

The Epistle Of James



Sermon Outlines

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The Epistle Of James

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The Epistle Of James

Introduction To The Epistle

INTRODUCTION

1. Not everybody who grows old, grows up; there is a vast difference between **age** and **maturity**
2. Ideally, the older we are, the more mature we should be; but too often the **ideal** does not become the **real**!
3. The result is problems -- problems in personal lives, in homes, and in churches...
 - a. Problems in these areas are caused by immaturity more than by anything else
 - b. If Christians would just grow up, they would become **victors** instead of **victims**
4. **The Epistle of James** was written to help us understand and attain spiritual maturity...
 - a. **“...that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” (Ja 1:4)**
 - b. Or as translated by J. B. Phillips: “...any you find you have become men of mature character, men of integrity with no weak spots.”
5. With this lesson, we shall begin a series of expository lessons based upon **The Epistle of James**, which I hope will help us all to reach this goal of spiritual maturity!
6. Beginning a study of a book of the Bible is something like preparing for a trip...you like to know ahead of time:
 - a. Where you are going
 - b. What you can expect to see-- **So perhaps the best way to launch a study of The Epistle of James is to answer some important questions**

[The first question is...]

I. WHO WAS JAMES?

A. SEVERAL MEN BORE THIS NAME IN NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY...

1. **James, son of Zebedee and brother of John**
 - a. A fisherman, he was called by Christ - **Mt 4:17-22**
 - b. Together with John, they were nicknamed “Sons of Thunder” because of their impulsiveness - cf. **Mk 3:17** with **Lk 9:51-56**
 - c. Killed by Herod in 44 A.D. - **Ac 12:1-2**
2. **James, son of Alphaeus**
 - a. Another of the apostles - **Mt 10:3; Ac 1:12**
 - b. Very little is known about him
 - c. There is no indication that this James wrote the epistle
3. **James, father of Judas the apostle**

- a. He is even more obscure
- b. One of the few references to him is found in **Lk 6:16**
4. **James, the brother of our Lord**
 - a. He is the most likely candidate for the author of this epistle
 - b. Even though he humbly identifies himself only as **“a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Ja 1:1)**
 - c. That Jesus had a brother named James is evident - **Mt 13:55**
 - 1) Who at first did not believe in Jesus - **Jn 7:5**
 - 2) But after the resurrection of Jesus and an appearance by Jesus to him, he became a disciple - **1 Co 15:7; Ac 1:14**
 - 3) Eventually becoming a leader of the church in Jerusalem - **Ga 2:9**
 - a) When Peter was delivered from prison, he sent a special message to James - **Ac 12:17**
 - b) He played an important role in the conference at Jerusalem - **Ac 15:13-33**
 - c) When Paul visited Jerusalem, it was to James that he brought greetings - **Ac 21:18-19**

B. WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS JAMES...?

1. He must have been a deeply spiritual man to gain such prominence in the church at Jerusalem
2. Tradition tells us that he was a man of prayer
 - a. This may explain the emphasis on prayer in his letter
 - b. It was said that he prayed so much, his knees were as hard as a camel's!
3. Again, tradition tells us that James was martyred in 62 A.D.
 - a. That he was cast down from the temple, and then beaten to death with clubs
 - b. That as he died, he likewise prayed “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

[It most likely this man who wrote the epistle bearing his name. The next question is...]

II. TO WHOM DID JAMES WRITE THIS EPISTLE?

A. “TO THE TWELVE TRIBES WHICH ARE SCATTERED ABROAD...” (Ja 1:1)

1. James wrote to Jews living outside the land of Palestine
 - a. “Twelve tribes” most probably refers to people of Israel, the Jewish nation - **Ac 26:6-7**
 - b. Since the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, many of the Jews were scattered throughout different nations - cf. **Ac 2:5-11**
2. James wrote his letter to Christian Jews
 - a. At least nineteen times he addresses them as **“brethren”**
 - b. That these were brethren “in the Lord” and not just brethren “in the flesh” is evident from **Ja 2:1**

B. IT IS LIKELY THAT MANY OF THESE CHRISTIAN JEWS WERE POOR AND OPPRESSED...

1. Being Jews, they would often be rejected by Gentiles
2. Being Christian Jews, they would also be rejected by many of their own countrymen

3. The letter indicates that most of these believers were poor, and some were being oppressed by the rich - **Ja 2:6-7**

[Another question is...]

