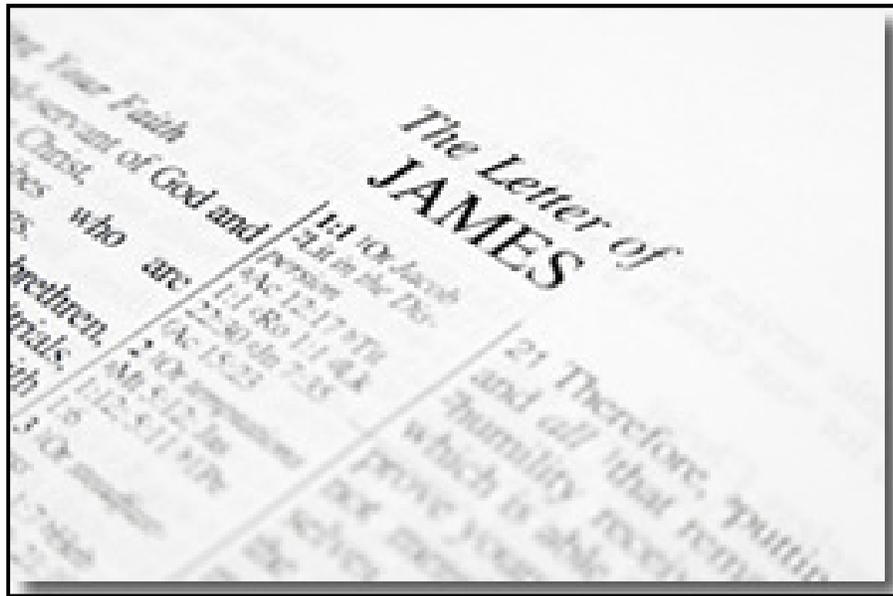


BACK TO THE BASICS



A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Back to the Basics

(A comprehensive study of the Epistle of James)

Chapter One

1 – Four different men were named James.

- James, the son of Zebedee (John's brother)
- James, the son of Alphaeus
- James, the father of Judas (not Iscariot)
- James, the Lord's half brother

The writer was well known in the Church. Of the four mentioned, the son of Zebedee and the Lord's brother stand out as prominent. James, the son of Zebedee, was martyred in 44 AD (Acts 12), and it is unlikely that the epistle was written this early. The Lord's brother became popular and respected in the early Church, especially among the Jewish Christians. In Acts 15, he seems to be the leader of the Church. Most scholars believe the Lord's brother is the writer of the epistle.

The scope of the epistle along with the historical progressive development of the whole Bible indicates that James wrote some time after the ascension and before the Apostle Paul. The information is very similar to the Sermon on the Mount and lacks the insight connected with the mystery that Paul revealed. James, like Jesus in the Gospels, still is adhering to the Mosaic Law but with the richer understanding that Jesus brought.

James addressed with the epistle the Israelites dispersed among foreign nations, but as with all of Paul's epistles, it is applicable to the entire Church.

Temptations and Christian Maturity

2 - The NAS Bible translates "trials" what the KJV translates "temptations." Frequently, in the Scriptures temptation and prayer are connected.

1. Matthew 6:13 Lead us not into temptation
2. Matthew 26:41 Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.
3. Mark 14:38 Keep watching and praying

Our attitude toward temptation determines its impact on us. We should not consider it strange that we are tempted (1 Peter 4:12), since it is common to all. Our attitude will not eliminate temptations but will determine its effectiveness on us. If we think it is impossible to be

victorious, we will always give in to the enticement. If we have faith that God can deliver us and seek His help, temptations can become an effective tool to strengthen our faith.

1 Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

2 Peter 2:9 - The lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

James 1:3 and 4 – The great allurements of temptation is the illusionary deception that partaking thereof will provide some enhancement or pleasure for us. Quite often, the initial taste provides some sense of fulfillment or pleasure, but ultimately it compromises our wellbeing and life. If we endure, God will make us perfect, complete, and lacking nothing. Sin causes us to want more and more, and seldom, if not ever, do we reach a place of peaceful fulfillment. The deception can be mind bogglingly powerful and therefore requires trust that God's commands are truly better. Withstanding temptation indeed proves our faith. In the least common dominator, the question is do we believe that the enticement or the Word of God is true; which will really provide the best for us?

James has a Hebraic style of writing which is evident in repeating the same thing with different ways or with different words. The words "perfect," "entire," and "wanting nothing" may have a nuance of difference in meaning but essentially mean the same thing. In verse 17, "good thing" and "perfect gift" mean about the same as do "variation" and "shifting shadow." In verse 27, "pure," "undefiled," and "unstained" are all similar. In 3:15, we see the same with the words "earthly," "natural," and "demonic."

Simplicity of Faith

Matthew 8:23-27 For Jesus, faith was simple and easy, something he expected of his disciples. He was in the boat with them; therefore, why fear? Just believe!

Matthew 14:28-33 Jesus told him to come; so, why fear? Just have faith.

Matthew 15:21-28 The Syrophenician woman had great faith which is in contrast to Peter who had little.

Matthew 17:14-20 The father came looking for Jesus and settled for the disciples. So, perhaps he doubted their ability. Demons controlled the child's behavior, and according to Mark 9, his actions were outrageous and most likely intimidating to the disciples. (Early MSS do not contain verse 21; the inclusion tends to confuse our understanding of faith.)

Matthew 21:18-22 Jesus gives a lesson about faith by example.

Temptations present themselves by pleasure or pain. Temptations caused by the pleasure of lust, immorality, greed, and such like or pain from tribulation, persecution, worldly pressures are a signal to act out. Faith grows through practice. Every time we ask God for help and receive it, our faith is strengthened. We prove to ourselves that God is dependable and will never leave us.

See it Big

Keep it simple

James 1:5 The context pertains to temptations, but the concept is applicable regarding everything in life. Sometimes we can reason things without His input, while other times we desperately need His assistance. Every time we should ask for help.

Temptations by design are cunning, deceiving, and usually, if not always, crafted from lies that personally appeal to the individual. Effective temptations are directed at our vulnerabilities, which can change as our circumstances in life change.

James 1:6 We must ask in faith without doubting. Seemingly, we should have no difficulty believing that Almighty God has more wisdom than we do in any given situation; yet, the whole crux of human failure is discarding the integrity of God's words. We want to do what we have decided we should do regardless of God's wisdom. When we do not give into the temptation, our endurance will have a perfect result so that, in the end, we will be perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing. When we act on our own feelings and thinking, we end up damaged, deficient, and wanting.

When we ask God for wisdom, we must embrace it and hold on without slipping back into our flawed human reasoning.

James 1:8 A double-minded man is unstable because he moves back and forward between God's wisdom and his own which renders him uncertain or indecisive as to what to do.

James 1:9-11 Poverty can be a temptation to the poor as wealth can be to the rich. Both the poor and the rich should be humble and therefore dependant on God. The state of need that the poor experience can make them very rich if they seek God who will exalt them now and in the age to come. The physical circumstances of the rich do not compel them to be dependent on God. However, the rich are equally insufficient by their morality and therefore should be just as humble as the poor.

James 4:14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

1 Peter 1:24 and 25 For all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off but the word of the lord abides forever." and this is the word, which was preached to you.

1 John 2:17 And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

James 1:12 Resisting temptation is a manifestation of our love for God. "No, I will not do this because I love God." The crown of life is also spoken of in Revelation 2:10.

James 1:13 Our worldview of God can be so twisted we reason that the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God is the author evil or in some way responsible for the evil which tempts us. We wrongly assess Yahweh and ignore the influence of the human state and the devil. GOD DOES NOT TEMPT MAN WITH EVIL!

James 1:14 The truth about temptation is that it is not God's fault but our own for it does not have impact upon us unless we lust after it. To be "carried away" means to draw out and is used in a metaphoric way meaning to lure forth like in hunting and fishing. As the game is lured from its hiding place, so man is allured from the safety of self-restraint to sin. The Greek word translated "enticed" has a very similar meaning, which is to bait or catch by bait. The lust within us is attracted to the temptation. Satan's lie appealed to the desire within Eve to be like God.

James 1:15 The temptation that promised enjoyment and good really produces sin which ends in death.

James 1:16 Again the deception is that the temptation is going to provide something enjoyable and or beneficial; yet, the complete opposite is what happens.

James 1:17 Every good thing that is enjoyable, pleasant, or agreeable plus perfect in the sense of wanting nothing necessary for completeness comes from God

James 1:18 The words "brought us forth" are also translated "begot" and imply to give birth to as in sons of God. This verse is the first of a few that indicate the epistle was written before the Apostle Paul received the revelation about the mystery. James understands the things Jesus taught before his passion but does not comprehend the inclusion of the Gentiles and the end of the old covenant. He still believes the Law has preeminence. He communicates snippets of the new covenant revelation without fully understanding or embracing it. According to Acts and Galatians, James did not fully accept the truth even after Paul received and taught the mystery. (2:8-12; 5:11 and 12)

Revelation 14:4 The first fruits were offered to God as acts of thanksgiving and worship to Yahweh.

True Christianity Seen by its Works

James 1:19 To understand this instruction, holding the context in view is helpful. Given God is the source of all good and that He tempts no man with evil, plus since by His grace we have been made the first-fruits of His creatures, we ought to be quick to hear His voice and slow to speak.

Quick to Hear - Slow to Speak

Our usual way is to be quick to speak and slow to hear. Even children think they should be instructors and not learners. The righteous speak little, and do much; the wicked speak much, and do nothing.

Ecclesiastes 5:2 Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.

Proverbs 10:19 When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise.

Proverbs 13:3 The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.

Proverbs 15:2 and 3 The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly. The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good.

Slow to Wrath

James 1:20 The Greek word translated “anger” here and elsewhere “wrath” is *orge*, which primarily refers to mental anger. The other Greek word translated “anger” and “wrath” is the word *thumos*, which primarily refers to an outburst of anger.

Mark 3:1-5 Jesus was angry (*orge*) but did not sin. He did not have an outburst of anger in which he yelled, attacked, bullied, or endeavored to control the other person. Most assume when he overthrew the money changers’ tables in the temple that he had an outburst of anger, but the Scriptures do not say that he did. Jesus was by no means a wimpy pacifist and often took a very bold courageous stand with those who opposed him, but he never had an outburst of anger or an unrighteous violent act.

We see in men like Peter in Acts 5 bold determined action that was not sinful anger. Paul in Acts 13 bravely withstood Elymas the sorcerer without sinning, and according to Galatians 2, he

did the same with Peter. One can have a natural disposition of anger or agitation without spilling over into an outburst of anger, which according to the Scriptures is always sin. Some understand Ephesians 4:26 and 27 to be instruction that permits or even encourages us to be angry. "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity." However, verse 31 tells us to put off all anger and wrath. "Let all bitterness and wrath (*thumos*) and anger (*orge*) and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." The Greek words used in verse 26 are derived from the root *orge*, which implies we can have mental anger without sinning but must quickly deal with before it becomes an explosion.

The wrath of God is something spoken about very often in the Scriptures and as such always brings about God's righteousness or justice because God is always right. We are not always right and very limited in our ability to judge correctly what is really going on inside another human soul. Far too often, the anger we feel or exhibit is the result of our wrong interpretation of the situation at hand. Many times anger is the manifestation of something else we feel such as disrespect, inferiority, shame, inadequacies, or revenge.

Romans 12:19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Proverbs 16:32 "He that is slow to anger is greater than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city."

Job 5:2 For anger slays the foolish man, and jealousy kills the simple.

Proverbs 11:17 The merciful man does himself good, but the cruel man does himself harm.

Proverbs 13:10 Through insolence comes nothing but strife, but wisdom is with those who receive counsel.

Proverbs 14:17 A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.

Proverbs 15:18 A wrathful man stirs up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeases strife.

Proverbs 19:19 A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if you deliver him, yet you must do it again.

Proverbs 22:24 and 25 Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself.

Proverbs 25:28 He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

Ecclesiastes 7:9 Be not hasty in your spirit to be angry: for anger rests in the bosom of fools.

James 1:21 The exhortation about anger should not be arrested out of context. We should lay aside all anger and wrath and should come to a calm investigation of the truth.

GENUINE CHRISTIANITY

1. Put off evil, keep yourself unstained
2. Receive the Word with meekness
3. Be doers by loving those in need

When we perceive that something other than our desire unfolds, the tendency is to become angry. Anger is often the reactive manifestation of the intense and aggressive desire to do our own will. Children must be trained to deal rightly with the frustration they feel when they do not get their way. When people feel frustration caused by not getting their way, the natural response is anger. Anger and self-will are often connected.

Filthiness and wickedness must be understood in the context of anger that is contrasted to meekness.

