end (Luke 21:20). After this event the disciples were to live in the expectation of the coming of the Lord (Matthew 24:29). The most obvious meaning of the language of Jesus is that after this end of the Jewish nation there was to be no future decisive event intervening until the coming of the Son of Man. The disciples were warned to live at all times in watchfulness, for the coming could be sudden and unexpected (Matthew 24:42ff). No indication of a "time within which" was given, and they were instructed not to expect any. Not even the Son Himself at that time knew when it would occur (Matthew 24:36). The promise of the return was often repeated. Once it was promised at the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:11).

The promise to see the Lord coming is repeated throughout the rest of the New Testament. Also the admonition to live in watchfulness and readiness is repeated (I Thessalonians 5:1-11; II Peter 3:10ff). But again Paul specifically discounted the impression that any of this warning meant that "the day of the Lord is just at hand" (II Thessalonians 2:2).

The urgency of the expectation and the desire for it are keenly felt on the pages of the letters. There are many passages in the New Testament epistles which speak of this expectation as if it was def-

initely anticipated by the early church within their lifetime. Some modern students of the New Testament would force the interpretation on these passages (Like James 5:8-9; I Peter 4:7) that inspired men predicted the definite coming of the end in their lifetime. These scholars hold that this is a sign of human weakness in the N.T. and a proof that it is not infallible. For to them the apostles were wrong about the matter. Since there has been a long delay in the *Parousia* (they argue), it is obvious that the New Testament writers were in error.

But this is to force the commentators' interpretations upon the writers of the New Testament. It is to assume that the N.T. writers meant what the commentators derive from the passages. Though they use the term "at hand," no N.T. writer claims that he knows or even predicts that Jesus would come before he died. Jesus had taught otherwise; Paul specifically refuted such, as we have seen. Peter definitely did not expect to see the event (John 21:19; II Peter 1:14). The writers write as though they must live in expectation or anticipation without knowing the date, just as Jesus taught and just as we must do today after so long. The inspired writer's words should be taken in the context of Jesus' teaching and that of his early disciples and not in that of the 20th century.

Within the Biblical world view which accepts the revelation of the creation of the world by the word of God as a matter of faith (Hebrews 11:3) it is not difficult to believe that the world will be destroyed by fire as the instrument of that same word (II Peter 3:7-10). The New Testament writers were not mistaken or led away by "cunningly devised fables when (they) made known (to us) the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" (II Peter 1:16).

## 2. SWEARING FORBIDDEN

5:12

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath: but <sup>o</sup>let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; that ye fall not under judgment.

<sup>o</sup>Or, *let yours be the yea, yea, and the nay, nay*, Comp. Mt. 5:37.

This verse is probably best interpreted as a continuation of the admonition on how to act in adversity, such as the abuse of the rich in withholding wages. James had counseled patience and against murmuring. He now in a special way urges that the disciples of the Lord must not allow themselves to be provoked into swearing.

James here does not have in mind what we call profanity or

taking God's name in vain. He is thinking of oaths, that is, confirming a statement or promise by something sacred or holy or (on the other hand) imprecations (the calling down of curses on one's enemies in the name of God or something sacred). The use of the verb "to swear" and the syntax of the Greek (accusative of oaths) make this plain.

It is also the contention of this writer that the passage, based as it is on Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:33-37) and subject to the same interpretation, has nothing to do with solemn and serious civil and religious oaths or vows. These conclusions will be set forth in the exposition and defended in the note following.

12 **But above all things,**—Funk (Sec. 213) holds that the preposition (*pro*) here means preference (cf., I Peter 4:8), that is, "especially" (So also Arndt-Gingrich). Thus it is not temporal ("the first thing you must do"), but "the most important thing to be aware of under the circumstances is do not swear." The verb means "stop swearing," since the prohibition is the type forbidding the continuation of something. James knew that the frequent taking of oaths was current among the Jews, as Jesus had Himself mentioned (Matthew 23:16-22; 5:34ff).

**swear not,**—This is almost a word-for-word quotation of Jesus' language in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:34ff). James changes the tense of the verb thus making Jesus' prohibition more applicable to the situation ("stop swearing"). He also omits Jesus' "at all" and shortens the things excluded as the standards of oaths (omitting "by Jerusalem" and "by thy head"). In the place of these James puts "or any other oaths" (on which see below). Since James' passage is most certainly a quotation and repetition of Jesus' words, it must bear the same interpretation.

**neither by the heaven, nor by the earth,**—Repeating Jesus' words in part. The Jews avoided the use of God's name and argued that oaths of this kind (compare the "greater" oaths in Hebrews 6:16) were not binding. Jesus taught (as the Law had, with certain minor exceptions, Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21) that all oaths were binding. Earth is the footstool of God's feet; it is thus sacred. Heaven, too, is sacred, for it is God's throne. An oath by such things is as binding as one by God's name.

**nor by any other oath:**—Here James varies the construction. In

the former phrases James says "Swear not by heaven or by earth" (using the accusative of oath to express the thing by which one swears). But now he says literally "Do not swear any other oath" (using a cognate accusative). This means that no other oath of the same kind, swearing "by" any other thing of the same kind such as "by heaven or earth," is to be taken. The word "other" is the Greek word (*allos*) which usually means "another of the same kind" (as opposed to *heteros* which means "another of a different kind," cf. the use of the words in Galatians 1:6, "another, *heteros*, Gospel which is not another, *allos*"). This is important, for it bears on whether James is prohibiting oaths absolutely. James uses the term "any other oath" to shorten his quotation of Jesus, and he means "not by another oath like these." Now Jesus' words, rightly understood, do not forbid oaths absolutely either. He says, "Swear not at all, neither by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, or your head." "Not at all" is not absolute in meaning, but modifies the things distributed in the prohibitions and is equivalent in our language to saying, "Don't swear by these things at all." But this does not prohibit oaths taken in God's name. Neither Jesus nor James thus prohibits solemn religious or civil oaths taken in God's name. This is proved by the fact that Jesus Himself took oaths (Matthew 26:63f; Mark 8:12 in the Greek where the same type of construction is found as in the oath in Hebrews 6:13-14). Paul did likewise (I Thessalonians 5:27, where Paul has the word for "swear" and the accusative of oaths). On this see the note following this section.

But let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay:—This also repeats the words of Jesus. He said, "Let your speech (or conversation) be . . ." This is to be taken in context. The Jews took the lesser oaths and claimed that they were not binding. Jesus called this hypocrisy (Matthew 24:16ff). This made oaths which were binding under the Law (which said, "Thou shalt perform to the Lord thine oaths") mere profanity. Hence Jesus means that in ordinary speech one should avoid oaths which do not have God's name (whether they are binding or not) and simply give his word, "yes" and "no." This leaves us (as it did Paul and others) free to use oaths in God's name when they are demanded or called for.

that ye fall not into judgment.—To say more than "yes" and "no" by the use of lesser oaths when they are not considered oaths

at all is to bring the user into the act of profanity and thus to bring him into judgment or condemnation. Jesus had said, "More than this is of the evil one." One will be condemned or justified by his words (Matthew 12:36, 37).

### NOTE ON SWEARING

The whole range of Biblical teaching on oaths is instructive. Moses prescribed that oaths should be by God's name (Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20). The third commandment did not prohibit oaths; it made sure that they were taken seriously with intention to keep them rather than that God's name be taken lightly. An oath must be kept: "Ye shall not swear falsely by my name" (Leviticus 19:12). "Whatsoever man shall vow a vow to the Lord, or swear an oath, or bind himself with an obligation upon his soul, he shall not break his word: all that shall come out of his mouth he shall do" (Numbers 30:2).

The Old Testament used a variety of constructions to express oaths. Some of these bear directly on the New Testament teaching. The most common word for "swear" in Hebrew is *saba'*. It is usually followed by the preposition *be*, "by" (of that by which one swears) and *le*, "to" (to express the person to whom the oath is made). The LXX translates usually with *omnumi* (173 times in the LXX). Several different constructions follow it to express that by which one swears. The most important is the accusative of oaths (Genesis 21:23, "swear by God, *ton theon*). Compare the following variations: "by my right hand" (Deuteronomy 32:40); "by the Lord God" (Joshua 9:18f); "by thy name" (Proverbs 24:32); "by the living God" (Hosea 14:15); "by the true God" (Isaiah 65:16). This is the standard way in Greek from earliest times to express an oath.