III. WHY DID JAMES WRITE THIS EPISTLE?

A. THE EPISTLE SUGGESTS THAT PEOPLE WERE HAVING PROBLEMS IN THEIR PERSONAL LIVES AND IN THE CHURCH...

1. They were going through difficult trials
2. They were facing temptations to sin
3. They were hearers, but not necessarily doers
4. Some were catering to the rich, others were oppressed by the rich
5. Some were competing for positions in the church
6. Improper use of the tongue was a problem, as was worldliness
7. Some were straying from the faith

B. THESE PROBLEMS ARE NOT MUCH DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OFTEN BESETTING CONGREGATIONS TODAY...!

1. Are there not in churches people who are suffering for one reason or another?
 2. Are there not members who talk one way, but walk another?
 3. Is not worldliness a serious problem?
 4. Are there not Christians who cannot control their tongues?
- **It appears that James is dealing with very “up-to-date” problems!**

C. BUT JAMES WAS NOT DISCUSSING AN ARRAY OF UNRELATED PROBLEMS...

1. All of these problems had a common cause: **spiritual immaturity**
 - a. These Christians were in need of “growing up”
 - b. Look again at some the problems dealt with and you can see that each one of them is characteristic of little children:
 - 1) Impatience in difficulties - **Ja 1:1-4**
 - 2) Talking but not living the truth - **Ja 2:14ff**
 - 3) Lack of control over the tongue - **Ja 3:1ff**
 - 4) Fighting and coveting - **Ja 4:1ff**
 - 5) Collecting material “toys” - **Ja 5:1ff**
2. This gives us a strong hint as to the basic theme of this epistle: **Marks Of Maturity In The Christian Life**
 - a. In fact, James uses the word “perfect” several times, a word that means “mature, complete”
 - b. By the expression “a perfect man” (**3:2**), James did not mean a sinless man, but rather one who is mature, balanced, one who is “grown-up”

D. AND SO JAMES WRITES TO FULFILL A GREAT NEED: THAT OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY...

1. Spiritual maturity is one of the greatest needs in churches today

- a. God is looking for mature men and women to carry on His work, and sometimes all He can find are little children who cannot even get along with each other!
 - b. As one person said, “Too many churches are playpens for babies instead of workshops for adults.”
2. James wrote to meet this need, so his epistle is very **relevant** today!

[Finally, the last question to consider...]

IV. HOW CAN WE GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS EPISTLE?

A. FIRST, WE MUST BE “BORN AGAIN”...

1. Apart from spiritual birth there can be no spiritual maturity
2. James writes with assumption his readers have been born again - **Ja 1:18**
3. This “rebirth” is brought about by obedience to the Word of God - **1 Pe 1:22-23**
4. It involves being “born again of water and Spirit” - **Jn 3:5** (traditionally understood to refer to baptism, cf. **Mk 16:16; Ti 3:5**)
5. So to benefit the most of this study, we must have been born again through obedience to the truth - cf. **Ac 2:38-39**

B. SECOND, WE MUST HONESTLY EXAMINE OURSELVES IN THE LIGHT OF GOD’S WORD...

1. James compares the Word of God to a mirror - **Ja 1:22ff**
2. As we study the Word...
 - a. We are looking into the divine mirror
 - b. And seeing ourselves as we really are
3. We must be honest about what we see and not merely glance at the image and walk away

C. THIRD, WE MUST OBEY WHAT GOD TEACHES, NO MATTER THE COST...

1. We must be “doers” of the Word, and not “hearers” only
2. The “blessing” does not come in **studying** the Word, but in **doing** the Word - **Ja 1:25**

D. FOURTH, WE MUST BE PREPARED FOR SOME EXTRA TRIALS AND TESTING...

1. Whenever we are serious about spiritual growth, the enemy gets serious about opposing us!
2. But if you wish to develop patience, you should expect some trials - **Ja 1:3**
3. However, in the end it will be worth it! - **Ja 1:12**

E. FINALLY, WE MUST MEASURE OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH BY THE WORD OF GOD...

1. We should not measure ourselves by comparing ourselves to others - cf. **2 Co 10:12**
2. But by the Word of God, and by the Son of God!