The verse has two instructions – 1) putting aside, and 2) receiving with meekness. Rather than submitting to our own intense desires such as anger, we should be meek to receive God's Word. Doing what we want does not save our souls.

MEEKNESS

Psalms 25:9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

Isaiah 66:2 For my hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at my word.

Matthew 11:5 The blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle [meek] and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Psalms 37:11AV But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Psalms 149:4AV For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

James 1:21 If we understand the meaning of "filthiness" and "wickedness" from the context before and after the verse, it includes succumbing to temptation, double mindedness, pride, blaming God when we are tempted, lust, slow to hear, quick to speak, quick to anger, being a hearer only and not a doer, uncontrolled tongue, polluted by the world, and compassionless.

Filth at first can be repulsive, even nauseating, but our minds have a weird ability to adapt and tolerate when we have to do so. Sin may be contemplated as a wrong thing; as a violation of law; as a lack of conformity; as mistake, fault, or error and therefore to be avoided; or it may be contemplated as disgusting, offensive, loathsome filthiness or wickedness. To a pure mind, sin is odious and in any form is more loathsome than the most offensive object can be to any of the senses.

The concept of engrafting or implanting provokes a figurative image of how the Word of God should be received. The engrafted becomes a part of the plant or tree and produces the new fruit. The engrafting image helps us to see that receiving the Word with meekness is not just an intellectual recognition but more so an influencing function. When thinking and behavior are changed by the Word of God, the results save our souls. The following verse illustrates the point.

Psalms 10:17 LORD, you have heard the desire of the humble: you will prepare their heart; you will cause your ear to hear

Psalms 27:14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Psalms 86:10-12 For you are great and do wondrous deeds; you alone are God. Teach me your way, O LORD; I will walk in your truth; Unite my heart to fear your name. I will give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and will glorify your name forever.

Psalms 119:11 Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

James 1:22-25 When we look into a mirror, we see the image, but when we look away, we forget what we just saw. Genuine Christianity is about doing and not just hearing. The intended lesson emphasizes the importance of doing and not the denunciation of studying.

James 1:26 Staying in the context of the doer and not hearer only, if someone thinks himself to be religious or pious and does not control his mouth, he is deceived.

James 1:27 "Pure" and "undefiled" mean the same. Genuine Christianity is caring for those who are legitimately afflicted and cannot help themselves and keeping oneself unstained by the world. Maintaining a compassionate heart for people and keeping unstained in this filthy world are very difficult. We need God's help.

Some people suffer need because of their habitual sin, others because they refuse to work, some because of pride. Their problems may be very similar to that of a widow, orphan, or stranger but dissimilar because they are not victims of uncontrollable circumstances. To help

people who are self-afflicted may cause more harm than good in that we enable them by offsetting the consequences of sin. God is a righteous judge who has set in place laws of retribution.

Galatians 6:7-9 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

Undisciplined children become miserable adults. Many parents, to the lifelong detriment of their children, do not heed God's instruction on developing children. The rod provides immediate consequence for wrong deeds and teaches the child that doing wrong causes pain. One of the most effective ways of evil is we do not immediately suffer consequences which entices us to continue therein. We often fail to connect the destructive consequences of sin with the actual sin.

The Rod of Correction (Proverbs)

Proverbs 13:24 He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.

Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

Proverbs 23:13 and 14 Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. You shall strike him with the rod and rescue his soul from Sheol.

Proverbs 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

One way we lose heart is by helping the wrong people. We need a heart of compassion and God's wisdom to direct us. Jesus did not help everyone, nor did he devote himself to feeding the poor only.

Caring for others like God

Psalms 68:5; Deuteronomy 24:17; Deuteronomy 14:29; Job 29:11-13; Isaiah 1:16 and 17; Isaiah 58:6 and 7

Chapter Two

Three topics are addressed in chapter two: 1) the sin of partiality, 2) the Law, 3) faith and works.

The Sin of Partiality

James 2:1 Most translations write “respect of persons.” The Greek word translated “respect” means literally “receiving the face.” To receive the face is to make judgments and distinctions based on external considerations such as physical appearance, social status, or race. (Woman at conference)

Deuteronomy 10:17 – 17 "For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe."

Romans 2:11AV For there is no respect of persons with God.

Ephesians 6:9 Masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Colossians 3:25 AV But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

1 Samuel 16:7 The LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Leviticus 19:15-18 Godly love does not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. People are people with only two differences: believers and candidates to become believers.

James 2:4 Judging with evil motives is frequently condemned in the Scriptures. See Matthew 7:1-12; Romans 2:1-3 and 14:1-15:7. We all must make judgments about others to determine our relationship them, but this should be done with godly motives and not evil. How did Jesus conduct himself when the leper

approached him, with the insane man who was naked, dirty, and possessed with a legion of demons, when the adulterous woman was cast into his midst, or with the tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes, or you? Showing favoritism is a sign of immaturity or straight out wickedness. The carnal nature of man is prone to prejudice.

James 2:7 Luke 6:20-27 The standard of the world is twisted and the opposite of God centered people.

James 2:8 No doubt, the most important law of all is love. Jesus summarizes the whole of the law into the two great commandments in Matthew 22:35-40, concluding with "on these two things depend the whole law and the prophets." The phrase "royal law" is not found elsewhere in the Bible. As a king to other men in his sovereignty, so the law of love is to other laws. The excellence, nobleness, prominence, and importance are far above all else. We will be judged by the attitude and actions we have toward our fellow man (Matthew 25:31-46). Living lovingly is not one thing among what we are required to do; rather, it is the most important issue.

We must remember that no other New Testament books existed at the time James wrote, so the reference to other Scriptures has to be to the Old Testament, particularly Leviticus 19.

James 2:9 Partiality is sin! This verse propels us into the second topic in this chapter.

The Law

James 2:12 We know from the testimony provided in the books of Acts and Galatians that James continued to believe the Christian Jews were still obligated to keep the Mosaic Law. Jesus lived under the old covenant and taught his followers to do the same. James had not progressed from these teachings when he wrote the epistle. At the time of the writing, the Gentiles had not yet been included into the household of faith, although it was available because of the cross. The mystery was still unknown to Paul because he was not yet a disciple of Christ.

After the church council meeting recorded in Acts 15, James was willing to accept the Gentiles but never changed on the Jews' responsibility to fulfill the old covenant. Much of the communication of Paul recorded in his epistles addresses the legalist viewpoint propounded by James and others at Jerusalem.

In the Gospels, Jesus invests more time training three of the 12 apostles - Peter, James, and John. Of the three, Peter is clearly the man appointed by Jesus to lead the others. In the early days after Pentecost, the focus is on Peter and John, with Peter being the more prominent. In Acts 12, we learn that Herod killed the Apostle James, John's brother. In Acts 12:17, we begin to note a shift in the leadership when Peter freed from jail said, "Report these things to James and the brethren." Comparing what Paul wrote in Galatians (1:19, 2:9-12) to Acts, we see that James the Lord's brother, who was not one of the original apostles, had risen to be the top leader of the church. In Acts 15 when all the apostles, elders, and Paul gathered, James was the one who made the final decision and instructions.

The meeting took place to discuss the acceptance of the Gentiles into the faith and whether or not it was necessary for them to be circumcised like the Jew. The general consensus arrived at was that the Gentiles were not required to be circumcised but nothing was decided or discussed about the Jews no longer needing circumcision or continuation under the Law of Moses. As a matter of fact, the revelation that Paul received and communicated to James, Peter, and John was rejected by James, as is clearly recorded in the book of Galatians. James not only discarded the doctrine of the mystery, now recorded in Paul's epistles, but also stood against the furtherance of this gospel messenger and led others to do the same.

The last time Paul went to Jerusalem, James said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs" (Acts 21:20 and 21). James then encouraged Paul to participate in the ceremonies of the law to appease the Jewish believers. Paul agreed and shortly thereafter was arrested and remained so for the rest of his life.

In the epistle, James does not wrongly teach or contradict Jesus or Paul because what is written came by revelation. Just like the teaching of Jesus before his passion, the information provides valuable insight, specific instruction, and commandments that the church today is obliged to heed. However, both teachings are impossible to carry out without understanding and believing the accomplishments gained with the cross, which Paul detailed in his writings. The book of James could canonically come after the Gospels and therefore before other church epistles that reveal the mystery. The Scriptures unfold progressively.

James 1:25 and 2:12 are the only places the phrase *Law of Liberty* is used in the New Testament. We tend to mix this up with the things that Paul wrote about liberty versus adherence to the law which is recorded in Galatians.

We can conclude from the context that James is referring to the Mosaic Law when using the phrase *the perfect law of liberty*. Nonetheless, the principle applies to all God's truth because all is perfect, and when individuals respond with faith, they are indeed liberated. It is the perfect law, wholly free from all defects.

Psalms 19:7 and 8 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Psalms 119:45 And I will walk at liberty, for I seek your precepts.

Mercy

Matthew 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Luke 10:25-37 The lawyer had the audacity to test Jesus with his questions. "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" "Who is my neighbor?" "Neighbor" is not a hard or complicated concept. "Neighbor" means the one who is near. Whoever crosses our path, whether they are loved ones or enemies, we are to love.

Samaritans were deemed enemies of the Judeans and considered as "dogs!" This Samaritan dog, the enemy of the half-dead Judean, was the one who had compassion. The acts of the Samaritan, in comparison to the priest and Levite, give us our understanding of mercy.

In this record, we can easily see the ungodliness of the hardhearted contrasted with the compassion of the tenderhearted. The question is — can we see this clearly when looking in the mirror? Do we feel with the heart of Christ for those in need, or are we blind as the priest and Levite were?

Matthew 9:10-13 Our Lord had a heart full of mercy and always looked for those he could lovingly heal. He told the self-righteous, pious ones to go learn mercy.

Hosea 6:4-6 The prophet confronted Israel because their mercy was fleeting like the morning dew.

God has always desired for His people to have hearts of mercy, not robotic, religious activity. He requires mercy according to Micah 6:8 – “What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” We are to do so with cheerfulness according to Romans 12:8. We are to love mercy and share it with others with joy in our hearts.

The Samaritan had no concern for the nationality, race, or social status of the wounded man; rather, he saw someone who needed help. Our Father in heaven makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good; the rain is for the just and unjust. God is not a respecter of persons, and neither should we be. The merciful are not prejudiced, nor do they show favoritism.

Jesus Christ is our perfect example of one who always acted out of a heart of compassion. Many times in the Gospels, we read that he was “moved with compassion” followed by his service to others, whether he was feeding the multitudes or healing the sick.

Philippians 2:3-8 We are encouraged to think and act as he did.

I John 3:16-18 God fully expects for His children to love, and love connotes action. We can perceive the love of God by realizing Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. God now expects us to lay down our lives for the brethren. If we see someone with need, God expects us to manifest our hearts of compassion toward him or her. We are not just to talk about loving but also to act lovingly.

Faith and Works

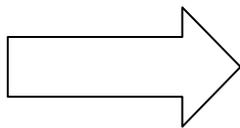
James 2:14-17 Words without help is like faith without works – useless.

James 2:18 To see faith without works is impossible. Faith and works never are independent things that exist separately; they must go together. Faith without works is dead, and works without faith is dead.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 Works without love is nothing.

James 2:19 and 20 Believing there is one God is good, but it does not change the need to understand that faith without works is dead.

James 2:21-24 Abraham's example illustrates that by works a man is justified and not by faith only.



Moses went
 Joshua walked around the city
 Gideon broke the pitchers
 Samson swung the jawbone
 David used his slingshot
 Hezekiah put the letter on the altar
 Jesus hung on the cross

James 2:25 Rahab did more than think about helping; she acted.

James 2:26 The body without breath is dead, so faith without works is dead.

1 John 3:1-3 Even faith in our hope has corresponding works.

Ephesians 2:1-5 When one is dead in sin, it is impossible to do good works to save oneself.

James 2:6-10 All the work of every man who ever lived would not be enough to provide anyone with eternal life. Salvation has to be a gift! In order to receive the gift, a person must have faith that Jesus Christ is Lord, according to Romans 10:9 and 10. Jesus is not your Lord because you state it, rather because you are subservient to him. The faith required for salvation has corresponding works, but the works do not save you, rather the sacrifice of Christ does.

Chapter 3

Unqualified Teachers

James 3:1 If we understand this instruction in the context, some wanted to be teachers but did not qualify because their faith was not companioned with works [2:14-26] and they could not control their mouths in a godly fashion [3:2-18].

The primary qualification for a teacher in the church is to be genuine and not a hypocrite. If one claims to have faith but his works do not correspond (especially those outlined in the Pastoral Epistles), he is disqualified to teach. Teachers need to know and live the Word and have the discipline to communicate accurately. Teachers who run their mouths about things unrelated to the truth and mislead people are devilish. A teacher can lead you to God or away from God. They can speak words which if believed can lead into the Kingdom or to hell.