But the verb "swear" does not itself have to be expressed. Frequently asseverative particles such as *ma*, *men*, or *na* accompany the oath, and the negative particle *ou* and the affirmative *nai* are quite typical. Cf. Homer's *Iliad*, 1, 86, "For no one by Apollo (*ou ma gar Apollona*) shall lay hands on you." Moses swore by saying, "I witness by heaven and earth" (Deuteronomy 4:26). Again the preposition *kata* with the genitive is frequent: "I swore by myself (*kata hemautou*)" (Genesis 22:16). See "by the fear of his father"

(Genesis 31:53); "by thyself" (Exodus 32:23); "by thy throne" (Judges 1:12); and compare Amos 4:2; Isaiah 62:8; Jeremiah 28:51. The other typical construction is to follow the verb with the simple dative ("by my name," Deuteronomy 6:13 in some MSS.); I Kings 1:17; Psalms 88:35. In some cases the preposition *en* or *epi*, "by" or "upon," may appear.

The other LXX verb is *horkizo*, a causative which means "I make someone swear," or "I adjure someone." It may be followed by *en* (Nehemiah 13:25) or by *kata* ("I adjured him by God," II Chronicles 36:13). Once the expression "before the Lord" (*enantion*) occurs, Joshua 6:26. Oaths made simply "before God" or "in the sight of God" are common as are those made by the use of "as Jehovah liveth" (I Samuel 28:10).

**The Oath with the Emphatic Future Negative:** The most distinctive form of oath in Hebrew uses the particle *em* ("if") and the emphatic future negative. It is used either with the verb "swear" or by some form of the asseverative particles, to indicate the oath form. The full condition appears in Psalms 7:4, "If I have requited evil, may I perish" (optative of wish). Without the conclusion (but with it understood) this construction was regularly used as an oath: "by myself I swear (if) righteousness shall (not) proceed out of my mouth (Isaiah 45:23). As illustrations of this frequent oath formula see I Samuel 28:10; 19:6; 14:11; II Samuel 19:7; Psalms 88:5; 94:11; 131(2):2; Ezekiel 4:14; 14:16; 20:3, 31; 33:27. It is this type of oath which is quoted in Hebrews 6:14 (quoted from Genesis 22:16f from the Hebrew, not the LXX) when the writer said that God swore by Himself saying, "Surely blessing I will bless thee." The Greek (*ei men eulogon eulogeso*) is identical with the O.T. passage in this construction. This is the oath form which is on the lips of Jesus in Mark 8:12, etc.

**New Testament Oaths:** The N.T. employs much the same constructions. *Omnumi* ("I swear," 26 times in the N.T.) is followed by the preposition *en* (Revelation 10:5f; cf. Matthew 5:34f; 23:20ff), by the prep. *kata* (Hebrews 6:13, 16). *Horkizo* ("I adjure") and also a compound *enorkizo* occur as in the O.T. The usual construction, as in ordinary Greek and the O.T., is to follow the verb by the accusative of oaths, as "I adjure thee by God" (Mark 5:7); "by Jesus whom Paul preaches" (Acts 19:13). Paul is definitely using an oath then when he says, "I adjure thee by the Lord"

(I Thessalonians 5:27). This is quite in custom with Paul, who is frequent with strong asseverations in the name of God (II Corinthians 1:23; Romans 1:9; Philippians 1:8; II Timothy 4:1ff). In I Corinthians 15:31 Paul uses one of the particles of oath (*ne*) with the accusative of oaths with the verb *omnumi* in ellipsis: (I swear) "by our glorying." Compare also Acts 18:18 for Paul's taking a vow, and see Numbers 6:1-21 for its significance.

Jesus answered in the affirmative ("I am") when he was adjured by the High Priest "by the living God" to tell whether he is the Christ (Mark 14:62). But just as significant is Jesus' typical use of the *ei* with the future emphatic negative (as described above from the Old Testament and Hebrews 6:13, 16) when he swore that no sign would be given (Mark 8:12). It is impossible to absolve Jesus and Paul from the use of oaths.

In the light of this, Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:34 and James' repetition of it in James 5:12 need to be better understood. When Jesus said, "Swear not at all, neither by . . ." He should not be understood as forbidding oaths absolutely. It should be noted that "swear not at all" is not followed by a period, but by a series of negatives introduced by the particle *mete* ("neither"). This particle "divides the negative item into its component parts" (Arndt and Gingrich). That is, as Professor J. W. McGarvey pointed out in his *New Testament Commentary on Matthew and Mark* (comment on Matthew 5:34f), "the universal prohibition . . . is distributed by the specification of these four forms of oaths, and is therefore most strictly interpreted as including only such oaths." Thus the actual words of Jesus forbid only oaths taken "by heaven," "by earth," "by Jerusalem," or "by the head." To take a parallel example, when Jesus said to the apostles, "take nothing with you," he did not give the command absolutely. He followed it as in Matthew 5:34 with a list of specifics all introduced by the same particle *mete*: "Take nothing with you, neither staves (nor script, nor staff), nor bread, nor money, nor two coats." Nothing is prohibited except the specifics included in the prohibitions. It is quite obvious even that one coat is authorized. In Matthew 5:34 it is quite significant that oaths bearing God's name are not included in the distributed specifications given. Hence, oaths of this type are not to be thought as prohibited.

What Jesus is condemning in Matthew 23:16 is the type used by



the Pharisees when they avoided the name of God and used the lesser oaths so that they would not be bound to keep their oaths. This made these oaths mere profanity.

One might ask, "If Jesus is then reaffirming the O.T. principles that all oaths must be kept strictly, what is the difference in the teaching of Jesus and that of 'olden times' which he was contrasting?" The difference is that under the terms of the Law an oath "by heaven," etc., (as Moses used in Deuteronomy 4:31) or any other oath not using God's name, would have to be kept or else the swearer brought under charge of profanity or of forswearing himself. But since these oaths lent themselves to profanity in the way they were used in ordinary conversation, Jesus advised against any use of this type of oath. This is equivalent to teaching that all oaths should be avoided except those in solemn vows and in civil and religious situations and that these should be taken in the name of God and not in a lesser name.

## SECTION NINE

## THE CHRISTIAN IN ILLNESS AND SIN

5:13-20

## 1. PRAYER AND SINGING

5:13

13 Is any among you suffering? let him pray. Is any cheerful? let him sing praise.

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Most commentators see the final section of the epistle as a series of admonitions without much, if any, connection or general theme. Most see no connection with this section and the previous one. It seems to this writer that a close study shows that the theme of illness and the issues growing out of it serve as a central idea in the whole section. James begins in verse 13 with the question about suffering. The cheerfulness and singing of praise are simply in contrast to show that one should do naturally what his circumstances lead him to do. From this he turns to a specific kind of suffering—illness—and instructs the ill to call for the elders and let them pray for the sick (verse 14). In connection with this he mentions the possibility that the sick may be a sinner or backslider and promises forgiveness upon confession of sins, with the bodily healing following (verses 15-16). Then there is the section promising that prayer has power, illustrated by the example of Elijah (verses 16-18). The last section seems to pick up the thread of the sinner in the previous verses and to encourage the faithful to seek the restitution of the erring one (verses 19-20). The whole section is a fitting climax to the previous section on the Christian's attitude in the wrongs he suffers.

13 Is any among you suffering?—The verb here is somewhat more general than disease and illness. In its use elsewhere it may refer to suffering hardship, e. g., "unto bonds" (II Timothy 2:9) and the hardships of evangelistic life (II Timothy 2:3; 4:5). James is repeating the same word used in 5:10 when he mentioned the "suffering and patience of the prophets." This verse, then, is a bridge between the difficulties mentioned before (in which the readers are admonished to patience and to forbearing of murmuring and swearing) and the more specific mention of illness, which is the subject beginning with verse 14.

let him pray.—In trouble prayer is the correct answer or solution to the problem. James is not thinking of prayers for vengeance. In James 1:2 the reader is admonished to treat trials as joy because they work patience. Wisdom in such trials is to be sought (1:5) by prayer. In 5:7 they are to be borne with patience. The idea of prayer runs throughout the section (13-20). Prayer is the outpouring of the righteous heart to the father whom it trusts. "God is our refuge, a very present help in trouble" (Psalms 46:1). The faithful are assured that the ears of God are attuned to their requests (I Peter 3:12). "Trust in him at all times, ye people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us" (Psalms 62:8). Jesus taught that God hears our prayers as a loving father who will give his son what is good for him (Matthew 7:9-11). Praying in faith and in resignation that God's will be done will enable us to overcome and stand up under all difficulty and be better in the end for the trouble (Hebrews 12:12-13). It will also secure for us God's help in trouble; God answers prayer (James 5:16).