CONCLUSION

1. Remember, not everyone who grows old, grows up...
 - a. There is often a vast difference between age and maturity

- b. Just because a Christian has been saved 10, 20, or 60 years does not guarantee that he or she is mature in the Lord
2. Mature Christians are:
- a. Happy Christians, despite the trials they face
 - b. Useful Christians, overcoming the temptations that cross their path
 - c. Christians who help encourage others and build their local churches

As we study The Epistle of James together, may we with God's help grow and mature together...

Note: Much of the material for this introduction was adapted heavily from **The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 2, by Warren W. Wiersbe, pages 334-337.**

A Servant Of God And The Lord Jesus Christ

James 1:1

INTRODUCTION

1. In our introductory study, we concluded that James, the Lord's brother, was most likely the author
2. If this is so, then it is interesting that James does not identify himself as such, but rather as simply “**a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ**” - **Ja 1:1**
3. Perhaps it was a case of humility; yet, calling himself a “servant” was not peculiar to James...
 - a. Paul described himself as such as well - **Ro 1:1; Ph 1:1**
 - b. So did Peter (**2 Pe 1:1**) and Jude (**Ju 1**)
4. Why did these men refer to themselves as “servants”...?
 - a. The Greek term (**doulos**) literally means “a slave”
 - b. Why use such a term to describe themselves?
 - c. And why should **we** think of ourselves as “servants”?

[In this lesson, I shall explain why, and make some other observations concerning the idea of being a servant. [First of all...]

I. BEING A SERVANT IS WHAT A DISCIPLE OF JESUS IS CALLED TO BE

A. JESUS STRESSED THIS TRUTH ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS...

1. While pointing out the faults of the scribes and Pharisees - **Mt 23:8-12**
2. During the Last Supper, with a vivid demonstration of servitude - **Jn 13:12-17**
3. Even by His own example, as He came to serve - **Mt 20:25-28; Ph 2:5-8**

B. SPECIFICALLY, WE ARE CALLED TO SERVE...

1. God - **Ja 1:1; He 9:14**
2. Jesus Christ - **Ja 1:1; 1 Co 4:1**
3. Righteousness - **Ro 6:17-18**
4. Each other - **Ga 5:13; 1 Co 9:19-23**

[The early Christians called themselves “servants”, because that is what they were! But what is so good about being a “servant”? For one thing...]

II. BEING A SERVANT IS A MARK OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

A. AN IMMATURE PERSON IS USUALLY VERY SELFISH...

1. For example, newborn babies are very egocentric

2. Normally, as people grow older, they begin to concern themselves with the needs of others
 - a. If they do, they are becoming mature
 - b. If they remain selfish, it is an indication of immaturity

B. A PERSON WHO SERVES OTHERS...

1. Is certainly not selfish, but concerned with the needs of others
2. And thereby demonstrates mature behavior

C. JAMES' DESCRIPTION OF HIMSELF FITS IN VERY WELL WITH THE THEME OF HIS EPISTLE...

1. Remember, the theme is: **Marks Of Spiritual Maturity**
2. By being a servant, James is demonstrating his own spiritual maturity
3. And we can make the point that one of the marks of spiritual maturity is truly being **“a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”!**

[Are we trying to be servants of God, and of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, then we are on the road to spiritual maturity! But before we answer too hastily, let's consider that...]