Galatians 1:7-9 There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel to you than that you have received, let him be accursed.

James 3:13-18 The motivation and intent of the teacher must be right with God. If you are going to stand before the people of God and represent Him, you better not have a selfish, self centered motive.

Matthew 7:15-20 Jesus warns the church to be on guard.

Ephesians 4:8-16 God equips individuals to serve in these capacities, but the teacher must diligently apply himself to develop the gift.

James 3:1 Teachers will incur a stricter judgment. Teaching is no game to be taken lightly.

James 3:2 We all offend, stumble, or fail in duty. Every teacher is liable to commit error, and this consideration should encourage men to be cautious in seeking an office where an error would be likely to do so much injury. If the improper use of the tongue will do mischief anywhere, it is in the office of a teacher. To show the danger of this and the importance of caution in seeking that responsibility, the apostle proceeds to show what mischief the tongue is capable of effecting.

Uncontrollable Tongue

James 3:2 The person is perfect in the sense that he is able to keep every other member of his body in subjection. The point is not to represent the man as spotless in every sense and as

wholly free from sin, because all offend in many things. The design is to show that if a man can control his tongue, he has complete dominion over himself, as much as a man has over a horse by the bit, or as a steersman has over a ship if he has hold of the rudder.

James 3:3-12 The tongue is not controllable because it is the manifestation of what is within the heart. Change must come from the inside out. In chapter 1 verse 19, we were instructed to be slow to speak.

Ecclesiastes 5:2 Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.

Proverbs 10:19 When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise.

Proverbs 13:3 The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.

Proverbs 15:2 and 3 The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly. The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good.

The emphasis here is on what we speak, not how much we speak.

Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6 Corrupt communication comes in many forms – gossiping, putting others down, bragging, manipulating, cursing God, false teachers, counterfeit prophecy, exaggerating, complaining, flattering, and lying.

Maybe we should ask ourselves before we speak: is it true; necessary to be said? Will my words be loving and building up? Are my words kind?

Proverbs 10:8 The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

Proverbs 10:11 – 14 The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence. Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions. On the lips of the discerning, wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding. Wise men store up knowledge, but with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand.

Proverbs 16:27 and 28 A worthless man digs up evil, while his words are like scorching fire. A perverse man spreads strife, and a slanderer separates intimate friends.

Proverbs 18:7 and 8 A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

James 3:3 The most spirited of animals is led when bridled. Something small controls something big. When we exercise careful control of the tongue, we are able to direct our whole being in a proper godly way.

James 3:8 The tongue can be deadly.

Psalms 140:3 They sharpen their tongues as a serpent; poison of a viper is under their lips. Selah.

Proverbs 11:9 A hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

Romans 3:13 and 14 Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

James 3:9 With our words we also have the power to bless people or to curse them. Words can carry either blessings or cursing. Parents have the power to speak blessings or cursing into their child's heart. In the occult, a common practice is to curse people. In many parts of Africa, the witch doctors specialize in bringing down curses. These things come to pass.

Numbers 22:6-12; 23:11, 25; Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:28; and Romans 12:14

Matthew 12:34 and 35 How can we change or control the mouth? The answer is we cannot do it, which is the point of the section in James.

Matthew 15:18 and 19 The heart has to change, and only God can change the heart.

Two Kinds of Wisdom

James 3:13 Staying in the context, the question is directed particularly to the want-a-be teachers mentioned in verse one. However, the exhortation applies to all believers, especially to those who pride themselves on their superior understanding.

True wisdom, like real faith, is a vital, practical quality that has as much or more to do with the way we live as with what we think or say.

The word translated as "gentleness" in the NASB and "meekness" in the AV is used only three times in the Bible: here, James 1:21, and 1Peter 3:15. Our understanding of the word "meekness" may better fit with the scope of the epistle. Genuine wisdom is gained only from God. Indeed, such wisdom does encourage gentleness to our fellow man. Once again, the separation of mind and actions is condemned.

It is not hard to see why this can still be connected with those who want to teach when we consider the religious leaders that constantly harassed Jesus and his disciples. Their envy led them to murder. Envy is a wicked emotion that can lead to much aggressive evil.

Matthew 27:17 So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that because of envy they had handed him over.

Acts 5:17 and 18 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

Romans 13:13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

1 Corinthians 3:3 For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men?

Acts 13:44-46; Galatians 5:19-21

2 Corinthians 10:12 For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.

Selfish ambition in your heart – Those who desire to be teachers or those who consider themselves wise need to check their motives. All service should be to the glory of God as is stated clearly in Matthew 6. Many are tempted to serve in the church because they want to feel important, significant, or needed. The void in their lives pushes them to do a thing that fills the void. Many people who stand before audiences such as teachers, musicians, comedians, and other performers do so to fill the void of appreciation or value that they should have received as children.

Philippians 2:3-11 Jesus is our sterling example.

James 3:15 – Such wisdom as this does not come from God but is earthly, natural, and demonic – three very powerful words.

Each of these adjectives takes its meaning from its implied opposite. This wisdom is earthy instead of heavenly, natural instead of spiritual, and demonic instead of godly.

James 3:16 JEALOUSY AND SELISH AMBITION = DISORDER AND EVERY EVIL THING

James 3:17 Wisdom from above James 1:5

1. Pure – free from any stain or blemish, blamelessness, incapable of producing anything evil
2. Peaceable – Proverbs 3:17 God’s wisdom produces peace, which is the opposite of contention and disputes. 3:14; 4:1 and 3
3. Gentle – to be kind , willing to yield, open to reason
4. Easy to be entreated or reasonable
5. Full of mercy and good fruits – compassion that shows itself in action 2:8-13
6. Unwavering or without partiality
7. Without hypocrisy – genuine without show or pretense

James 3:18 – NASB and the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

NIV - Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

The fruit of righteousness is never gained with man’s wisdom or actions. James 1:20 states – “for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” We are to be peacemakers. According to Matthew 5, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” Where we go, we bring peace. According to Ephesians 6:15, “Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” We sow in peace because with God’s wisdom we have peace. Our peace does not assure that what we say or do will gender peace with others. Many times the result of Jesus’ words caused anger and hate. The glorious wisdom of God with the seven brilliant virtues is not always received by others because some have eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear, and hearts that cannot understand.

WISDOM (James 3:13-18)

James 3:13 A person who has God's wisdom produces godly fruit. Our behavior again tells on us.

Gentleness and meekness are synonyms. Wisdom in this context is understood to mean insight, discernment, perception, wise attitude or belief, or the perspective we hold regarding what is going on.

James 3:14 Selfish ambition is the only thing a non-Christian people have and is always common to those who fail to hold Christ as the head in their lives, carnal Christians.

Romans 1:21-24 We do primarily what we want to do. Only with some things, we must do them, but only because if we do not them, they will cause undesired results in our lives. The activity of man's life is centered entirely upon himself because of the refusal to honor Yahweh and be thankful.

29 The fruit of man's wisdom is unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malicious gossips, slanderers, those hating God who are insolent, arrogant, boastful inventors of evil, disobedient....

Ephesians 2:1-3 Life before Christ is entirely about self, so all human wisdom is defective. At times, our insight as it relates to others seems to have compassion and goodness, but usually it is still filtered through our own interpretation and purposes.

1 Corinthians 3:1-9 Immature Christians continue to be caught in the snare of jealousy and strife because of self-centered concern and not God or Christ centered concern. What difference does it make if God is at the center of what we do? Who is getting the glory? Note the repeated use of the pronoun "I" in the context. The Corinthians were a very self-ambitious, self-centered church; therefore, they had considerable jealousy and strife. Read chapters 12-14. What is the difference who sings the song as long as the song is sung to the glory of God? What difference does it make who sets the chairs, teaches, prays...?

James 3:15 This is not God's wisdom, rather human which is earthly, natural, demonic. Such wisdom is not heavenly, spiritual, or godly.

James 3:16 Jealousy and selfish ambition equal disorder and every evil thing.

James 3:17 God's wisdom is the opposite.

Pure - Because the origin is the One who is holy, holy, holy! God's perspective is without one speck of sin, filth, unrighteousness, darkness, perversion, ignorance, lopsidedness, or selfishness. Pure is without any foreign mixture included and therefore impervious to human influences.

Man's wisdom is always tainted with self and is faulty human reasoning emanating from a sinful mind.

Peaceable – God's wisdom to the meek is peaceable; whereas, to the prideful, it is unsettling and annoying. Insight that comes from God brings peace. It fits well with the heart of the humble. Human wisdom often causes unrest, turmoil, confusion, anxiety, trouble, and uproar. Man tends to get frantic, uptight, forcing his ways into place.

Gentle – God does not bully people and force them to do this or do that. He honors free will and allows people to accept His will. He deals very tenderly with His children, not in comprising but in handling us. He is direct without being caustic, firm without oppressing or forcing, certain without being overbearing. Man, on the other hand, when he thinks he knows what is right, could care less about what others think or feel. We tend to be controlling, pushy, intimating, and arrogant. We can develop a bulldog attitude that runs all over whoever gets in the way.

Reasonable – People often complain about God's ways not being reasonable in the "real world." Man in his prideful way thinks he knows better than God and everyone else for that matter. "Love your neighbor as yourself." "Turn the other cheek." "Do not take a neighbor to court." "Let him take my coat too." These are seen as fanciful ideas but not practical or reasonable. For those of us who follow

His ways, we marvel in joyful delight at just how reasonable His wisdom really works.

Full of Mercy – Mercy or compassion is empathy centered on others not on self. Human wisdom is primarily centered on self with little concern about the others involved. God's wisdom is full of mercy.

Full of Good Fruits – Fruit is the result. The result of God's wisdom is good.

Unwavering – Not ambiguous, not dubious, rather certain and reliable

Without Hypocrisy – Man's wisdom is often present as a concern for the betterment of others with the reality of self concern.

James 3:18 Righteousness is the result of the seed of God's wisdom. The end result is right. It is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Chapter 4

James 3:13-18 Leads to the contrast in chapter 4

James 4:1 The question posed – What is the source or cause of the fighting and quarreling among us? The answer is that they come from within the person. The source is your own pleasures. (Extremely vital –shoulder the responsibility for all your thoughts and actions. Your behavior is never someone else’s responsibility or fault.) Just as a child acts out when he or she does not get his way, so do those void of godly wisdom. People are self-centered, so when they do not get their way, they get upset and act out (which is why there are conflicts and quarrels). We believe the deception that our contentious behavior is the reaction to the wrong behavior of another. However, the truth of the matter is we did not get our way, so we became upset. With maturity, we learn to justify and disguise these unseemly behaviors, but they are the same as they were when we were children.

James 4:2 Humanity’s sole motivation for thoughts and activities is selfishness. The great paradigm (a philosophical and theoretical framework) switch for the Christian is in our base of operation for life. We now have the choice to think what we think and do what we do for the glory of God and not self only. We are enabled to seek, focus, and obey the will of God above our own will. We can be like Christ who always did the will of the Father.

John 5:19 Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of himself, unless it is something he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.

John 14:12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.

People are motivated by their own selfish lust. We learn early on in life if we do the right thing, we benefit. We eat all our food in order to get the treat. We learned to go on the potty because we received applause or rewards. At school, we get certificates of achievements, rewards, and grades for our actions. With our vocation, we are told if we do well, we will receive better pay, vacation time, and, most of all, positions with more prestige. When our egos are stroked, we respond and do more to satisfy our employer. **The inner machinery of all civilization is the manipulation of man's activity based upon his self-interest.** Yet, this core motive was nonexistent in the original world, the life of our Lord Jesus, and will be so in the Kingdom to come. The holy and right way is living from a God-centered core.

Ephesians 2:2 and 3 Satan keeps control over the people of the world by the complete and constant manipulation of our egos. **He knows that individual self-interest is the actual motive of all conscious action.** The interest we have in others is only through the reflection of self. For the believer, God implants a new will in us, the will of God in Christ Jesus. The great paradigm switch is we now have a choice between our own will and the will of Christ that lives within us. The new will causes us to have genuine godlike concern for our fellow man.

James 4:2 The history of humanity reveals the vast extremes of wickedness stirred by the unrelenting and hideous motive of self. Even in the church, we experience the effects of the immature Christians who never grow past self interest to desire and obedience of the will of God. Everyone comes around because of self-interest; few stay around because most do not mature past self to God. Some churches grow in population because the person in charge is a master motivator playing on the base motive of self-interest to entice people to participate. The people think they are giving service to God but really are serving themselves.

James 1:4 If we ask God for His wisdom, we can be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 4:3 Asking God out of self-interest rather than God-interest is to ask amiss. The concern for prayer is to be God's will and wisdom rather than our own.