James seems to be speaking of general situations, and it is likely that he is speaking particularly of private prayers rather than public ones. He is talking of the Christian's response to his difficulties. The same is true of the following injunction to sing praise. In neither case is he thinking of corporate or congregational singing or praying. Of course, when trouble falls upon a group or one member of a group, it is quite in order to call for prayer by the church (Acts 12:12). But James is thinking of what one does when in trouble or conversely when he is happy. In the following verses illness leads to prayer at least semipublic when the elders are called to pray for the sick.

Is any cheerful?—"Cheerful" is better than the King James "merry," which is more the outward show than the inward cheer and joy. The verb occurs elsewhere in the N.T. only of Paul's efforts to cheer up his companions in the storm on the voyage to Rome (Acts 27:22, 25). The adjective occurs similarly in Acts 27:36. This sentence seems to be put here in contrast to the general subject. It is just as we would say, "Pray when you are in trouble; sing when you are happy." Both are natural attitudes for different circumstances of life. Together they are logical and proper responses to changing moods and circumstances.

let him sing praise.—A Christian can sing even in the midst of

adversities (Acts 16:25). But this is because he receives trials with joy knowing that they work steadfastness (1:2ff). This is not the ordinary response to trouble. Rather, James thinks that under ordinary conditions singing is the natural expression of cheerfulness.

The Greek word (*psalleto*) is a present imperative ("be singing") of the verb *psallo*. Though James is not thinking primarily of church or congregational singing here, the meaning of the verb is important, since it is the same verb used by Paul in injunctions regarding congregational singing (I Corinthians 14:15 and probably Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16).

All uses of *psallo* in the New Testament are absolute uses (intransitive verbs without an object expressed); nothing in the context indicates a meaning other than that of vocal music. A number of considerations have led practically all commentators, lexicographers, and translators to say that in the New Testament the word simply means to "sing praise": (1) The fact that there was a growing tendency in secular Greek to use the verb in an intransitive sense with its figurative and metaphorical meaning of "singing" (derived probably from the figurative idea of striking the vocal cords or the "strings" of the heart); (2) the Septuagint usage where the predominant use was of the verb in the absolute to mean "sing," often occurring with words meaning "to sing" in the Hebrew parallel; (3) the strong opposition in the early church (even in the stage where it was still largely a Greek-speaking church) to the use of instrumental or mechanical music. This took such a violent form that it led the Greek commentators to allegorize even the significance of the references to instrumental music in the Old Testament. (This is most fully documented in Johannes Quasten's book, *Musik und Gesang in den Kulturen der heidnischen Antike und christlichen Fruehzeit*, Munster, 1930.)

It is in order here to quote some of the opinions of the leading commentators with reference (not to the Classical, etc.) to the meaning of the New Testament usage: Ropes, "The word does not necessarily imply the use of an instrument." Knowling, "In the N.T. the same verb is used of singing hymns, of celebrating the praise of God, Rom xv. 9; I Cor. xiv. 15; Ephes. v. 19 (cf. Jud. v. 3)." Mayor, "We find it also used of singing with the voice and with the heart, Eph. v. 19, I Cor. xiv. 15." Ross, "The verb used

here . . . means, first, to twang the strings of a harp or some other musical instrument, then, to sing to the accompaniment of the harp, and, then, simply to sing the praises of God in song." (All these in comment on James 5:13)

Of the lexicons, Thayer is typical: "In the N.T. *to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song*, Jas. v. 13 (R. V. sing praise)"; Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, "properly = 'play on a harp,' but in the N.T., as in James 5:13, = 'sing a hymn.' "

These are typical of many judgments of the world's best scholars showing that, whatever the word may have meant at other times, in such passages as these in the New Testament the word simply means "to sing."

These are important facts. There is practically unanimous judgment that the primitive church did not use mechanical instruments in its worship. There is no authority for its use in the worship of God under the Christian dispensation. The restored church, a church that claims apostolic sanction for its worship, cannot use such instruments.

## 2. ILLNESS AND THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER

5:14-18

14 Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, <sup>7</sup>anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

<sup>7</sup>Or, *having anointed*

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In this section James deals specifically with the condition of illness. The general admonition to seek help by prayer in time of trouble is made more specific in instructions regarding illness or disease. A specific kind of prayer, in a particular circumstance, is ordered for those in sickness. It is worthy of note at the outset that the commentators are sharply divided over whether the anointing, prayer, and healing are (1) the use of ordinary medicinal means with the imploring of divine aid through the leaders of the church as righteous men or (2) the use of the miraculous gift of healing. It is the conclusion of this commentator (though he leans to the second view) that at this stage it is not possible to know definitely which of these positions is correct, since the language and historical circumstances will fit both interpretations. In the comment each position will be examined and its implication for the

church today will be touched on. The use of the passage both in modern divine healing cults and also in the Roman Catholic practice of Extreme Unction will be touched on.

14 Is any among you sick?—The general terms for “suffering” or “trouble” in verses 10 and 13 lead naturally to the more specific words for suffering bodily ailments. The verb here means to “be without strength” and is used of weakness of various kinds. But the most common meaning is that of illness. The participle used as a substantive is one of the principal words for “the sick person” (e.g., John 5:3, “the sick man answered”). The context makes clear that this is the specific meaning of the word here. Compare the comment on verse 15 and note the added complications of the sick man’s sins. If the sickness were merely spiritual, as some claim, that element would not need to be mentioned.

let him call for the elders of the church;—The “church” here seems to be the local church or congregation.<sup>1</sup> In James 2:2 the writer had used the Jewish term “synagogue” to designate the meeting of the congregation. The church was thought of from the universal point of view as an organism, made up of its many parts, and under this figure it was called “the church” (*ekklesia*, Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 1:18; Matthew 16:18). But the more common use, and the one more closely related to the history of the word (cf. Acts 19:39), was to designate the local worshipping congregation or community. Thus the local groups of disciples were gathered into autonomous groups, just as the Jews had been in synagogues before them. There is no use of the word for church in the N.T. comparable to the modern denominational use of the term. All Christians were members of the body of Christ, having been baptized into it (I Corinthians 10:13). They had obeyed the gospel and had been added together in that body or the church (Acts 2:47, RV). All who belonged thus to the body of Christ belonged by virtue of that fact to the church universal and also to local churches wherever they were. There were no differing denom-

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<sup>1</sup>As opposed to K. L. Schmidt, *The Church (Bible Key Words)* (London: Black, 1950), p. 23, who thinks James means elders of the Christian community as a whole, “to which the Epistle is addressed.” But the N.T. knows nothing of the office of an elder over the community as a whole. As in the synagogues, elders were officers in local churches (Acts 14:23). Besides, the church as a whole existed in local communities or assemblies.

inations or parties. Indeed, the N.T. emphasizes the unity of the body in a way to indicate that such would be a sin (Ephesians 4:4; I Corinthians 1:10; Galatians 5:19-20). These local churches had their rulers or managers. Thus we read of the elders of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17,28), of the bishops at Philippi (Philippians 1:1), of "elders in every church" (Acts 14:23), and "elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). It is generally conceded from the interchanging of the terms involved in passages like Titus 1:5ff; Acts 20:17, 28; I Peter 5:1ff that the words "elder," "bishop (overseer)," and "pastor" were not different, but were interchangeable designations. It was the elders of these churches that James says should be called for in the case of sickness.

### NOTE ON THE ELDERS

In the modern confusion of church government it is useful to inquire further about these elders and who they were. The term "elder" was obviously taken over from the Jewish synagogues, where the elder was a local member of the community. He was not a Rabbi or a member of any professional group. Nor are elders of churches in the N.T. ever conceived of as ministers or preachers. They were "pastors" because they cared for the flock, but they did not serve at all in the sense of a local evangelist or preacher. They were chosen from the congregation for their high moral reputation, their leadership, and their loyalty to the teaching of Christ. See I Timothy 3:1ff and Titus 1:6ff, where their qualifications are listed.