III. BEING A SERVANT HAS SEVERAL IMPLICATIONS

A. IT IMPLIES “ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE”...

1. In a slave-master relationship...
 - a. The slave knows no law but his master's word
 - b. He has no rights of his own
 - c. He is the absolute possession of his master
 - d. He is bound to give his master unquestioning obedience
2. Does this describe our relationship to Christ?
 - a. It should, especially in light of **1 Co 6:19-20**
 - b. We have to come to Jesus on HIS terms, not our own - **Lk 6:46; Mt 7:21**

B. IT IMPLIES “ABSOLUTE HUMILITY”...

1. Otherwise, absolute obedience is not possible
 - a. When we have a humble opinion of ourselves, we are receptive to the idea of complete obedience
 - b. For example, consider Paul's self-estimation - **1 Co 15:9-10; Ep 3:8; 1 Ti 1:15**
2. Does this describe our relationship to Christ and His Will?
 - a. Jesus said it should! - **Lk 17:10**
 - b. But if we murmur or complain about what Jesus tells us to do, can we really be considered “servants”?

C. IT IMPLIES “ABSOLUTE LOYALTY”...

1. Since we become servants **freely**, it should be expected that we:
 - a. Are to be loyal to Him first - cf. **Ga 1:10**
 - b. Do not consider our own profit or preference important, but that of the One we freely serve!
2. But it is amazing how anyone can claim to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, while:

- a. Complaining about having to do the will of God
- b. Being negligent or slothful in carrying out His will
3. But some act as though they are being forced against their own will!
 - a. They don't "have to" serve the Lord Jesus...
 - 1) Of course, the alternative is not very inviting
 - 2) If we don't serve Jesus, by default we serve Satan, and are destined for hell!
 - b. But God by His grace has offered salvation, and how dare we ever grumble or complain that He calls us to life of service in grateful appreciation!

[These are some of the implications of being called a "servant". It is costly in terms of service, pride, and allegiance. But consider also that...]

IV. BEING A SERVANT IS A GREAT HONOR

A. FAR FROM BEING A TITLE OF DISHONOR, IT WAS THE TITLE BY WHICH THE GREATEST MEN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WERE KNOWN...

1. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob - **Deu 9:27** ("Thy servants")
2. Moses - **1 Kin 8:53** ("Thy servant")
3. Joshua - **Josh 24:29** ("Servant of the Lord")
4. Caleb - **Num 14:24** ("My servant")
5. Job - **Job 1:8** ("My servant")
6. Isaiah - **Isa 20:3** ("My servant")
7. The prophets - **Jer 7:25** ("My servants")

B. HOW WONDERFUL IT WOULD BE IF GOD LOOKED UPON US AS COMPANIONS OF THESE GREAT MEN...

1. Who found freedom, peace, and glory!
2. Who found it in perfect submission to the Will of God!

CONCLUSION

1. He will, **if** we are willing to accept the call to serve Him and His Son Jesus Christ with...
 - a. Absolute obedience
 - b. Absolute humility
 - c. Absolute loyalty
2. And when we are serving God, His Son Jesus Christ, and even each other in this manner, we are making great strides towards **spiritual maturity!**

"...a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ"

Can this be said of us?

Turning Trials Into Triumph

James 1:2-8

INTRODUCTION

1. Perhaps you have seen the bumper sticker: **“When life hands you a lemon, make lemonade!”**
2. It is easier to smile at that statement than to practice it, but the basic philosophy is sound...
 - a. In fact, it is Biblical
 - b. Throughout the Bible are people who turned defeat into victory and trials into triumph
 - c. Instead of being **victims**, they became **victors**
3. The Epistle of James tells us that we can have this same experience today!
 - a. Whether we are dealing with trials on the outside
 - b. Or temptations on the inside
 - Through faith in God and Jesus Christ we **can** experience victory!
4. The **key** to turning trials into triumph is to obey four imperatives:
 - a. **Count - Ja 1:2**
 - b. **Know - Ja 1:3**
 - c. **Let - Ja 1:4**
 - d. **Ask - Ja 1:5-8**

[Starting with **verse two**, then, let’s look at the first imperative...]