Ephesians 1:16-19; Colossians 1:9-12

The wrong motive is self-centered concern, desire for that which brings pleasure to self, which is the way of every human in the world. The way humanity got into the mess we are in was by Adam and Eve following self-interests and pleasures in place of God's interests. God's interest for them was paradise.

Matthew 16:21-27 Jesus taught us to stop following man's interest, deny self, and follow him. Luke 9:23-27.

We can turn our lives over to the one who lives within us by quiet, persistent practice day by day. Turning our attention from self and the world to Him with prayer, inward worship, and surrender is our goal. We can develop and establish mental habits of inward orientation. A steady, inner, secret turning to God is possible. We can begin right now by turning within ourselves and telling God we love Him and asking Him to help us grasp the concept under consideration.

You can keep engaged with the outer world, and at the same time you surrender yourself to the inner world where God dwells within Christ in you. Turn your thought in silent worship to Him as you are involved in every activity of life. Ask for His help; ask for His blessings on the person you are talking with. Pray that His blessing will shower down on the place that you are located. Ask Him to guide you and direct you. Keep it up throughout the day. First thing in the morning, last thing at night, while you are eating or driving in your car, turn your thoughts and heart to him. When you forget to do it, immediately return to focus on Him. Do not dwell on the past of what you failed to do; rather, do it now.

When you realize you are self-focused, claim Jesus' command to die to yourself. **STOP THINKING ABOUT YOURSELF!** Turn your mind to Him, and ask what is Your will? What do you want me to think about, and what do you want me to do?

James 4:4 James employs very strong, Old Testament, idiomatic language. We are married to God, and any connection with the world is considered adultery.

Psalms 50:18 When you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you associate with adulterers.

Psalms 73:27 For, behold, those who are far from you will perish; you have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to you.

Isaiah 57:3 But come here, you sons of a sorceress, offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute.

Jeremiah 9:2 Oh that I had in the desert a wayfarers' lodging place; that I might leave my people and go from them! For all of them are adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

Hosea 3:1 Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes."

Matthew 12:39 But he answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;

Matthew 16:4 "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And he left them and went away.

The world goes round based upon the evil manipulation of self-centered, selfish people; therefore, those who want to live godly just do not fit in. We are not self-centered but God-centered through our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 7:7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.

John 8:23 He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.

John 12:25 "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

John 12:31 Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

John 14:30 I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in me

John 15:18 If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you.

John 15:19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

James 4:5 The Scripture speaks in many places of God's desire for complete and absolute devotion and loyalty. He is not willing to share us with the devil or his world.

Exodus 20:1-6; Deuteronomy 4:23 and 24; 6:15; 32:21; Joshua 24:19; Psalms 78:58; Nahum 1:2; and 1 Corinthians 10:22

James 4:6 This is a quotation from Proverbs 3:1-35. The proud live by their own will and desires, whereas the humble discipline themselves to suppress their will while embracing and obeying God's will.

James 4:7 Submit to God:

- Prove your faith by withstanding temptation.
- Build your faith by hearing the Word of God.
- Build faith with associations.
- Ask God for wisdom.
- Slow down and think.
- Surrender your concerns to God, and allow Him to speak to you.
- Meditate on God and the things of God.
- Be slow to speak, quick to hear.
- Be doers of the Word and not hearers only.
- Receive the Word with meekness.
- Care for others like God does.

- Develop a heart of compassion; do something to bless those you know and those you do not know.
- Speak words that glorify God and edify others.
- Develop your inner life by building the habit of seeking God's will, praise and thanking God, praying for people and places. Constantly acknowledge the presence of God and of Christ in you.
- Seek God's wisdom.

Resist the devil:

- Acknowledge that temptations are an illusionary deception.
- Do not allow yourself to spin stuff to rationalize wrong actions.
- Be patient and withstand passion.
- Deal quickly with mental anger, and refuse to have an outburst of anger knowing it is always sin.
- Put off evil; keep yourself unstained.
- Put away all filthiness and wickedness.
- Do not judge or show partiality.
- Control your tongue so as not to speak badly of others.
- Stop the self-centered, self desired lifestyle by dying to yourself.
- Stop thinking about yourself all the time.
- Repress your own wisdom.
- Always accept responsibility for your own actions.

James 4:7 Expand your inner life by constantly acknowledging the presence of God.

James 4:8 God will not force Himself on anyone. If you want God in your life, you must choose to draw near to Him, and if you should do so, He will draw near to you. Change the focus off the world and self by replacing it with a focus upon God and Christ.

James 4:9 - John 1:5-2:7 He will forgive if we confess.

James 4:10 The humble soul recognizes his own spiritual poverty, acknowledges consequently our desperate need of God's help, and submits to His commanding will for all our lives.

Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Matthew 23:1-12; Luke 14:7-11, 18:9-14; Philippians 2:1-11; 1 Peter 5:5-11

The Futility of Pride, 4:13-5:11

This section confronts an arrogant, boastful attitude that neglects to take into account the transitory nature of this life.

James 4:13 The deliberate and self-confident planners fail to seek God's wisdom. They decide where they will go, when they will go, how long they will stay; and they are certain that they will gain profit from their venture. The problem is not in the desire to make a profit, rather about the exclusivity of this worldly context in which the plans are made without God.

James 4:14 The extremely short duration of life, illness, accidental death, or the return of Christ could cut short our lives just as quickly as the morning sun dissipates the mist or as a shift in wind direction blows away smoke. James 1:10 and 11 also talked about this subject. We should never hold an arrogant attitude that excludes dependence upon God and seeking His will. The realistic reckoning with the brevity and uncertainty of life is wise.

Proverbs 27:1 Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.

Job 7:7 and 9 O remember that my life is wind: my eye shall no more see good.

As the cloud is consumed and vanishes away: so he that goes down to the grave shall come up no more.

Psalms 39: 5 and 6 Behold, you have made my days as handbreadths, and my lifetime as nothing in your sight; surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah.

Surely every man walks about as a phantom; surely they make an uproar for nothing; he amasses riches and does not know who will gather them.

Luke 12:16-20

James 4:15 Paul frequently expressed his submission to the Lord's will. Acts 18:21; Romans 1:10; 1 Corinthians 4:19; 16:7; and Hebrews 6:3

The one time Paul failed to do God's will in his missionary travels cost him his freedom and eventually his life.

A constant verbalization of the formula *if the Lord wills* can become a glib and meaningless recitation. A sincere appreciation for God's control of our affairs and for His specific will for us is our aim.

James 4:16 We can get a certain pride in ourselves in planning our future with such confidence. This pride of life, this arrogant sense of self-sufficiency and self-importance, we want to avoid.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the father, but is from the world.

James 4:17 – Luke 19:11-27; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 12:47 Doing things we should not do and failing to do things we should do are both sin.

CHAPTER 5

The Futility of Pride, 4:13-5:11

James 5:1 “Weep and howl” has tones of the Old Testament prophets who frequently used such language regarding the wicked in the Day of Judgment. God’s concern for the poor is reflected repeatedly in the Scriptures. In Israel’s later history, these laws were ignored, and the poor were often oppressed and taken advantage of by wealthy, powerful Israelites. Hence, the “rich” occasionally becomes a synonym for the unrighteous.

Luke 6:24 and 25

But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

The unrighteous rich are the subject of concern, not just the rich. Scriptures warn that wealth can be a particularly strong obstacle to Christian discipleship.

Matthew 19:16-22

Matthew 19:23 and 24

Jesus said to his disciples, truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

James 5:3 We should understand the worthlessness and temporality of even the most precious metals. The foolishness of placing reliance upon perishable material goods that provide no spiritual benefit now and give no grounds for hope in the future is confronted.

Matthew 6:19-21 The rich concentrate on the accumulation of earthly treasure to the exclusion of heavenly treasure, thereby plainly indicating where their hearts are.

The effect would be as if it should corrode or consume their very flesh; that is, the fact of their laying up treasures would be followed by painful consequences. The reference is to the punishment which God would bring on them for their avarice and injustice – effects that will come on all now for the same offenses.

In the early church, the believers held a pervasive belief that they were in the last days. Acts 2:17; 2Timothy 3:1; Hebrews 1:2; 2Peter 3:3; 1John 2:18; and Jude 18.

The day of Pentecost when the holy spirit was first given began the last days which will end when Jesus comes back. If we live convinced that we are in the last days, we will not be tempted with the same sins of the unrighteous rich.

Luke 12:13-21 To make plans and save money for the latter years of your life can be wise and compassionate in that you will not become a financial burden to your family or to the government. Saving for the future to live the life of luxury and selfishness in the sunset years of your life does not align with God's desires for the elderly.

James 5:4 First-century Palestine, before 70AD, witnessed an increasing concentration of land in the hands of a small group of very wealthy landowners. As a result, the many farmers with small holdings were forced to earn their living by hiring themselves out to their rich landlords.

Matthew 20:1-16

The Law required payment of wages daily – Deuteronomy 24:14 and 15; Leviticus 19:13; Malachi 3:5

The cries reach the ears of the God of vengeance, Genesis 4:10 18:20, 21. Among others, oppression of the poor is a loud crying sin, Exodus 2:23; Job 24:11, 12; Hab. 2:9, 11, 12.

The Lord of Sabbath is the same as Lord of hosts, which is Yahweh as the almighty, powerful leader of all the armies in heaven and earth. The title is often used when God brings judgment and revenge on people which is why James uses it in this context.

James 5:8 Those whom he addressed were doubtless suffering under those oppressions, and his object was to persuade them to bear their wrongs without murmuring and without resistance. One of the methods of doing this was by showing them that those who injured and wronged them would be suitably punished at the Day of Judgment.

Luke 8:15 The seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

Romans 2:7 Those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;

Romans 8:24 In hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?

Romans 8:25 If we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might hope.

Galatians 5:5 For we through the spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

Galatians 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

James 5:9 – Do not complain, James 4:11; 1Peter 4:9.

Philippians 2:14-16

Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

James 5:12 Vows tempt us not to live in the now.

Prayer and Healing 5:13-20

James 5:13 Suffering hardship reflects back to chapter one, verses 1-6.

2 Corinthians 12:8-10

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

Psalms 18:6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry for help before Him came into His ears.

Psalms 50:15 Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.

Psalms 91:15 He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.

The Greek word translated "cheerful" was translated "be of good courage" in Acts 27 when Paul was on the sinking ship and the angel revealed to him that no one was going to lose his life. Singing praise is a form of prayer. 1Corinthians 14:15

Singing praises is a vital asset to controlling your mind and practicing the presence of God.

Psalms 95:2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.

Psalms 105:2 Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; speak of all His wonders.

Matthew 26:30 After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

James 5:14 Anointing with oil is difficult to understand since this is the only place it is spoken about, except Mark 6:13 - "They were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them."

Oil was widely used in the ancient world as a medicine. In Jesus' parable, the Samaritan went and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil (Luke 10:34), so there was a connection between healing and oil. Anointing frequently symbolizes the consecration of persons or things for God's use and service in the Old Testament. Perhaps, as the elders prayed, they would anoint the sick person in order to symbolize that the person was being "set apart" for God's special attention and care.

Jesus and the apostles sometimes used physical props in their healings to stimulate the faith of the sick person. Clay on the blind man's eyes, his fingers in the ears of the deaf, Paul with handkerchiefs are examples of God inspired physical aids. Merely copying these God-inspired actions is useless. Communion, water baptism, child dedications are outward actions designed to aid people in their faith.

Important to note are the many healings in the Gospels and Acts, and none are with the anointing of oil. In our culture with ignorance of the significance of anointing with oil, the impact may be limited.

Elders Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2-6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17 and 18; 21:18; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1 and 5

James 5:15 “Prayer offered in faith” – that is of the elders and the sick person
Chapter 1:6 and 7

James 5:16 Remaining in the context of healing and prayer, we see the sins confessed would be related to the sickness suffered. Sickness has many different causes – one of which can be sin.

Matthew 9:1-8 The cause of this man’s sickness was sin.

John 9:1-5 The connection between sickness and sin was common knowledge.