That the term "elder" (from the Greek word *presbyteros*, an "older man") is interchangeable with "bishop" or "overseer" (from *episkopos*, a superintendent or overseer), and "pastor" or "shepherd" (Greek *poimen*, *poimaino*, a "shepherd" or "tender of the flock") is shown by the following: In Acts 20:17 Paul is said to have called for the "elders" from Ephesus; he tells these same men that they are made "overseers" of the church and are to "shepherd" the flock (verse 28, see NEB). In I Peter 5:1 the elders are exhorted; they are told to "exercise the oversight" (Codex A, the Common Text, Latin and Syriac) and to "shepherd the flock" (verse 2). In Titus 1:5 and 7 "elders" and "bishops" are used interchangeably.

Despite the brilliant effort of the great Anglican scholar J. B.

Lightfoot in his excursus on the Ministry in his commentary on Philippians (later published separately with additions) and those who have followed in his thinking, the monarchical bishopric, which developed in the early centuries of the church (where elder and bishop were distinguished and where there was only one bishop to a church or to a number of churches) cannot be regarded as a scriptural form of church government. It developed too late and arose out of the desire to build up a governing body for the church to counteract the threat of Gnosticism. Lightfoot saw the germ for it in the figure of James in the Jerusalem church and in the evangelistic helpers of the Apostle Paul such as Timothy and Titus. But though these may have served as the analogy for the development of the reigning bishop, there was no scriptural sanction for their doing so. Furthermore, though Lightfoot contends that the system developed in areas of residence of the last Apostles of Christ to die, there is no proof that they gave their sanction to the system. How early the system actually gained a foothold is tied up in the difficult question of whether the Ignatian epistles present an already settled state of bishop rule or whether Ignatius was merely trying to foster such upon the churches. Lightfoot concedes that, if his argument is sound, there is no escape from the position that history sanctions the logical development of the system into the Pope. His only counter to this is that the Pope should not be a bad Pope! We reject the contention that there is authoritative sanction in the history of the church. In this way every innovation which has crept into the church can gain sanction.

Not the historic episcopacy, but a presbytery, is the form of government grounded upon the New Testament. Yet this presbytery is not that of an eldership over a whole city or region of congregations, but a board of elders ruling each local church. This is the only conclusion which will fit all the data given in the New Testament (e. g., Acts 14:23). What is seen is that a group of men from among the congregation itself was chosen and appointed to lead and oversee the work of the church and to watch in behalf of the souls of the saints (Hebrews 11:17; I Thessalonians 5:12; and compare I Timothy 3:5; 5:17; Acts 11:30; 15:2).

It is thus the conclusion of this writer that the elders of the New Testament congregations were what in modern religious language would be called "lay members." This means that they would be



usually distinguished from the preaching or evangelistic ministry (though at times they might function also in that capacity, I Timothy 5:17). The qualifications laid down for them in Titus 1:5ff and I Timothy 3:1ff are not therefore the qualifications for ministerial candidates as they are usually treated in the commentaries. No mention is ever made of "preaching" or "evangelism" in the qualifications and work of these elders. The churches of Christ around the world today are organized after the New Testament pattern. An eldership is selected from among the members of the congregation in light of the instructions laid down by the New Testament. An evangelist may labor with a congregation ruled over by such bishops, but he is not a part of the eldership unless so chosen to that office also. (For this the work of Timothy at Ephesus is the main example.) The eldership of each local church, working with the appointment and consent of the local church, has the determining voice and responsibility for the community of God's people. There is no ecclesiasticism or denominational oversight or authority. Each group is autonomous. At the same time, there is developed a strong sense of "brotherhood" and cooperation as in the early church.

With this understanding of the "elders" in the New Testament it can be seen that those called to pray for the sick were not what today would be called the preachers or ministers of the word of God.

and let them pray over him,—Let the elders pray over him. Is this an example of ordinary prayer for recovery through natural means as David prayed for the recovery of his baby (II Samuel 12), a prayer in which Christians prayed for something to happen in the providence of God (such as the prayer for Peter's deliverance from prison, Acts 12:12), or is this prayer in connection with miraculous healing (such as Jesus prayed before the raising of Lazarus, John 11:41, or as Peter prayed at Dorcas' bed, Acts 9:40)? This depends upon a number of other factors in the interpretation of the passage before us. Certainty about the answer is probably not possible now.

Whether it is the concern of this passage or not, prayers for natural recovery in God's providence or for help and aid in other ways are scriptural. Paul prayed for recovery from his affliction (II Corinthians 12:1ff); and, though he did not receive the answer

in his way, he was strengthened to bear his trouble. The church made prayer for Peter (Acts 12:12). Hezekiah prayed to recover and God heard his prayer (II Kings 20). Paul implies that he had prayed for Epaphroditus in his illness and that God had had mercy on both Paul and him so that he recovered (Philippians 2:25-27). Such prayers ought to be prayed with the attitude of "God's will be done." It goes without saying (in spite of the contention of the "Divine Healers") that such prayers ought to be accompanied with all the help of medical remedy.

anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:—There were two common uses of anointing with oil. One was medicinal. The bodies of the sick were rubbed with olive oil (sometimes with that mixed with other ingredients). Instances of this are to be seen in the Good Samaritan's action (Luke 10:34) and Isaiah 1:6 and Jeremiah 8:22; 46:11.<sup>1</sup> Thus whatever is the decision about the kind of healing involved here, the use of medicine in healing is approved in the Bible (again in spite of the modern divine healing groups and the so-called Christian Scientists). Paul approved a medicinal use of a type of wine for Timothy's stomach and his frequent infirmities (I Timothy 5:23).

The other use of oil in anointing was ceremonial. It was often used in the ritual of appointment (I Samuel 16:13) and seemingly in cases of miraculous healing. When Jesus sent the disciples out to heal by His authority, oil was to be used: "And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them" (Mark 6:13). This was similar to the laying on of hands in cases of healing (Mark 1:41) or to the covering of the eyes of the man born blind with clay (John 9:6). All these were evidently symbolic, calling attention to the miracle and to the one doing it. Some of them were approved as having effect in healing (e. g., the covering with clay). But as ordinary means of healing such things were not able to account for the results which were produced by the miracle which accompanied their use. Thus the activity called attention to the power of the miracle and of the one healing.

As in the case of the prayer mentioned above, it is impossible to

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<sup>1</sup>Compare Josephus, *Wars*, 1,33,5; *Antiquities* 17, 6, 5; Pliny, *Natural History*, 31:47.

say with certainty which of the uses of anointing James had in mind. Certainly in the context of their own activity at the time, the first readers of James knew which he meant. But that context is not known to us today. We can only say which is more probable and what the application for us would be in either case.

It seems to this writer that the healing was miraculous. We know that spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:1ff, esp. verse 9) were bestowed upon the early church as a means of confirming the gospel in the infant state of the church (Mark 16:20; Acts 8:7, 13). This was somewhat equal to the power of Jesus manifested to heal while on earth (John 14:12), which became one of the signs that He was sent from the Father, and yet which was often used in compassion upon the afflicted.

If the healing which James has in mind is miraculous, the oil was ceremonial; prayer was a part of the preparation both of the miracle worker and the onlookers (Matthew 17:21; John 11:41f). The reason for the elders' being called is not so apparent. But it is probably because (since the gifts were distributed by the laying on of the apostles' hands, Acts 8:17f; 19:6) when these gifts were imparted, the elders would be the most likely to be selected to receive them. If this is the correct interpretation of the instruction of James, then the passage has no direct bearing on the practice of the church today. It is obvious both from practice and from the teaching of the scripture that such miraculous gifts did not outlast the apostolic age of the church. Notice the following (1) The reason for the gifts, the confirmation of the word (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4; Acts 14:3), no longer obtains, since the word is fully given and confirmed. (2) The scriptures themselves teach that the gifts were to cease (I Corinthians 13:8). (3) The means of the gifts being conferred argues for their discontinuance: consider the following quotation from Smith's *Bible Dictionary* (Article "Miracles"):

The miracles of the New Testament (setting aside those wrought by Christ Himself) appear to have been worked by a power conferred upon particular persons according to a regular law, in virtue of which that power was ordinarily transmitted from one person to another, and the only persons privileged thus to *transmit* that power were the *Apostles*. The only exceptions to this rule were (1.) the Apostles themselves, and (2.)

the family of Cornelius, who were the first-fruits of the Gentiles. In all other cases, miraculous gifts were conferred only by the laying on of the *Apostles'* hands. By this arrangement, it is evident that a provision was made for the total ceasing of that miraculous dispensation within a limited period: because, on the death of the last of the Apostles, the ordinary channels would be all stopped through which such gifts were transmitted in the church.