I. “COUNT IT ALL JOY WHEN YOU FALL INTO VARIOUS TRIALS” (1:2)

A. NOTICE THAT JAMES ASSUMES THAT WE WILL EXPERIENCE TRIALS...

1. He doesn’t say “if” but “when”
2. This is because Christians must expect trials
 - a. So said Jesus - **Jn 16:33**
 - b. Paul also - **Ac 14:22**
3. The nature of these trials are “various”
 - a. Some trials come simply because we are human
 - 1) Sickness, accidents
 - 2) Disappointments, death
 - b. Other trials come because we are Christians - **1 Pe 4:12; 2 Ti 3:12**
4. But because Satan fights us, and the world opposes us, we can expect trials!

B. WHAT IS TO BE THE CHRISTIAN’S RESPONSE? - “COUNT IT ALL JOY!”...

1. This was the attitude of:
 - a. The apostles - **Ac 5:41**
 - b. Paul - **Ro 5:3; Ph 2:17-18**
 - c. The Christians - **1 Pe 1:6-8; 4:12-14**

2. So the first step to turning trials into triumph is to: **Immediately thank God and adopt a joyful attitude!**

[“But how,” we may ask, “is it possible to rejoice in the midst of trials?” The second imperative in **verse 3** explains how...]

II. **“KNOWING THAT THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH PRODUCES PATIENCE” (1:3)**

A. **THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE CONCERNING THE VALUE OF TRIALS MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE A JOYFUL ATTITUDE...**

1. We are to understand that:
 - a. Trials test our faith
 - b. Faith tested can bring out the best in us!
 - 1) Just as fire purifies gold - **1 Pe 1:7**
 - 2) Just as training makes the athlete stronger
2. With this understanding, we can have joy in trials because we know that:
 - a. Testing works for us, not against us - cf. **2 Co 4:17**
 - b. Trials rightly used help us to mature

B. **SPECIFICALLY, FAITH TESTED PRODUCES “PATIENCE”...**

1. Notice **Ro 5:3-4**
2. In the Bible...
 - a. “Patience” is not a passive acceptance of circumstances
 - b. The Greek word is **hupomone**
 - 1) From the preposition **hupo** (under), and **meno** (to remain, to abide)
 - 2) It denotes the ability to exhibit steadfastness and constancy in the face of the most formidable difficulty!
 - c. It is a courageous perseverance in the face of suffering!
 - d. It is the continuing on even when it is rough, despite the circumstances
3. Such a quality of steadfastness can come only through experiencing trials
4. The value of developing **patience** will be seen shortly...

[Having this understanding about what trials can accomplish enables us to have a joyful attitude toward such trials. But to really benefit from our trials, we must also obey the third imperative found in **verse four...**]

III. **“LET PATIENCE HAVE ITS PERFECT WORK” (1:4)**

A. **TO TRULY TURN TRIALS INTO TRIUMPH, WE MUST LET PATIENCE DO ITS WORK...**

1. Too often, we want to get our trials or difficulties over with quickly
2. But there are times when the best course is to bear up under the trial patiently
 - a. Instead of grumbling and complaining...
 - b. ...patiently endure the trial, doing good despite the trial

B. **FOR WHEN PATIENCE HAS HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO WORK, IT**

PRODUCES MATURITY...!

1. The word **perfect** does not mean sinlessness, but “completeness, wholeness, maturity”
2. In the New Testament, it is used of those who:
 - a. Have attained to spiritual manhood in Christ
 - b. Have reached full maturity and understanding in spiritual matters
 - c. Are no longer “babes” and immature persons in Christ
3. Such maturity comes only when patience has had time to work!
 - a. Consider, for example, an endurance runner in his training
 - 1) To be a mature runner requires letting patience do its work
 - 2) That is, patiently running mile after mile in training
 - b. If we wish to run the race well spiritually speaking, we need to develop patience
 - 1) Which comes only through a form of spiritual “resistance training”
 - 2) That is, trials in which our faith is put to the test!