One of the most difficult things people struggle with is to expose themselves to others due to the fear of rejection and fear of how others view them. Confessing our sins to another is an act of humility that very few are willing to experience because of our flesh or self-orientation. A powerful evil weapon used by the devil is our unwillingness to expose ourselves. We just cannot bear the thought of others really knowing our weaknesses or sins. Deuteronomy 9:18-20

James 5:16 The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much only if we believe. Joshua 10:12; 1 Samuel 12:18; 1 Kings 13:6; 1 Kings 17:18-24; 2 Kings 4:33-35; 2 Kings 19:15-20; 2 Kings 20:2-5; 2 Chronicles 14:11 and 12; 32:20-22; Job 42:8; Psalms 10:17 and 18; 34:15; 145:18 and 19; Proverbs 15:8 and 29; Jeremiah 29:12 and 13; 33:3; Daniel 2:18-23; 9:20-22; Matthew 7:7-11; 21:22; Luke 11:11-13; 18:1-8; Acts 4:24-31; 12:5-11; 1 John 3:22

James 5:20 We should help each other! The believer who sees his brother wandering from the fold should seek with all his power to bring him back. These last two verses are an appropriate closing. Not only should the readers of James “do” the words he has written, they should be deeply concerned to see that others “do” them also.

CORRESPONDING READING MATERIAL

- 1:2-17 - *Kingdom Studies, Vol. 2, Jesus the Christ*, chapter 3, "Temptation"
Inside Out (Heart of Christian Living), chapter 12, "Escape Temptation"
Change-to-Change, chapter 5, "Choked"
- 2:1-9 - *Kingdom Studies, Vol. 3, Living Sacrifice*, chapter 3, "Judging"
- 2:13 - *Inside Out (Heart of Christian Living)*, chapter 6, "Bowels of Mercies"
- 3:1-12 - *Inside Out (Heart of Christian Living)*, chapter 1, "The Heart"
- 4:1-8 - *Inside Out (Heart of Christian Living)*, chapter 2, "God Requires Humility"
Change to Change, chapter 1, "Perspective"
- 4:9 - *Inside Out (Heart of Christian Living)*, chapter 47, "Three Forgiven Men"
Change to Change, chapter 2, "Repentance"
- 5:1-11 - *Kingdom Studies, Vol. 1, The Foundation*, Epilogue, "The Kingdom of God"
Kingdom Studies, Vol. 2, Jesus the Christ, Epilogue, "The Kingdom of God"
Kingdom Studies, Vol. 3, Living Sacrifice, "Man's Hope" and Epilogue,
 "The Kingdom Come"
- 5:12-20 - "Lord, Teach us to Pray"

Simple Uncomplicated Faith

For Jesus faith was simple and easy, something he expected of his disciples. His matter of fact response to their reaction to danger exemplifies his attitude about faith. He was sound asleep enjoying his peaceful rest while the disciples are freaking out with anxiety and fear.

Matthew 8:23-27 - When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!" He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.

Since Jesus was on the boat with them there was no reason for alarm, instead confidence and trust should have prevailed. One of the classic examples of faith contrasting with doubt is when Peter joined Jesus walking on the water. With eyes focused on Jesus, Peter had faith and when his eyes shifted to the circumstances, he doubted and fell. To maintain our focus upon our Lord and our God is the most fundamental element to faith.

Matthew 14:28-33 - Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind stopped.

The Syrophenician woman had great faith, contrasting to Peter who had little. Children and uncomplicated thinking adults often have more faith because things are not complicated, complex or confusing. While many confuse themselves and muddle things up, they keep their faith simple and easy. God said so it must be true!

Matthew 15:22-28 – And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and *began* to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us." But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and *began* to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.

At the time of this incident, Jesus was still limited to ministering primarily to Israel. However, after his resurrection all would change. Her unyielding determination stands out as a hallmark of genuine faith.

Obstacles to faith are always present so we need to persistently embrace the promises of God and refute the faith-breakers just like this woman.

The father of a demon-occupied boy came looking for Jesus but could not find him. He settled for the disciples even though he doubted their ability to help the child. Demons controlled the child's behavior and according to Mark 9, his actions were outrageous and most likely intimidating to the disciples. They did doubt and therefore were unable to help the child.

Matthew 17:14-20 - When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. "I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him." And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me." And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

The circumstances intimidated the disciples but not Jesus. For Jesus faith was simple and easy. He never doubted his authority over the demons and cast them out without any problem. The verse, which follows this section, is not included in the earliest manuscripts and confuses the simplicity of faith. (verse 21- But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.)

Matthew 21:18-22 - Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry. Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, "No longer shall there ever be *any* fruit from you." And at once the fig tree withered. Seeing *this*, the disciples were amazed and asked, "How did the fig tree wither *all* at once?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen. And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

Faith grows through practice. Each time we sense faith and act upon it, our faith becomes stronger. Every time we ask God for help and receive it, our faith is strengthened. We prove to ourselves that God is dependable and will never leave us. All we need to do is ask for help and trust in His power. Faith is not intellectualized; rather it just is. Faith is not self-contrived or manufactured; rather it is a gift from God. Faith is not self-focused; rather it is God-centered. Faith is not earned; rather a gift we simply accept. Faith is not optional; rather the very core of our life with God.

Faith and Works

The full accomplishment of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was kept secret until long after the crucifixion because if the evil powers of this world understood God's magnificent plan, according to 1Corinthians chapter two, they would not have crucified our Lord. The complete revelation regarding this great mystery was first revealed to the Apostle Paul and is now recorded in the church epistles that he wrote. After Christ ascended, many years would pass before Paul gained this information. Thus, the early church still lived primarily under the Old Covenant, and the Gentiles were excluded from taking part in the church. Once Paul understood the mystery, he boldly proclaimed this enlightened gospel to the Gentiles and taught the full significance of the New Covenant that began with the crucifixion.

The Gentiles whole-heartedly embraced Paul's inspired message, but the Jews in Jerusalem who fervently adhered to the Mosaic Law greatly struggled with this radical change. This was radical for the Jews because for centuries only they were God's chosen people with the exception of a few Gentile proselytes and the Old Covenant was their absolute law. The inclusion of the Gentiles was undeniable because, starting with Peter and greatly extended under Paul, God openly accepted the Gentiles in a way the Jews could not ignore. On the other hand, they still believed that the Jews were a better class of people and remained bonded to keep the Mosaic Law even though God's revelation stated differently. Hence, a major conflict ensued in the church that is evident in the book of Acts and especially in the epistles of Romans, Galatians, Hebrews, and to a lesser degree in the other writings of Paul.

Paul by revelation forcefully condemns the Jew's ardent stand to embrace continually the things of the law for which Christ paid the price to free humanity. He argues, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "A man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Christ Jesus." "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died needlessly." "Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." "Christ is become of no effect to you, whoever of you are justified by the law; you are fallen from grace." These urgings along with many more reveal the immense conflict that existed with the Jews unwillingness to accept the accomplished work of Christ that makes salvation available by God's grace to everyone that believes in Christ.

Today in the church, we have another theological struggle that has metamorphosed from the revelation given to correct the original problem. Many in the church believe we are saved by grace; therefore, man is not required to do any work at all to be saved. The verse most quoted to support this belief is Ephesians 2:8 and 9 –" for by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." A failure to understand the scope of the information discussed earlier has caused some to think that Paul was arguing and condemning all work as a rejection to accepting God's grace in Christ.

Without question, it is absolutely impossible for man to save himself by his own works. Not all the good work that any man could muster up in a lifetime, yea even greater – all the good work of all men for all time – would still be enough to make one person righteous in the eyes of God. If man's work could have brought about God's righteousness, then Christ need not to have suffered and died. The fact is the work for our salvation had to be accomplished for us in the person of Jesus the Christ. The question is – are all men saved? The obvious answer is – no; not all are saved. Faith is required to receive the grace. We must have faith that Jesus Christ is our Lord and that God raised him from the dead. Our faith does not save us; rather, God through our Lord Jesus Christ saves us. Nevertheless, to receive the gift, we are required to have faith. So the next important question to ask is – what does faith look like?

Jesus often talked about faith, both of little faith and great faith. During a storm, the disciples woke him out of sleep because they feared they would sink and die. Jesus responded with, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" They experienced anxiety and fear rather than confidence and trust. Their fear driven behavior accompanied their negative faith. When Peter walked on water, after looking at the wind, he experienced fear and lost his faith which resulted in his sinking into the water. Jesus saved him and said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Again, we see a corresponding action connected to Peter's faith. When he had faith that we could walk on water, he walked, and when he became fearful, he sank. When confronted with the bewildered father who failed to realize the deliverance of his demonized son after the disciples wavered in their faith, Jesus said "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you?" Jesus seemed frustrated because of their lack of faith. Their actions or lack thereof indicated lack of faith.

Jesus said of the centurion with the paralyzed servant that he had great faith because of his absolute conviction and trust that just the words of Jesus could heal his servant. Not wanting to bother Jesus to come to his home, he said to him, "Just say the word and my servant will be healed." The centurion's actions evidenced his faith. The Syrophenician woman also had great faith. Her unyielding determination to receive healing for her demonized daughter even in the face of Jesus' rejection caused Jesus to say, "O woman, your faith is great." The manner in which she acted showed Jesus her faith. FAITH ALWAYS HAS COORESPONDING ACTIONS.

Faith is more than just a function of the mind because subsequent actions always coincide. Moses' rod turned into a snake after he obeyed and cast it down to the ground; then, it turn back into a rod after he obeyed and picked it up. The walls of Jericho did not tumble down simply because Joshua had positive thoughts, rather after he obeyed and walked around the city seven times. Gideon obeyed by breaking the pitchers, lighting the torches, blowing the trumpets, and yelling, "The sword of the Lord and Gideon." Then, the enemy destroyed themselves. Samson acted with a jawbone of ass, not just thoughts. David flung the stone at the giant. You get the idea: obedient actions must match up with the mental conviction and trust to have real faith.

In the context of telling the disciples to rebuke a brother if he sins and to forgive him after he repents even if it occurs seven times, they asked Jesus to increase their faith. Herein is a request that we all are

interested in receiving. His response is important to our understanding regarding the connection between faith and works.

Luke 17:6-10

The lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you.

Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'come immediately and sit down to eat'?

But will he not say to him, 'prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'?

He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?

So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'we are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.

His response requires thoughtfulness to understand. The essence of what was said in response to "Lord, increase our faith" was to do what you are told to do. He connects faith to obedience. If we say we have faith that Jesus is our Lord, subordinate obedience must be present. He is not Lord because we mentally acknowledge him to be so. He is Lord if we do what he says to do. Lordship demands submission to the Master. To those who believe that salvation by grace excludes the works that always accompany faith, the following words of Jesus must be upsetting.

Matthew 7:21-27

"Not everyone who says to me, 'lord, lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven will enter.

Many will say to me on that day, 'lord, lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles? 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'

Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.

Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.

If Jesus stated once (as he did in this passage) the importance of doing his word, the impact would be powerful enough to conclude that faith and works are connected; however, Jesus spoke the same over and over again. Some who argue that works are not important dismiss the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels declaring they were for a different administration before the post Pentecost church age. However, the apostle who taught and wrote after Pentecost spoke the same exact way. For example, Paul the Apostle made the following statement about his ministry in Romans 1:5 "...we have received

grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles.” How can anyone ignore or dismiss the profound truth stated on this subject in the book of Romans? Consider!

Romans 2:5-11

But after your hardness and impenitent heart treasure up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life:

But to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

Tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man that does evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that works good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

For there is no respect of persons with God.

To the Corinthian believers, he wrote the following after already confronting them in the previous chapter to avoid those called brothers who behave this sinful way. To dismiss this warning by thinking we are saved by grace, and therefore, works do not matter could cause rejection from entering the Kingdom.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the lord Jesus Christ and in the spirit of our God.

To the Galatians, Paul explains the struggle we must endure as Christians because of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. He outlines the works of the flesh and concludes that if Christians habitually practice these things, they will not enter the Kingdom.

Galatians 5:21

I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The list of Scriptures on the subject goes on and on. The requirement man has to receive that which is given to us by grace is faith, and faith always has corresponding works of obedience. Truly, faith that has no works is not really faith at all. James demonstrates the connection between faith and works in a very simple yet insightful way in James 2:14-26. He concludes the section with – just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. Faith without works is dead and void regarding accepting the grace of salvation.

Another wrong doctrine prevalent in the church is “once saved always saved.” The wrong belief is – one simple declaration of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ ensures entrance into the Kingdom of God regardless of any of our actions thereafter. Such a doctrine believed is sure to mislead many and hinder them from entering into the Kingdom. Again, we could review the scores of Scriptures that refute such a doctrine, but for time’s sake, consider the following. Note the all important little word – “IF.”

Colossians 1:22 and 23

He has now reconciled you in his fleshly body through death, in order to present you before him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard ...

Hebrews 3:6 and 14

Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end;

Hebrews 10:26-31

For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins,

But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, with which he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite to the Spirit of grace?

For we know him that has said, Vengeance belongs to me, I will recompense, said the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Intellectually to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, that God raised him from the dead, and that he is coming back is the beginning of right faith but by no means the completion of faith. True faith ALWAYS has corresponding works. Do not be deceived; faith without works is dead!