(4) Church History confirms this conclusion, for efforts to revive such gifts in the post-apostolic church (e. g., the Montanists) were considered heresies. (5) Modern practice confirms it, because the "healings" performed in the cult services today are never the kind that remove doubt, such as lost limbs, sight recovered of those born blind, or the raising of the dead.

However, if the healing was medicinal and providential, then the anointing served to carry out the healing, prayer was a plea for God's providential help, and the reason for calling for the elders was that such men were leaders and men of holy reputation (I Timothy 3:7) and their prayers would be valuable as righteous men (verse 16).

Lenski makes a strong argument for the view that the healing was natural since the phrase "anoint with oil" (Literally "oil with oil") in Greek is the verb and the cognate (*aleipho*), rather than the verb ordinarily rendered "anoint" (*chio*). He contends that ritualistic or "sacred" anointings with oil would always use the other verb. But in Mark 6:13, which is certainly miraculous healing, the text has *aleipho*. Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon* shows that the verb *aleipho* is used rather interchangeably with the other verb in the early church. So no such clear distinction as this can be made in the verbs.

Since it is clearly demonstrated from the New Testament that such miraculous aid existed in the church of that age and since this healing would be more certain to offer aid to the sick, it would seem that it might be expected that the instruction of James concerns the miraculous healings. It is the "prayer of faith" (not the anointing) in verse 15 which promises the healing. The expression "in the name of the Lord" would seem to be more understandable by this interpretation. As Professor J. W. McGarvey once remarked:

. . . every reader of the New Testament should know that this (James 5:13) was written when many elders of churches possessed the miraculous power of healing, which was imparted to them by the imposition of the hands of an apostle. To argue from this that elders of the church, or anybody else, can do the same thing in the present day, is to leave out of view the one thing that enabled them to do it then; that is, the imposition of apostolic hands with prayer for this gift.

(*The Christian Standard*, Oct. 8, 1898, quoted in *Biblical Criticism*, pp. 349f.)

This passage cannot be appealed to, at any rate, by the sects which teach modern divine healing, unless they can prove that these miraculous gifts were to continue beyond the apostolic age. This is positively denied.

On the whole question of modern divine healing see the following bibliography:

Waymon D. Miller, *Modern Divine Healing*, Rosemead, Calif., Old Paths Book Club, 1956.

*Nichols-Weaver Debate*, Nashville, Tennessee, Gospel Advocate Co., 1944.

G. K. Wallace, "What is Wrong with Modern Divine Healing?" in *What is Wrong?*, Fort Worth, Campbell-Caskey Pub. Co., 1950, pp. 38-68.

#### NOTE ON EXTREME UNCTION

The Roman Catholic Church appeals to James 5:14 to support the doctrine of Extreme Unction (See James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of our Fathers*, p. 384). In this doctrine the anointing is considered a sacrament conveying spiritual grace (assuring pardon of unforgiven sins) to the sick in danger of death. The holy oil is applied by a priest to the organs of sense and accompanied by a recital of prayers.

The doctrine grew out of the attempt to retain in the church what had been a miraculous power (I Corinthians 12:8-9, 28) after the meaning of that power as a confirmation of the early preaching had been lost. (This is paralleled by attempts such as that of modern "holiness" groups to revive the speaking with tongues, a "sign to unbelievers" in the New Testament, as in I Corinthians 14:22, when they have lost sight of its purpose.) See Irenaeus, v. 6;

Tertullian, *de Baptism*, c. 10; Eusebius, E. H., 5:7; Origen, Homil. ii on Leviticus; Chrysostom, Book iii, *de Sacred*. Through the years the practice of anointing with a view to recovery of the sick (as it continued in the Eastern Church, See Knowling's note) was lost as the anointing began to be associated with the giving of the *Viat-icum*, the sacrament providing for the final journey to the soul. In the Council of Florence (1438 A.D.) and then in the Council of Trent (1551 A.D.) it was directed that the anointing should take place only where recovery is not to be looked for ("*qui tam periculose decumbunt ut in exitu vitae constituti videantur.*" Session 14). From this the anointing is called "Extreme Unction," and it is regarded as a sacrament conveying grace and forgiveness of sins to the departing soul.

The Council of Trent declared that such a doctrine was "implied by Mark, and commended and promulgated by James the apostle and brother of the Lord." But many Roman Catholic commentators themselves have said that James 5:14 does not refer to such a practice. Cardinal Cajetan (Luther's opponent) is quoted (Wordsworth), "These words are not spoken of the sacramental anointing of Extreme Unction," See Beyschlag *ad loc* (revision of Huther in *Meyer's*, 1897) and the useful note in Mayor. F. W. Farrar's words are quite true: "Neither for extreme unction, nor for sacramental confession, nor for sacerdotal absolution, nor for fanatical extravagance, does this passage afford the slightest sanction." (*The Early Days of Christianity*, p. 348).

The Roman Catholic position is thus seen to be in error in two specific points. First, the identification of the "elders" with the Catholic priests is erroneous. Second, the changed purpose shows how completely lacking are James' words from supporting the practice. James' anointing envisioned and promised recovery from bodily ailments as its purpose, while the substitute is used only when death is seen as sure and for the sole purpose of giving spiritual grace.

**in the name of the Lord:**—The anointing is to be done in His name. This means that at the time of the anointing the name of Jesus is to be pronounced, asserting that the anointing is done in that name. Thus Peter said to the lame man (Acts 3:6), "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." This is certainly the meaning if the anointing is miraculous. If otherwise, the use of

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15 and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him.

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medicine in Jesus' name would probably signify that it is to be used with a prayer in the name of Jesus that it might be effective. The phrase is much more understandable here in the light of miraculous healing.

15 and the prayer of faith—The faith is probably that of both the one calling for the elders and those praying, but especially of the elders, as they are the ones doing the praying. James has taught that when we pray we must believe that our prayer will be answered (1:6). Jesus told the disciples that they failed to heal because of a lack of faith (Matthew 17:20). Whatever prayer is prayed, it must be with trust that God can and will, in accordance with His will and our good, give us what we ask for. The qualification of faith on the part of the one being healed does not mean that a miracle could not be performed if the one being healed had no faith. This excuse is often seized upon by the modern faith healer to excuse his failure. Jesus would not cast pearls before swine, and he often would do no mighty work in a region of unbelief. But then again both Jesus and the disciples often worked miracles where no faith was involved, such as Peter's healing the lame man (Acts 3). That man was ignorant of what was about to take place; he looked expecting to receive an alms. The man born blind did not even know who Jesus was "that he might believe" (John 9:36). Jesus raised the dead, as did Peter (Acts 9:36ff).

shall save him that is sick,—“Save” here means “heal” and ought to be so translated. Forgiveness of sins is mentioned later. This is a frequent meaning of the verb (Mark 5:34; Luke 8:48; Acts 14:9). James promises that prayer will cause the sick one who has been anointed to be healed. The word for “sick” here means “wasted away, or ill”; it is from an earlier usage that signified “fatigued.” The word here argues strongly that this is physical or bodily sickness which James has in mind and not spiritual illness as some claim.