Humility Compared To Pride

Matthew 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The humble acknowledges that Yahweh is the Almighty God. He realizes God's absolute sovereignty as the source and maintainer of all life. His heart is fixed on Yahweh and his mouth utters constant praise and exultation for Him (Job 38:1- 42:17; Daniel 4:28-37; Revelation 4:11).

The proud thinks everything revolves around himself. Everything he does is viewed through the lens of self. His thoughts and therefore his conversation are primarily centered on self.

The humble is thankful knowing everything he has and hopes for are based upon God's grace and mercy. He strongly believes he deserves nothing. The life he has now and the hope for the coming Kingdom are and will be available because Yahweh is merciful, gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth (Exodus 34:6; Ephesians 2:7-10). He thanks God and others often (Ephesians 4:19 and 20; Colossians 3:17; I Thessalonians 5:18).

The prideful one lacks genuine gratitude. They usually think they deserve what is good, that God and others owe it to them. Consequently, they see no reason to be thankful for what they receive. In fact, they may even complain because they think they deserve better. They tend to be critical, complaining, and discontent. The proud person is not in the practice of being thankful toward God and others (II Chronicles 32:25).

The humble is aware that he has no right to question or judge Almighty God; rather he unpretentiously asks God for wisdom and forgiveness. He does not see himself as even remotely qualified to question Yahweh. If undesirable things occur, he questions himself and never blames Yahweh (Psalm 51; Romans 3).

The proud complains against and blames God for that which is wrong in his or her life. He freely and openly murmurs against God and shifts his own blame to Him. He thinks and often proclaims to others, "Look what God has done to me after all I have done for Him" (Numbers 14).

A humble one does not see himself as better than others. He does not forget the sinfulness of his own heart nor the grace and mercy bestowed upon him. When he approaches others who are having problems, he does so with a spirit of kindness and gentleness (Galatians 6:1-10). Regardless of who the other people are, or what they have done wrong, he maintains a compassionate, Christ-like attitude (Philippians 2:4-8; Colossians 3:12-16).

The proud compare themselves to others and feel good that they are not so bad (II Corinthians 10:12; Luke 18:9-14). When seeing a fault in others, they are quick to judge and "straighten out" the person and do so with a superior, belligerent attitude. They often try to force the issue by controlling the person. They are determined to fix what is wrong and to discard those who do not change as they think they should. In contrast, the humble know God is in control and that He honors free will.

Humble people pray a lot because they want to worship God and see themselves as utterly dependent on Him. The humble one holds firm to the awareness of their own limitations and weaknesses while acknowledging God Almighty's ability and strength in their lives. Prayer is a way to surrender our ways to His ways, which are so much higher than our own (Luke 18:1-8; Matthew 6:9-13).

The proud do not have time to pray because they are too busy living life on their own. They may even say, "I want to pray, but I don't have the time" (Matthew 14:23; Luke 11:1; I Thessalonians 5:17).

The humble prefer others above themselves. They are willing to put others before self without first considering their own rights. Their good deeds are for the glory of God and not the praise of man. Serving others is viewed as a gracious privilege granted by a loving God (Matthew 6:1-6; Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3-16).

The proud may be willing to serve others but always on their own terms. They obsess with what others think about them. Some are in a continual pursuit of gaining the approval and esteem of others. They are men-pleasers rather than God-pleasers. Proud people usually struggle a great deal with criticism. They cannot bear the thought of others not thinking well of them. Service to others is more service to self because it is for vainglory, acceptance, or validation.

Humble people realize they do not know everything and, even when they think they are right, are willing to consider that they might be wrong (I Corinthians 4:7). They also know that God can use anyone to teach them since He had a donkey to communicate to Balaam (Numbers 22:22-35). Sound reproof is embraced not resented by them (Proverbs 9:8; 27:5 and 6). Understanding the infinite, eternal God can never be fully contained within their own small, finite knowledge they continue to search the Scriptures with meekness.

The proud maintain, although they may not admit it, a presumptuous conviction that their own beliefs contain the whole truth about God. Narrow-mindedness and closed-mindedness are frequently the result of this arrogant mind set. The proud often criticize, condemn, and fear all those who believe differently. "Surely they must be wrong because they do not believe what I believe." Other sincere, committed Christians are perceived as a threat because their beliefs are different and must be avoided. This avoidance is perceived as taking a stand for God, but in actuality, it is a result of high mindedness (I Corinthians 8:1).

God gives grace to the humble and resists the proud.

James 4:6-10 -The promise blessing for the humble is "a greater grace and "He will exalt you." The greatest grace and the highest exaltation will be for those who enter into the Kingdom of God which is the promise connected with this first beatitude – blessed are the humble for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The Bible is jam-packed with records of people who have received God's help when they manifested genuine humility and also the consequences for those who are prideful. Proverbs summarizes well.

Proverbs 16:5; 26:12; 28:25 and 26

No Vows, Rather Integrity

An "oath," according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, is "a solemn, usually formal, calling upon God to witness to the truth of what one says or to witness that one sincerely intends to do what one says." A "vow" is "a solemn promise or assertion; specifically one by which a person is bound to an act, service, or condition." Always the matter of utmost importance is that of worshipping God. The Old Testament warns against breaking oaths because it shows irreverence and contempt to the name of the Lord. "You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:12). God holds man accountable for the vows made in His name. "If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth " (Numbers 30:2). People should always mean what they say but especially when they swear to God! If we break a vow to the Lord, it is sin.

Deuteronomy 23:21-23

When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the LORD your God will surely require it of you. However, if you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you. You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God, what you have promised.

The instruction given in Ecclesiastes is a prelude to what Jesus would eventually teach.

Ecclesiastes 5:4 and 5

When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.

Jesus gave new instruction, which is essential for believers to heed lest they fall into sin. He said not to swear at all.

Matthew 5:33-37

"Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the LORD.' But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil.

We lack the ability to control the future, so making oaths about the future is foolish. A better way to live is to have our "yes" mean "yes," and our "no" mean "no." To maintain truthfulness and integrity with our words, we are to avoid making oaths.

James 4:13-17

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what your life will

be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

The only good we can determine to do is right now, which is enough of a challenge. Making promises to God about tomorrow is absurd and causes us to sin and deceive ourselves. Far too often, we put off doing now what is right because we make bold promises about changing tomorrow. It seems easier to swear regarding tomorrow than disciplining ourselves now. "I am going to start tomorrow." "I swear I am going to quit next week." "January 1st, I am going to change." Then, when tomorrow, next week, or January 1st comes, it is now, and we put it off again. Jesus said to stop doing this. God has no pleasure in fools.

When we swear by His name, we disrespect Him and sin. We must refuse to ease the responsibility of living godly today with a lie about tomorrow. A vital part of walking with God is constantly seeking His guidance. We do this by reading the Scriptures and by asking for His help in everything we do. Humility (dependence on God) and meekness (the quietness and willingness to receive guidance) are always needed to walk with Him. When we make up our minds in advance about what will happen tomorrow and seal it with an oath to God, we eliminate God's working within us now and tomorrow. By making oaths, we box God out of our daily living. The teachings of Jesus Christ are not just good advice; rather, they are the words of truth by which we are to govern our lives. Do not make vows. Mean what you say, and say what you mean. Whether we believe it or not, the following verse is true.

Matthew 18:18

Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

(The following selection is from the book The Spirit of Truth, chapter 15)

All of humanity is in the midst of a spiritual hostile conflict that has raged on for ages. The two opposing forces are Yahweh (the one true God) and the devil (the god of this age). God wants everyone to enter into His glorious Kingdom that begins when Christ returns, and the devil wants to keep everyone out of the Kingdom. Yahweh desires for every man to be saved and enjoy a holy relationship with Him now and more fully in the Kingdom. The devil desires for all men, especially Christians, to suffer an unholy relationship with him now and in the end total annihilation in the lake of fire.

Every person strives to live a good life but constantly struggles to do so because we live in the middle of a warzone. This dire situation is even more calamitous than need be because most people are oblivious to spiritual matters and the spiritual warfare. Ignorance dooms humanity as victims to the crafty methods of the evil one. We are seduced into thinking our lifelong struggles center in our own weakness or the conflicts other humans bring into our lives or just bad luck. Yet, the Scriptures present a completely different reality as to why things happen in the world.

Ephesians 6:12

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Within the original heaven and earth was Paradise, which was without any knowledge of evil or the myriad of negative ramifications that evil produces. After the fall, everything in the world changed. Paradise was lost. The effects of evil have infiltrated the world and everyone in it. The time between the fall and the return of Christ is an age described in Scripture as an evil generation because Satan is the god of this age.

2 Corinthians 4:4

In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

With the parable about the seed and the sower, Jesus explained that everyone who hears the word about the Kingdom will be attacked by the devil. No one is exempt from his evil assaults. The parable is recorded in three of the four Gospels. In Matthew 13:19, he is the wicked one; in Mark 4:15, Satan; and in Luke 8:12, he is called the devil. Peter provides additional information elevating our understanding to consider our personal adversary.

1 Peter 5:8

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

“Be on alert” is a common exhortation in the Scriptures. We are warned frequently about the spiritual warfare and our need to be sober minded so we can seek the help of God to overcome. Again,

ignorance, forgetfulness, or laziness does not exempt one from the struggle; rather, it dooms one to defeat. In this warfare, we are confronted by three major fronts that are briefly outlined in Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:1-3

You were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

The fronts are: 1) the world, 2) the demonic realm, and 3) the flesh.

The world in its fallen state can serve as a platform to oppose God and the people of God. Satan is the ruler or prince of this world,¹ which implies that he currently has primary influence over what goes on in the world. Satan is the god of this age, which implies he is the primary one receiving worship today. Most indirectly worship him by venerating something or someone above the true God.

The world system hates Jesus and God,² and if we love Him, the world will also hate us (according to John 15:18-25; 17:14). Friendship with the world according to James 4:4 is hostility towards God. If one regards the world or the things in the world as precious, Jesus reveals that God is not precious to that person.

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to explaining the origin of the demonic and the flesh.

The diabolical spiritual force that opposes the true God and His people is first mentioned in Genesis chapter three where he is called the serpent, which describes his crafty and deadly nature more than his appearance. Throughout the ages, his evil influence is clearly evident and documented but is seldom recognized as such by those ill affected thereby. He functioned undercover cleverly camouflaged in secrecy until our Lord Jesus Christ exposed and defeated him for all to see.³

In the beginning days of Jesus' public ministry, he spoke in the Nazarene synagogue and boldly pronounced a clear declaration regarding his ministry by quoting from the prophet Isaiah.

Luke 4:18 and 19

"The spirit of the lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the lord."

As our Lord's ministry progressed, it became clear that satanic and demonic influences were the cause of the captivity, blindness, and oppression from which he set people free. Teaching and preaching about the Kingdom, along with healings and casting out demons were, therefore, his regular activities.

¹ John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11

² John 7:7, 14-17

³ Colossians 2:15

When He (*Jesus*) had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

Matthew 4:23 and 24

Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

When Jesus sent out the twelve disciples, recorded in Matthew 10, he gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out. His instruction to them was to preach regarding the Kingdom and to minister to people including to cast out demons. When he sent the seventy out two by two, he gave them similar authority and instructions. They returned from the mission filled with great joy saying, "Even the demons are subject to us in your name." In his final commission to the disciples before the ascension, he told them that casting out demons would be normal as they conducted their ministry.

Mark 16:17 and 18

These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

In the present day, there seems to be little understanding regarding demonization (those occupied by devil spirits or demons). Our society is snowed under with thousands of psychological viewpoints to explain why people are afflicted with mental captivity, blindness, and oppression. In most circles of mental health, the possibility of demon influence is never a consideration. If someone should believe thusly, he or she may be considered candidates for their own psychological help. Today in the United States,⁴ most consider the devil and demons to be fantasy, mythology, or something believed by weird, religious fanatics. (Unfortunately, some biblically ignorant, weird religious fanatics give good reason to doubt.) As I stated earlier, the devil functions effectively undercover and cleverly camouflaged in secrecy. He does not want people to understand what the Bible clearly makes known about him, the unclean spirits that work with him, and the unseen spiritual warfare.

During the life and times of Jesus, demon occupation was common knowledge. Often people would approach the Lord and ask him to cast demons out of their loved ones. In the next chapter, we will review some of the many places demons are referenced in the Gospels. These matters are very evident in the Scriptures⁵ and vital for us to know if we want to walk by the spirit of truth.

A good starting place to develop our understanding, like so many other matters, is in the beginning of the Bible in the book of Genesis. In the first two chapters, God created the heavens and the

⁴The way people in the United States think regarding spiritual matters is not the same as other places in the world where people are much more in tune with the influence of the devil and demons.