Is the promise of healing invariable? God's promises are always conditional. Even in the age of miracles many in the church were not healed. Paul was not (II Corinthians 12:7), nor was Trophimus (II Timothy 4:20); Timothy, Paul's helper, was to take med-

icine for his bodily ailment. Those who claim that the gift of healing is an integral part of the atonement of Christ and a part of the gospel to be preached to all must overlook such passages, as well as the fact that the original purpose of such miracles was as a "sign for unbelievers." One condition is mentioned in the next verse—the removal of sin.

and the Lord shall raise him up;—"Lord" refers to Jesus Christ, the one in whose name the anointing is done. The raising is from the sick bed, the effect of the cure just mentioned. Spiritual healing or forgiveness is introduced in the next clause and is conditional. Hence it is wrong to think of the "raising" here as the resurrection.

and if he have committed sins,—The condition is one of possibility or probability (the so-called "more probable condition"). This construction is often used in expressing conditions which may not be known to be true or false, but which are known to be possible.<sup>1</sup> The perfect tense is used for the present state which is the result of past action; hence, here it is implied that the ill member may also be a backslider or one who has sins which he has not corrected. James is not taking the stance of the many Jews who taught that all sickness is caused by sin. Jesus had refuted this contention that calamity is the penalty for sin (Luke 13:1ff; John 9:1-3). It is doubtless true that this belief colored Jewish thinking, and it is recognized even in our modern society that some disease is the result of sinful living, either directly or indirectly. But even this need not be what James had in mind. Sickness will often make men who are sinful more conscious of their spiritual condition. Illness has been the turning point of many lives. Thus if the one calling for the elders turns out to be a sinner, he should be helped to realize that to confess his sins and remove them is a condition of his being healed. Knowling is right in saying that it is a quite natural thing in almost all prayers for bodily strength to consider the mental and spiritual condition of the patient and to ask forgiveness and spiritual strengthening at the same time.

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<sup>1</sup>On the use of conditional sentences in the N. T. compare A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, Broadman, 1934), pp. 1007ff and this writer's dissertation, "The Use of Conditional Sentences in the Greek New Testament as Compared with Homeric, Classical, and Hellenistic Usage" (Library of the University of Texas, 1955).



16 Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working.

it shall be forgiven him.—The verb is impersonal: "It shall be remitted for him." The same sort of impersonal construction occurs in Matthew 12:32 of the forgiveness of the sin of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. This forgiveness is conditional as always. The condition is the subject of the next clause—confession.

16 Confess therefore your sins one to another,—The "therefore" does not occur in all MSS., but it is adopted by Westcott-Hort and Nestle. It is almost certainly genuine. This is important, as it serves to connect the thought. The sense is: "For this reason confess your sins." If the sick man is a sinner, he may be forgiven; and to make this a realization the condition of forgiveness, which is confession (and which presumes repentance), is admonished. The principle of mutual confession of sins is wider than the primary context of this passage (I John 1:7f); nevertheless this is the specific application of the reference. The verse is connected with the forgiveness of the sick, with whom the whole section is concerned. The word "confess" refers to an open admission of a fact—here a wrongdoing. John the Baptist "confessed and did not deny" (John 1:20). James uses a present imperative of continuous action: "Be in the practice of confessing your sins to one another." We are not to wait until we are ill to do so. As Huther says, "From the special order James infers a general injunction, in which the intervening thought is to be conceived that the sick man confessed his sins to the presbyters for the purpose of their intercession; Christians generally are to practice the same duty of confession toward each other."

Not merely "faults" (as in the King James) but "sins" are to be confessed. The reading "fault" is a late inferior reading adopted in the King James. James repeats the same word of the previous verse, "if he have committed sins."

"One to another" does not refer to confession to a person of sins committed against him; though, if one is guilty of such, they ought to be confessed and made right. But James is thinking of unburdening our lives to each other (and here to the elders in particular) at such times as this, in order that we may intercede for one another. This ought to be a general practice.

In view of the general nature of the rule as stated, it should be emphasized that the verse does not limit the confession to the elders. Any brother may be of help to another in bearing the burden of his trespass (Galatians 6:1). This may, as is often done, be before the whole church. In fact, if the sin is of such a nature that the whole church is affected, the confession should be before the congregation. But the principle is much more general than this.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of Auricular Confession has no support from this passage. In the first place, "elders" here does not refer to a priestly set of workers.<sup>1</sup> Elders here are not given power to absolve a sinner or to set conditions on which he may be forgiven. The only conditions of forgiveness are those laid down in the gospel of confession and repentance (which implies restitution), Acts 8:22; I John 1:7-9. The confession is for intercession and then for healing and is not for absolvment. Finally, "to one another" means that any brother chosen may rightly hear the confession and make intercession. "Ye who are spiritual, restore such a one" (Galatians 6:1ff).

and pray one for another,—Pray "in behalf of one another" as well as "confess to one another." Simon asked Peter to pray for him that he not perish with his money (Acts 8:24).

that ye may be healed.—This returns to the main subject of bodily healing. For the one who is ill and also in sin, the sin stands between him and being healed. If he is willing to confess his sin and seek forgiveness, the elders may pray for him as they were called to do. The anointing and praying would then be in order. Verse 15 promised that the prayer would be effective.

The supplication of a righteous man—The noun "supplication" means "entreaty." It is petition, the begging or imploring of God for what one desires. It is generally used of prayer, but of a particular kind of prayer—an earnest entreaty for something for which

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<sup>1</sup>Though the English word "priest" is derived etymologically from the Greek *presbyteros* "elder"), the specific meaning to which this term answers is not *presbyteros*, but *hierous* (as in Acts 4:1). *Presbyteros* means "an older man" and this is not the meaning of the English term "priest." In the N. T. there is a universal priesthood of all believers. All Christians making up the temple of God are a royal priesthood (I Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10). The concept of a clerical priesthood separated from the common members of God's people for the administering of ordinance and the preaching of the Word is not found in the N. T.

one longs. It is not necessarily selfish to let God know our wants so long as we are sincere and our desires are not evil (James 4:3). Here James is encouraging prayer for recovery from sickness and for another's sins. Christians may pray for many things. What is generally worth a Christian's time and efforts surely is worth his prayers.

"The righteous man" in this passage and possibly in verse 6 is the godly or upright man, the one endeavoring to please God in life, though suffering persecution. The word is a virtual synonym of "a Christian" as opposed to those that are evil and disobedient (Matthew 13:43, 49; see Matthew 25:37, 46). The two groups are often contrasted in the epistles: I Peter 3:12; 4:15; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 22:11. In I Timothy 2:8 the men who can lift up holy hands are to pray. Lenski attempts to attribute the special use of "one to whom righteousness is imputed by the blood of Christ" in the particular Pauline sense. But it is not necessary to find this meaning in every occurrence of the word in the New Testament. Jesus often used the word in its traditional sense. So did even Paul himself: Romans 9:30; Ephesians 6:14; Philippians 1:11; II Corinthians 11:15; I Timothy 6:11; II Timothy 2:22. This also seems to be the meaning in the other passages where James used it (1:20; 3:18). Many passages in both Old and New Testaments express the idea that God listens to the man who walks in His ways: Psalms 34:12ff (quoted in I Peter 3:10ff); Genesis 18:23-32; John 9:31; Proverbs 15:29; 28:9; Psalms 66:18.

**availeth much**—This is a very strong expression. The verb means to "have strength," to "be powerful or mighty," and then to "prevail, to win out" (Cf. Acts 19:20, "the word of God mightily grew and prevailed"). Here the meaning is something like "is able to do much" (Arndt and Gingrich). For an illustration James tells what Elijah's prayer did. Compare Romans 3:2, "Profit much in every way."

**in its working**.—The verb *energeo* as an intransitive verb (as in this passage) means to "work, be at work, operate, be effective" (Arndt and Gingrich). Because the word has caused no little difficulty, it is well to study the other uses of it. In Philippians 2:13 it is used as an infinitive like a noun: "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to work." Here the infinitives mean "willing-

ness" and "action." It is used as a finite verb: Matthew 14:2 = Mark 6:14, "(John's) powers are working in him (Christ)"; Romans 7:5, "Passions were working in our members to produce the fruit death"; II Corinthians 4:12, "Death is working in us"; I Thessalonians 2:13, "(the word) which also works in you who believe"; II Thessalonians 2:7, "the mystery of lawlessness is already at work." It also is used as a substantive (participle) with the article, "The one working in both Peter and me" (Paul).

But more in point are the other passages where it is used as a participle with an adjectival or modifying force: Ephesians 2:2, "the ruler of the powers of the air, the spirit working in the sons of disobedience"; II Corinthians 1:6, "Your comfort working in the patience of the same sufferings which we suffer"; Ephesians 3:20, "according to the power working (operative, effective) in us"; Colossians 1:29, "(the perfect man in Christ) toward which I also labor, striving according to his working (*energeian*, a noun) working (the participial adjective) mightily in me"; and Galatians 5:6, "faith working through love."