⁵ Matthew 4:23 and 24; 8:16 and 17, 28-34; 9:32-34; 10:1 and 8; 12:22, 43-45; 15:21-28; 17:14-21; Mark 1:21-28, 32; 5:1-20; 7:24-30; 16:17; Luke 4:33-36; 6:17 and 18; 8:1 and 2, 24-39; 9:1, 37-43; 10:17-20; 11:14-23, 24-26; 13:10-13, 32; Acts 5:1-11, 16; 8:6 and 7; 16:16-18; 19:11-16.

earth and placed Adam and Eve in Eden – everything was very good. In the third chapter, the serpent appears, and things become very bad. The obvious question is: how did the devil get into Paradise? To learn the answer, we must read what the prophet Ezekiel wrote regarding the subject. The prince of Tyre is described in the beginning of Ezekiel 28, followed by a lamentation (a lyrical poem used to express sorrow). In this lamentation, the prince of Tyre is compared with the devil, whom he emulates. Therefore, the overall context pertains to the king of Tyre, with some very specific information about the devil and his origin.

Ezekiel 28:12

Thus says the Lord GOD, "You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

The description that follows pertains to the serpent before iniquity was found in him.

Ezekiel 28:13 and 14

You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared.

You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

The cherub⁶ was anointed as the protector in Eden. The precious stones give a description of great beauty. Ezekiel goes on to explain that the cherub was lifted up with pride, forsook his responsibility, and became the adversary that tempted those he was sent to protect.⁷ God did not place the serpent in Eden, rather the beautiful cherub who apparently chose to rebel against God. The cherub became the serpent who is the devil.⁸

God gave Adam a very specific command with the warning of definite dire consequences for disobedience. He said, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." The serpent lied, telling Eve, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." He seduced Eve with his subtlety to exercise her free will to disobey God. He told her lies about God and about herself, and she believed him.

We can gain vital understanding about the devil's workings from this first encounter with humanity. God established a standard that both spiritual powers are subject to that is neither power

⁶ Cherub and the plural cherubim are spoken of first in the Bible when Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden. The cherubim prevented them from eating of the tree of life; hence, we see that their responsibility was to guard or protect. Elsewhere in the Scripture when cherubim are spoken of, they have the same connotation of guarding or protecting.

⁷ For more detailed information regarding the serpent in Eden, refer to the book by the same author entitled *Kingdom Studies, Volume one – The Foundation*, chapter 2.

⁸ Due to a misunderstanding about God's omniscience, people wonder why God would allow the cherub to become the serpent if He knew this would happen before it did. A wrong assumption that God knows everything that is going to happen before it happens is the reason for this doubt. The Scriptures depict the future as partly open and determined by the free will of God's created beings. Some things are absolutely predetermined, and God knows ahead of time, but other things are open and not known until they happen. We have no reason to conclude that God knew before time that the cherub would rebel or that Adam and Eve would disobey.

may control or influence individuals independent of their personal choice. The exception to honoring free will is when God passes judgment, but even then, the judgment is based upon man's choice to reject God. Satan did not make Eve take of the tree; rather, he tempted her to do so. When she saw the tree was something desirable, she exercised her freewill choice to disobey God's direct command.

What transpired with Eve was the beginning of an evil pattern that continues ever since. The devil will use lies to seduce people into exercising their own will to disobey God's command. With lies, he makes that which is good look evil and that which is evil to look good. What we believe determines who we are and what we do. When we believe lies, we allow evil into our lives; and likewise, when we believe the truth, we enjoy the fruit thereof. Once Adam and Eve believed the lie, they were exposed to evil, which greatly influenced their thinking and consequently their behavior. The Apostle Paul compels us to consider this original devilish method because it is still how he works today - 2Corinthians 11:3 "But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." The lies we believe give the devil an opportunity to infiltrate our lives. Demon occupation generally occurs because of the lies believed by the individual.

The record concerning King Saul illustrates how one allows demons to infiltrate. His first encounter with the prophet Samuel reveals he did not hold himself in very high esteem. Samuel received revelation that Saul was God's selection to become Israel's first king. After Samuel informed Saul, he replied, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me in this way?" Benjamin was the smallest tribe because years earlier, shortly after entering the promised land, they allowed horrific "Sodom and Gomorra" like sin to be carried out in their midst. When confronted by the other tribes, they refused to repent. Therefore, Israel attacked Benjamin, which resulted in the death of 25,000 men in one day. Also, their cities and cattle were destroyed.⁹ From that time on, Benjamin was the smallest tribe and carried a "less than" or shameful stigma. Saul acknowledged that he was one of those Benjamites and that his father's house was among the least in the tribe. He was expressing not just a humble attitude but a negative belief about himself, which later in his life opened him up to much sinfulness and demon occupation.

When all of Israel was gathered together, Samuel introduced Saul as their king; however, they could not find Saul because he was hiding. Samuel had already informed Saul that he was God's anointed. He also foretold many supernatural signs that indeed took place and confirmed the anointing. Yet, he was lacking confidence to the degree of hiding. Again, we can see he had some inner issues. We are not reaching outside what is written in the Scriptures to conclude that Saul had emotional wounds caused by things he believed about himself.

When a formidable Philistines army threatened Israel, everyone was afraid, and some people scattered.¹⁰ Saul became fearful himself and decided no longer to wait for Samuel to arrive. In contradiction to the Law of Moses, he offered a sacrifice only the priest was to offer. As the king over God's people, he should have been extremely confident that God would provide. God had already emphatically demonstrated His involvement in Saul's life. However, because Saul believed lies about himself, he was vulnerable to feelings of rejection and fear. When the Philistines threatened and the Israelites ran for fear, Saul began to believe the same old lies rather than trust God's truth.

Another time, Samuel gave Saul God's orders to destroy completely Amalek, including all the men, women, children, ox, sheep, camels, and donkeys. Yet, He saved the king and some of the animals. Samuel's confrontation reveals Saul's low self-esteem – "Though you were little in your own eyes, you

⁹ See Judges 20 for more detailed information. Although the incident is recorded at the end of Judges, it took place in the beginning shortly after entering the promised land. Phinehas the son of Eleazar, Aaron's son, was the high priest which dates the record.

¹⁰ 1Samuel 3:1-ff

were made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the Lord anointed you king over Israel." Saul had an inferior attitude that prompted him to do things contrary to God's will. In response to Samuel's confrontation, he told why he disobeyed.

1 Samuel 15:24

Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

People who believe that they are inferior often project onto others their lack of confidence and feelings of rejection. Whenever someone does something that is perceived as rejection, fear wells up, and the person reacts accordingly. With Saul this is the second time he reacted to the people instead of obeying God. The truth that God spoke should have taken priority over anything Saul believed; however, the lies he embraced about himself overpowered God's truth. When Samuel confronted him, he rationalized rather than accepting responsibility and repenting. Due to Saul's acts of indiscretion and disobedience, God decided to take the kingdom away from him and give it to his faithful servant David.

After David killed Goliath, he became an officer in Saul's army. God was with David, so he was very successful in his military campaigns. When the people embraced David, the same old feeling surfaced in Saul, but this time it opened him up to evil spirits.

1 Samuel 18:6-12

It happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments.

The women sang as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?"

Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on.

Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, while David was playing the harp with his hand, as usual; and a spear was in Saul's hand.

Saul hurled the spear for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." but David escaped from his presence twice.

Now Saul was afraid of David, for the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul.

From this time on until the end of his life, Saul considered David his enemy and endeavored to destroy him. Ironically, of all the people in Saul's sovereignty, David was his most loyal subject. David absolutely refused to lift a finger against Saul even when the opportunity presented itself. Saul believed lies, which caused him to sin. The hate, bitterness, envy, jealousy, murder that haunted Saul for the rest of his life were due to the lies that he believed about himself and projected onto David, who was a man after God's own heart.

In Saul, we see the main way that unclean spirits get into a person's life. The lies we believe about God, others, and self open us up to much sin and, in many situations, demon occupation. Unclean spirits do not just enter a person without the right to do so. The Scriptures reveal a number of ways evil spirits

gain the right to enter, with the most prominent being what we see in Saul.¹¹ He believed lies, which opened him up. If we want to eliminate spirit influence, we must deal with the lies first. One author stated it this way – If you want to get rid of the rats in your house, get rid of the garbage they feed on. The casting out of demons recorded in the Gospels and the book of Acts were preceded by teaching which revealed truth to offset the lies believed by the afflicted ones.

In the final chapter of the book, we will discuss more details about believing lies rather than the truth. Now we should return to Genesis and review some other significant information regarding how the devil ill affects us. The third front that we contend with is our flesh. This problem again began with Adam and Eve. The flesh, also called the old man or sinful nature, has been passed down to every person born since we are all descendants of Adam and Eve.

In Paradise, they were free from the knowledge of evil and therefore enjoyed a loving, harmonious life with God and each other. After they disobeyed, thereby sinning, their entire viewpoint changed for the worse. Genesis 2:24 declares their state of mind before the fall – “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” Their nakedness did not arouse evil thoughts of lust, shame, guilt or any other dark inclination that is common to humanity today. They maintained a holy, innocent, loving attitude toward one another. However, after the fall, a radical change of mind occurred.

Genesis 3:7

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

The nakedness was not new, but their perception was very different because now they had knowledge of evil. That which was holy, pure, and right became shameful. Mankind still does not handle nakedness real well. It arouses in him all manner of evil, lustful thoughts. What changed after the fall was their knowledge of evil. Knowledge is what we know, and what we know determines what we think and do. Knowledge has everything to do with our walk in life. Notice their reaction to the bad feeling of shame – they tried to cover themselves.

Genesis 3:7

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

They tried to change the bad feelings that were within by changing something on the outside, which is always futile. The only way to eliminate shame or any other negative feeling is to do so from the inside out, not outside in. They tried to fix themselves, which is something man has been endeavoring to do ever since, with consistent failure. They (and we) need the help of God. Adam is the father of the human race; therefore, we all inherit from him the things we are currently reviewing. Everyone is born with the same sinful nature, dead in trespasses and sins, destined for eternal damnation.

¹¹ Participation or even association with the occult is always a step into the demonic. Demons take occult involvement not only as an automatic invitation to inhabit but as a legal contract to do so. Persistent, willful sin may also open us to demon occupation, although the existence of sin does not guarantee demonic infiltration. Lack of forgiveness and unredeemed, sinful generational patterns can also become strongholds for occupying spirits.

Genesis 3:8

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Their once open, holy, loving relationship with God was reduced to hiding from His presence. Before they disobeyed, they had no reason to hide from God. Hiding from God continues to be an issue for man. Sin causes separation from God and provokes avoidance that perpetuates the problem. The only way to regain fellowship with God is to disregard this natural tendency of evading God and run to Him asking for forgiveness and help. Adam and Eve failed to respond correctly.

Genesis 3:9 and 10

Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"
He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

Their love for God eroded into fear, which again is very similar for us today. Everything they experienced after their disobedience is a type for all humanity ever since. We all inherit the same sinful behavior from the father of the human race. In this state, with these tendencies, we are vulnerable to the devil's attacks. Since he is the god of this age, according to 2Corinthians 4:4, we are in a constant battle.

Genesis 3:11 and 12

And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"
The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."

Adam manifested an irreverent attitude towards God. Rather than accepting responsibility for his wrongdoing, he shifted the blame to God and his own wife – the woman You gave me.... Accepting responsibility for our wrong behavior is the essential beginning point for changing; therefore, denial, which is our natural tendency, dooms us to destruction. Remember how King Saul refused to accept responsibility each time Samuel confronted him and thereby hindered God's help and worsened his own situation.

Genesis 3:13

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Eve, similar to Adam, shifted the blame – this time to the devil. Has anything changed today? When confronted, people deny their fault and blame God, others, or the devil! The patriarchs of the human race passed on the evil propensity outlined in Genesis.

The world, the demonic, and the flesh all work together in spiritual warfare. Understanding the warfare can tend to overwhelm or frighten us. However, God is much bigger than the devil and all the demons. Christ has already defeated them. We have the spirit of truth, which enables God to be in Christ and Christ to be in us. We are never left to our own devices to battle evil. The battle is the Lord's, and He is much greater.

John 4:4

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

Since we are equipped with great spiritual power, knowledge about the spiritual war is most helpful so that are not deceived. Ignorance plays into the hand of our adversary, so we need to learn more about demons and our power to defeat them.

- Humanity is in the midst of a spiritual hostile conflict
- Three major fronts confront us in this warfare – 1) the world, 2) the demonic realm, and 3) the flesh.
- The knowledge of demon occupation seemed to be commonplace in the first century; yet, today there seems to be little understanding regarding the subject.
- The devil functions effectively undercover, cleverly camouflaged in secrecy.
- The anointed cherub sinned against God and metamorphosed into the serpent seen in the Garden of Eden.
- The devil will use lies to seduce people into exercising their own will to disobey God’s command.
- Demon occupation generally occurs because of the lies believed by the individual.
- As descendants of Adam and Eve, we inherit the same sinful nature.