In the light of these parallels James means that a prayer which is "working, operative, or doing" is the prayer which is very strong or prevailing with God. Lenski's translation is "A righteous one's petition avails a great deal when putting forth its energy." "Effectual" is thus a proper translation as it keeps the adjectival force; "in its working," however, does not do this. The petition of a righteous man avails when it is doing its work, which is petitioning, pleading, begging. The action of prayer must be earnestly and persistently engaged in. God does not want to interpret our own desires and thoughts; he wants us to express them. Prayer is often an unused asset. This is importunity. Consider the cases of the persistent friend (Luke 11:5-8), the importunate widow (Luke 18:1-8), and the imploring Syro-Canaanitish mother (Matthew 15:21-28). They would not take "no" for an answer. God is touched when the petitions of a righteous man are going on persistently, when they are doing their work. (Clark is not successful [*Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1935, Vol. 54, pp. 93ff] in making the meaning of the verb passive.)

The subject of the efficacy of prayer in raising the sick leads to an illustration of the power of prayer, that of Elijah's prayer that began and ended the great drought in Israel in Ahab's time (I

17 Elijah was a man of like <sup>a</sup>passions with us, and he prayed <sup>o</sup>fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months.

<sup>o</sup>Or, *nature*

<sup>a</sup>Gr. *with prayer*

Kings 17). It is supposed by Mayor that James may have turned to Elijah's example by the natural connection between praying for the recovery of the sick and the prophet who raised the son of the widow of Zarephath by prayer (I Kings 17:17). Even if this is true, he still takes another and perhaps more dramatic illustration of this prophet's prayer life. Elijah's example was well impressed upon the Jewish mind. Jesus mentioned his miracle on the son of the widow and spoke of the same amount of time lapsed in the drought (Luke 4:25).

17 a man of like passions with us,—The word means of similar feelings or sensations. Cf. Acts 14:15, where Paul asserts to the people of Lystra that he and Barnabas were men of like passions with them—not gods. Elijah had the same kind of feelings, circumstances, and experiences as we. The idea is that basically he was no different from us. If God answered his prayer, why not ours? But why this statement? Because the Jews of the intertestamental period developed an exaggerated opinion of Elijah, making him a mysterious heavenly figure, as they did Enoch and Melchizedek. Peter had to correct Cornelius by telling him that he was also a man (Acts 10:26). Hebrews in much the same way insists that Jesus was "made like unto his brethren" (2:17). If it is thought that Elijah was some sort of extraordinary figure, then his prayer might be different from ours. The same power of prayer is within the reach of the church, since we are the same kind of creatures that Elijah was.

and he prayed fervently—Literally, "he prayed with prayer." This is a Hebraism. The construction is emphatic, suggesting intensity or earnestness. There are many examples of the effect of this mode of thinking and speaking on the writers of the N.T. Compare "desired with desire" (Luke 22:15) and "charge with charging" (Acts 5:28). The ASV has therefore correctly caught the thought in its "fervently." The reluctance of some writers (e.g., Lenski) to admit of Hebraisms in the N.T. is a result of the controversy over Deissmann's contention that the N.T. is to be understood primarily from the point of view of secular Greek of the

18 And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

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first century. But Deissmann went too far. It is quite natural that the Greek learned by people through their reading the Greek Bible (the Septuagint) should be reflected in their speech or be imitated. It would have been strange if this were not true.

that it might not rain;—Since there is no mention of this prayer in the Old Testament, many have charged that James made it up. Elijah only declared that there would be no dew or rain in Israel except by his word (I Kings 17:11), according to our records. But Jesus implied the same fact about him (Luke 4:25). If it was not to rain except by his word, then he must have consulted God about the fact and have known that his prayer would be answered. If James, then, knew the length of the drought, it would be a simple deduction that Elijah had continued his prayer over this time until God was ready once more to send him to Ahab with the promise that rain would come. James was an inspired man, and revelation is through inspiration. We do not have to know the source of James' information to believe that he knew what he said.

and it rained not on earth for three years and six months.—Again it is charged that the O.T. does not say this. So it does not. But that proves nothing. There is nothing in the O.T. to contradict it. I Kings 18:1 says that in the third year Elijah was told to go show himself to Ahab. But this is the third year from what? The Bible does not say that it was only in the third year of the drought. Nor does Kings say how long it was from then until the drought was broken. So the O.T. does not prove James wrong.

18 And he prayed again;—The story of this prayer and its results is told in detail in the story of the contest on Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18:20-45). After Elijah began praying, he prayed seven times before the servant reported a small cloud coming up over the sea. After this "the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain" (I Kings 18:45).

Did Elijah's prayers which were answered in the withholding and sending of rain result in miracles, and may we expect the same? Is this what James is saying in stressing that Elijah was like us? In a sense, the result was unnatural and miraculous. But it

may be noted that, when the rain came, it came in the natural way—through clouds, which had hitherto not arisen. Strictly speaking, the answer was providential (if we are to make a strict distinction). All answer to prayers need not be thought of as miracle. In Bible times God answered some prayers for healing with a miracle—the gift of healing. But the prayer of faith in connection with the physician may help to heal; the modern physicians say so themselves. The prayer of forgiveness in the same context did not require miraculous manifestation. The point of comparison is that, whether prayer is answered in the same way as Elijah's was answered or not, since we are the same kind of creatures, God can and will hear and answer our prayers.

### 3. CONVERTING ERRING BRETHREN

5:19-20

19 My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him;

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In this final section James is still thinking of praying for the erring brother. In verse 15 he has mentioned the forgiveness of sins which the sick brother may have in his life. The brother's healing will depend upon his confession. But the touching of such a brother and turning him from his way may be a difficult task. James teaches the spiritual what a favor one does another when he is the instrument of leading that brother to be rid of his sins. With so many erring and backsliding brethren in the churches, this is a lesson for all to ponder.

19 My brethren,—Five times in the admonitions of this chapter James addresses his readers affectionately as "brethren." He is in deep earnest, as we ought to be, over the lost.

James is thinking of the sinning Christian, as in 5:15-16. There he used the perfect tense of people who were in a state of sin as a result of past actions. He is thinking of a backslider or of one who may be still attending services, but who is known to be in a dangerous state of fault. Many brethren have quit the church after having been overtaken in a trespass (Galatians 6:1ff). Serious illness and the admonition and pleading of brethren have often rescued such. To err from the truth is to be deceived and thus led away from the truth, the truth being the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is possible for one to deceive himself or be deceived by others.

20 <sup>10</sup>let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.

<sup>10</sup>Some ancient authorities read *know ye*.

Those not Christians are often deceived about the truth. But those James is concerned about are deceived and led away from the truth after having received it, i. e., backsliders or apostates. Those commentators who think of the Jewish readers who have been tempted to go back to Judaism may be correct. See Hebrews 2:1ff; 6:4-8; 10:25ff. But moral as well as doctrinal sins are possible. James' conditional sentences are of real possibilities (compare on verse 15). There are those who think that one cannot so sin as to be in danger of death if he is once saved. But this is Calvinism and not the teaching of the gospel. One could not err from the truth unless he had been in it; the death from which he would be saved, if one convert him, must certainly be eternal death. An old debater once said that James 5:19-20 was the strongest passage in the New Testament on the possibility of apostasy.

and one convert him;—The word means to “turn someone back” in a religious or moral sense. John the Baptist was to turn many to God (Luke 1:16). The conversion is “from the error of his way” (next verse). One does this by bringing the sinner to his senses through the word of God by teaching, warning, pleading, admonishing, and showing an interest in him. Though the Scriptures teach that some put themselves beyond repentance (Hebrews 6:4ff) and sin in a mortal way, there are many who fall away who could be won back to Christ. James may be thinking of the many Jews who, now that the Judaism of their fathers had begun to harden against Christianity, were finding the way difficult. He may remember that he himself had once not believed in the claims of his brother Jesus.