Surrender Exercise

Excerpt from Present Perfect God in the Now

By Gregory Boyd

Pages 77-78

“In his Classic work *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster details a very old way of praying he calls “palms down, palms up.” With practice this exercise can be done in just about any circumstance, but in the beginning it helps to practice it during a quiet time when you can be alone.

Foster teaches that you should begin by holding your palms downward on your laps as “a symbolic indication of your desire to turn over any concerns you may have over to God.” Call to mind everything that is weighing on your heart and mind and give it to God. Let your downward facing palms represent letting cares and concerns fall from your grasp into the hands of the sovereign God of love who holds you in existence, moment-by-moment. Notice your breathing and envision every exhaled breath as a further release of weight in your life. As Foster notes, you may at times notice a sense of release in your hands or other parts of your body as you do this.

When you’ve finished this part of the prayer, Foster encourages you to turn your hands over in your lap so that your palms are facing upward “as a symbol of your desire to receive from the Lord.” Remain in this posture with a receptive attitude as you wait for what the Lord would like to give you. With every breath you take in, receive the fullness of Life that comes from God. Breathe in his forgiveness, direction, peace, healing, or whatever else he has for you.

It’s important that you remember that it’s not your job to make anything happen. Your only task during this time is to be open to whatever the Lord has for you. Whether you experience any change or not, accept on faith that God’s full Life is flowing into you and enjoy remaining aware of this fact.

The beauty of this way of praying is that, if you practice it regularly, the physical motion of holding your palms down can become anchored to letting go of anything that is inconsistent with God’s heart for you. So too, the physical motion of holding your palms up can become anchored to receiving God’s Life and will for you in the present moment.

Whenever you find you’ve begun to focus on things that are taking you away from an awareness of God’s presence in the present moment or are feeling weighed down by the concerns of life, you can simply put your palms down and let it go. Whenever you find you’ve begun to resist God’s movement in your life or are trying to acquire some element of your worth, significance, or security by idolatrous means, you can simply hold your palms up so that your body is in agreement with your intention to receive God’s Life.”

FAITH BUILDERS

Staff – Moses – Yahweh is present – Exodus 3

Trumpet – Joshua – Walls are coming down – Joshua 6

Pitcher – Gideon – Sword of the LORD – Judges 7

Jawbone – Samson – With God all things are possible – Judges 15

Slingshot – David – The battle is the LORD's – 1 Samuel 17

Oil – Widow with two children – God Provides – 2 Kings 4

Letter- Hezekiah – You alone are God – Isaiah 37

Cross – Jesus our Lord - Victory

Temptation Exercise

1. Sit still; ask God to help you focus.
2. Think about what tempts you; identify one or two things.
3. Pray for wisdom and listen.
4. Find a place in the Scriptures that you can claim as Jesus did.
5. Pick someone you can talk to about the temptation.
6. Ask the person to help, and tell your story to him or her.
7. Determine a time each day that you can work on this.
8. Be patient, and if you struggle, ask God for relief.

Meditation Exercise

- Accept that meditation is a biblical discipline that you are able to do. Unlike Eastern meditation in which the focus is to empty the mind, Christian meditation is an attempt to fill the mind. The former is about detachment, and the latter about attachment. You can do this!
- Meditation can be practiced at any time and under almost every circumstance. However, to develop the habit, we should designate quiet time alone each day. Select the best time for you each day.
- We must be resolved to take the time and guard the time, or we will be overwhelmed with the frantic activity that has become normal to us.
- Find a place that is quiet and free from interruption. Leave your cell phone elsewhere.
- Sit in a straight chair with your back correctly positioned in the chair and both feet on the floor. To slouch indicates inattention and to cross the legs restricts the circulation. Place the hands on the knees with palms up in a gesture of receptivity.
- Select a verse or a section of Scripture to focus on. Think deeply about the verse, and ask God to help you understand the truth He wants you to gain. Stay focused on this one thing only. Do not let other things interfere. You can think about the other things at another time. Right now, stay focused on the truth that is contained within the verse or section. Try James 1:21
- Select a situation in the Scriptures such as when Jesus was sleeping in the boat and the disciples became fearful. See yourself there with them in the boat. Ask God to help you see what He wants you to understand. Stay in it until you have a peace about knowing.
- Focus on one aspect about Yahweh or one verse that speaks of His nature. Try to focus on “God is love.” Muse Romans 11:33-36 or Exodus 3:14 and 15 or Exodus 34:6 and 7 or Revelation 4:8.
- Meditate on any aspect of God’s creation, and ask Him to let you see Him in it. Psalm 19:1 –“The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of his hands.”
- Do not allow yourself to become discouraged. Disciplines take time to develop but are worth the effort.

Relaxation

These activities trigger the “relaxation response” in your body. They work by interrupting the stress response.

Deep Breathing (Belly breathing): This is helpful in emotional calming.

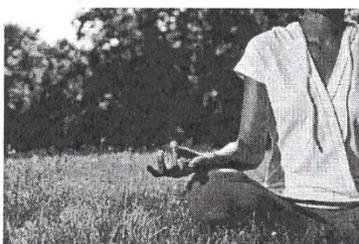
- Get into a comfortable position.
- Focus on your breathing allowing it to become regular and natural as you inhale and exhale through your nose.
- Place your hands on your abdomen. Take a deep breath until you feel your hand move.
- Hold for 3 seconds.
- Exhale slowly allowing muscles to relax.
- Do 3 times in a row.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation: this activity relaxes your muscles.

- Get into a comfortable position and close your eyes.
- Start with your facial muscles and end with your toes progressing down, tightening and relaxing muscles one by one.
- Tense muscles tightly for 5 seconds and then **relax**.
- Smile hard - **relax**
- Shrug shoulders - **relax**
- Make a fist - **relax**
- Put arms in front and push against an invisible wall - **relax**
- Tense stomach – **relax**
- Tense thighs and buttocks – **relax**
- Flex ankles – **relax**
- Curl toes – **relax**

Be sure not to hold your breath – **Keep Breathing**

Focus on the pleasant difference between tight and relaxed.



Study Exercise

James 1:21 - ...in humility [meekness] receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

2 Timothy 2:15AV - Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

- 1) Believe you have the ability to study the Bible with comprehension because God has equipped you with the holy spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:12 - Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God
- 2) Devotional reading of the Scriptures should be a daily habitual practice just like eating. Read the entire Bible from beginning to end at least once a year.
- 3) Plan routine study time, and select a place where you will not be disturbed which may be outside of your home. The church or public library can be good alternatives.
- 4) Select the topic for study. Always focus on the context of the subject. For example, if you are trying to understand James 1:21, read the entire chapter and the whole epistle. You may need to do this repeatedly to discover the overall truth God is communicating. Understand the verse in the context.
- 5) Pray and ask God to help you know the truth and what He wants you to understand.
- 6) Read other sections of Scripture that communicate the same subject.
- 7) Look up the words that are unclear to you in a good English dictionary.
- 8) Take time to ponder what you are studying. 2 Timothy 2:7 – “Consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things.”
- 9) Use other material written about the subject as a reference outside of yourself to consider. All the books published with our ministry are designed to help the readers understand the Bible and can be an aid to your study.
- 10) Slow your mind down, and ask questions that provoke inquiry. Who is speaking? What is said? When is it said? (This is important to acknowledge when comparing to other parts of the Bible that may cover the same subject.) What is the geographical location? (Use a Bible atlas.) Is the language figurative or literal? Why is this being stated at this location?
- 11) Enjoy the task of studying without becoming anxious or impatient. The exercise of studying is very rewarding and ongoing, so do not feel compelled to force understanding.

Love Your Neighbor As Yourself Exercise

Devise a plan to take loving actions every day, and review your success each night. You may want to start a love journal to record the blessings that you give and receive.

Suggestions:

- 1) Each day as part of your prayer time, ask God whom you should pray for that normally you do not. Pray for that person.
- 2) Go out of your way to do something to bless someone. Ask God whom can I bless today. Be determined not to go to bed until you bless at least one person. You may extend to a stranger or someone near a smile, hug, kind word, helping hand, bless note, compliment, word of encouragement, or gift. Do something to bless someone every day. Soon you will develop a habit, and bless many people each day.
- 3) Acknowledge God's presence in the interactions you have with others. Gregory Boyd in his book Present Perfect (pages 109-110) suggests the following exercise.

The Space between Us

Every interaction you have with another human being is pregnant with God's redemptive love and activity. Even in the darkest of interactions, God is present as a penetrating light, working to bring good out of evil. As you practice remaining aware of God's love and will permeating the space between you and others, it cannot help but transform the quality and significance of your relationship and casual encounters.

Find a way to represent God's redemptive love filling the interpersonal space between you and others. I sometimes imagine a fine mist or soft light engulfing me and those I'm encountering. Some people envision Jesus standing between them and whoever they're encountering, touching both of them on the shoulder. With every encounter, however positive, negative, or neutral the

encounter may be, ask God to reveal to you his will in the interaction. How does he want to use this interaction to impact you and the person(s)?

If you notice judgments or anything else inconsistent with God's love rising up in your mind or heart as you interact or think about another, simply turn your palms down and release them into the hands of the sovereign, loving God. Maintain a receptive posture toward God's intentions in each present moment as you look into the eyes of this person in front of you. Notice how this changes your own thoughts and intentions.

This can be especially challenging in relationships that are difficult or even abusive. Yet, this is where the practice of God's presence can sometimes be most potent. Your job is not to *create* light in these kinds of relationships; it's rather to simply notice where God's light is already shining. How might God be using this relationship to form you? What good thing is he bringing out of this darkness?

Sometimes, in fact, God's light might lead you out of a relationship that is damaging. Even here, however, his redemptive activity is at work. Pay attention to his moment-by-moment presence and be willing to follow where he leads.

- 4) Daily pray for opportunity to share the gospel with someone, and diligently seek occasion to do so.

Active Mercy Exercise

Adopted from the book To Love Mercy by C. Samuel Storms

Pray, asking God's forgiveness for not sharing mercy as you should have in the past. Ask Him to fill you now with a Christ-like heart of compassion.

Do not try to do too much too quick. Select one person, one act of mercy, or one opportunity each week on which to focus your energy.

Do something to bless those you know.

- Make a well-timed phone call to say, "I care, and I am here if you need me."
- Send a card or brief letter that reminds the person someone thinks he or she is worth remembering.
- Give an invitation to lunch or coffee, nothing fancy, but enough that he or she knows you enjoy his or her company.
- After church, seek someone out to talk with or encourage with words or a hug. Look for opportunity to pray with someone after the service.
- Greet visitors at the church, and welcome them to the fellowship.
- Help set or clean up before and after church.
- Offer someone assistance with work at their home.
- Help someone with transportation.
- Notice those who consistently slip into and out of church unnoticed, and reach out to them.
- Treat the believers as family and get involved helping.
- Make a point of looking up those whose absence from church has become more than sporadic. Contact them, not for the purpose of passing judgment or humiliating them, rather to communicate your genuine concern for their welfare and your interest to help them.

Do something to bless someone you do not know.

- Visit a hospital during your lunch break, and pray with those in need.
- Volunteer work at a hospital.
- Visit a nursing home and talk with the residents; you have no idea how lonely some of them are.
- Volunteer at a nursing home.
- Serve at your local city mission or food pantry.
- Walk through your community or local mall praying for God's blessing on the people you pass.
- Look for opportunity to serve your fellow man.

Always be ready to speak the gospel to people you meet. Pray for God to give you opportunities to speak.

FAITH AND WORKS EXERCISE

Do you believe that Yahweh is worthy of your veneration? What work can you do that corresponds with your belief?

Jesus the Christ is Lord to those who believe in him. Do you believe he is your Lord? If so, what works should you do to support your confession of faith?

The Bible contains the words of life and when received with meekness can save your soul. How does this belief influence your behavior?

The greatest commandment is to love God and your neighbor as Christ loved you. Do you believe loving your neighbor is the truth? If so, in what have you manifested this belief recently and how can you further love your neighbor? Be specific.

God is our sufficiency and promises to provide for us if we trust Him. Giving and tithing honor God. Do you believe these things to be the truth? If so, how have you evidenced your belief? How can your works further support your faith?

Jesus said "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." Do you believe our Lord's words? In what way have you denied yourself and how can you do more? What does "pick up his cross and follow me" mean to you in practical application?

Jesus is coming back and the resurrections will take place. The just will receive glory in the Kingdom of God and the unjust destruction in the lake of fire. Do you believe this? In what way have your works demonstrated your faith?