20 let him know,—This is the reading of the best MSS., though the Vatican (B) has the second plural form which may be either an indicative or an imperative: “know ye” or “ye know.” At any rate, James is anxious to point to the knowledge of the favor that one does in helping the erring. It is difficult for us to realize the value of a soul. If someone tried to get us to realize the value of a billion dollars, we could not. This is beyond our understanding. The best way to realize the value of a soul is to remember what it cost to



redeem one—the blood of Jesus.

shall save a soul from death,—eternal death, the second death of the Bible. Repentance will not save a man's soul from dying any other death. To die and be lost is a horrible thing to contemplate. To realize that to rescue a brother is to save a soul is indeed a realization. We are our brother's keeper.

and shall cover a multitude of sins.—This is repetition of a kind. To "cover sins" in the Old Testament sense is to have them forgiven. The passage (like I Peter 4:8) is based on Proverbs 10:12, "Hatred stirreth up strife; but love covereth all transgression." Notice the parallelism in Psalms 85:2 (LXX), "Thou hast forgiven thy people their lawless deeds; thou hast covered all their sins." Nehemiah's prayer for his enemies was "cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee" (Nehemiah 4:5).

There has been some question as to whose sins James is saying will be covered by converting the sinner. Oesterley argues that James is stating the doctrine of the Jews of the merit of balancing an evil deed with a good one and refers it to the one converting the erring. The passage could refer to the one converting the sinner without having this meaning. Jesus said that, if we forgive others, we will be forgiven. This is not as a matter of merit, but is creating or showing the right attitude on our part, which in turn disposes God to be merciful to us. So James taught that God will be merciful to the merciful (2:13). But on the whole, it is better to take James as thinking of the multitude of sins (v. 15) of the sinner. To convert him is to have these sins removed and to save him from death. This is indeed a labor worthy of a Christian.

James breaks off the letter without any farewell. He had signed the letter at the start as was typical of epistles in those days. He was not writing a personal letter to acquaintances or to a particular church known to him. This fact, together with his style of moving from one subject to another somewhat rapidly, left him with no particular need to end with a salutation. The first epistle of John likewise has no formal closing. A few cursive MSS. of James and one Syrian source add "Amen," but it is not genuine.

## APPENDIX

## The Sources for the Later Life and Death of James

The stories of the later life and death of James are given mainly in the accounts of Josephus and of Eusebius the historian, especially the latter's quotation of Hegesippus. These accounts are here quoted in full for the purpose of reference.

Josephus relates that this deed displeased many of the most equitable of the citizens, who protested to the new governor. He, in turn, deposed Ananus after an administration of only three months.

Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, II, 20, 1):

But this younger Ananus, who took the high-priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent. He was also of the sect of the Sadducees; who are very rigid in judging offenders above all the rest of the Jews: as we have already observed. When, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had a proper opportunity to exercise his authority. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but on the road. So he assembled the Sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some of his companions. And when he had laid an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.

Eusebius, a church historian, published in 311 A. D. the first edition of his history of the church from which the following references are taken:

Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book II. 1. 2-5)

At the same time also James, called the brother of the Lord because indeed the latter too was called the child of Joseph, and Joseph the father of Christ, to whom the virgin was betrothed. Before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit, just as the Sacred Scripture (The Gospels) teaches. Now this same James, whom the men of olden times used to call by the surname of "the Just" because of his excellence of virtue, is said to have been first appointed to the throne of the oversight of the church in

Jerusalem. Clement in the sixth book of the *Hypotyposes* presents the following, "For Peter," he says, "and James and John after the ascension of the Savior, as though they had been given the honor before by the Savior, did not contend for glory, but selected James the Just bishop of Jerusalem." This same writer adds in the seventh book of the same work these things about him, "After the resurrection the Lord gave to James the Just, and to John, and to Peter knowledge; these gave it to the other apostles, and the other apostles to the seventy of whom one was Barnabas. There were then two Jameses, one "the Just"—the one thrown down from the turret of the temple and beaten to death with fuller's club, the other the one being beheaded." Paul also mentions the same James the Just when he writes, "And I saw none other of the apostles save James the brother of the Lord."

Book II. 23. 1-18. After Paul appealed to Caesar and was sent to the City of Rome by Festus, the Jews, disappointed in the hope with which they had plotted against him, turned against James the brother of the Lord to whom the throne of the oversight in Jerusalem had been entrusted by the apostles. They dared such things as the following. Bringing him into the midst, they demanded a denial of the faith in Christ in front of all the people. But he, contrary to what all expected, with a loud voice to the entire multitude confessed that our Savior and Lord Jesus is the Son of God. They could no longer bear the testimony of the man who was believed by all them to be the most just person by virtue of his measure of attainment in the life of philosophy and piety, and so they killed him, taking anarchy as an opportunity to take over power because Festus had just died in Judea, leaving the country without rulership or guardianship. The words of Clement which have been quoted have already indicated the manner of James' death, indicating that he was thrown from the turret of the temple and beaten to death with a club. But Hegesippus, who lived in the first generation after the apostles, has given the most accurate account of the things about him in his fifth book as follows,

James the brother of the Lord along with the apostles succeeded to the (leadership of) the church. James was called "the Just" by all men from the time of Lord on down to us, inasmuch as there are many who are called "James." But he was holy from his mother's womb. He did not drink wine or strong drink; he did not eat flesh; no razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil; and he did not use the baths. It was permitted to him alone to enter the Holy Place, for he did not wear wool clothing, but linen. He used to enter alone into the temple, and he used to be found upon his knees asking forgiveness for the people. Hence his knees had become hardened like a camel's because he was always kneeling worshipping God and asking for forgiveness for the people. Because of his exceeding righteousness he was called the "Just" and the "Oblias" (which is in Greek the "bulwark" of the people) and "righteousness," as the prophets make plain about him.

Therefore certain of the seven sects among the people (mentioned already by me in the *Memoirs*) inquired of him as to what was the "gate of Jesus," and he was repeating that it is the Savior. From this some of their number believed that Jesus was the Christ. Now the sects which have been mentioned did not believe in a resurrection or in one coming to render to everyone according to his deeds, but some believed on account of James. Since many of the rulers believed there was a tumult of the Jews, and the Scribes, and the Pharisees, who were saying that all the people were in danger of looking for Jesus the Christ. So assembling together they said to James, "We entreat you to hold the people back because they are going astray after Jesus as though he were the Messiah. We beseech you to persuade all who come for the day of the Passover concerning Jesus, for everybody obeys you. For we testify and the whole people testify to you that you are just and do not show partiality. Do you therefore persuade the crowd not to err concerning Jesus, for all the people and we all obey you. Now stand on the turret of the temple in order that you may be visible from above and in order that your words

may be heard by all the people, for because of the passover all the tribes have come together along with the Gentiles."

Thus the Scribes and Pharisees already mentioned had James to stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and they cried out to him and said, "O Just One, whom we all ought to obey, since the people are going astray after the Jesus who was crucified, tell us who is the door of Jesus?" And he answered with a loud voice, "Why do you ask me concerning the Son of Man? He is sitting in heaven at the right hand of the Great Power, and he will come upon the clouds of heaven." And when many were convinced and glorified the witness of James saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," then the same Scribes and Pharisees said again to one another, "We were wrong to allow Jesus such testimony, but let us go up and cast him down that they may become afraid and not believe in him." And they cried out saying, "Oh, oh, even the Just One erred." And they fulfilled the scripture written in the book of Isaiah, "Let us take the just one for he is unprofitable to us. Nevertheless they shall eat the fruit of their works."

And so they mounted and threw down the Just. And they were saying to one another, "Let us stone James the Just." And they began to stone him, inasmuch as he had fallen and had not died. But he turned and kneeling said, "I beg you, O Lord, God, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And while they were thus stoning him one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of Rechabim, of those whom Jeremiah the prophet had borne witness to, cried out saying, "Stop, what are you doing? The Just is praying for you." And a certain one of them, one of the laundrymen, took a club which which he beats out the clothes and hit the Just on the head. And thus he suffered martyrdom. And they buried him on the place by the sanctuary and his gravestone yet remains by the sanctuary. This one became a true witness both to the Jews and the Greeks that Jesus is the Christ.

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And immediately Vespasian began to besiege them.

This account Hegesippus gives in length and agrees with Clement. Thus James was a marvelous man and indeed famous among all for righteousness, so that the wise men among the Jews confessed that this was the reason for the siege of Jerusalem immediately after his martyrdom and that it happened for no other reason than the crime which they had dared against him.

