[Letting patience have its perfect work is not easy. It certainly requires wisdom which enables us to see the value of our trials. This brings us to the fourth imperative necessary to turn trials into triumph, found in **verses five to eight...**]

IV. “LET HIM ASK OF GOD” (1:5-8)**A. IF WE LACK WISDOM, ASK FOR IT FROM GOD...!**

1. He has promised to give it liberally
2. And He will not reproach us for making such a request
3. Even as Solomon’s request for wisdom was well-pleasing to God - **1 Kin 3:7-12**

B. WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS WISDOM...?

1. We should be careful to distinguish “wisdom” from “knowledge”
 - a. Knowledge involves information, facts, etc.
 - b. Wisdom is the ability or insight to properly use those facts in the most expeditious way
2. Failure to understand this distinction has led many into error!
 - a. Many believe that this passage (**Ja 1:5-8**) teaches that God will give knowledge concerning His Will in answer to prayer
 - b. But knowledge comes only through His Word; we must carefully study it if we would know the Will of God!
 - c. However, the **wisdom** to properly use His Word can be received through prayer

C. THE WISDOM TO PROPERLY USE TRIALS AND TURN THEM INTO TRIUMPH CAN LIKEWISE COME THROUGH “PROPER” PRAYER...

1. Proper prayer is that asked in faith and with no doubt
2. Otherwise, the prayer will not be answered by God

CONCLUSION

1. So here is the key to turning trials into triumph:
 - a. Having the knowledge and perspective that adversity can accomplish much good
 - b. Letting the patient enduring of adversity accomplish its work

- c. All the while using the wisdom God gives in answer to prayer to help put it all together
2. When this is done, even trials can be a source of joy for the Christian!

Have we learned to make lemonade out of our lemons in life?

Note: Much of the material for this outline was adapted heavily from **The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 2, by Warren W. Wiersbe, pages 337-340.**

Trials Of Poverty And Wealth

James 1:9-11

INTRODUCTION

1. James has already discussed how we can turn trials into triumph, dealing with trials in general - **Ja 1:2-8**
2. In **Ja 1:9-11**, he discusses specifically the trials of being poor and being rich, and the attitudes we should have
3. In this lesson, we shall concentrate our attention on **Ja 1:9-11** and passages elsewhere which deal with the subject of poverty and wealth

[Let's begin by noticing that both wealth and poverty can be a problem...]

I. THE TRIALS OF POVERTY AND WEALTH (cf. **Pro 30:7-9**)

A. IN "POVERTY", WE MAY BE TEMPTED TO CURSE GOD...

1. Like Job's wife wanted her husband to do, when they had lost everything - **Job 2:9**
2. And as many do today when things don't go well

B. IN "WEALTH", WE MAY BE TEMPTED TO FORGET GOD...

1. As God warned Israel that it might happen to them - **Deu 8:10-14,17**
2. And as it did in fact happen to them - **Hos 13:5-6**

[Having seen that both poverty and wealth have their own potential for causing problems, let's now consider...]

II. THE REASONS FOR JOY IN POVERTY OR WEALTH (**Ja 1:9-11**)

A. IF WE ARE "POOR", THEN WE CAN REJOICE THAT WE HAVE BEEN "EXALTED" ...!

1. God has chosen the "poor" to be rich in faith - **Isa 66:1-2; Ja 2:5**
 - a. It is the poor who first had the gospel preached to them - **Lk 4:18**
 - b. It is the poor slave who becomes Christ's "freedman" - **1 Co 7:21-22**
2. So even if poor, we can still be "spiritually rich" and on par with all Christians - cf. **Re 2:8-9**

B. IF WE ARE "RICH", THEN WE CAN REJOICE THAT WE HAVE BEEN "HUMBLED" ...!

1. The rich are "humbled" by their:
 - a. Becoming Christ's "slave" - **1 Co 7:21-22**
 - b. Being placed on an equal par with all Christians...in which riches mean nothing - cf. **Re**

3:11-19

2. Why it is good that the rich be so “humbled”...
 - a. Riches are temporary - **Ja 1:10-11; Pro 23:1-5; 1 Ti 6:17**
 - b. Riches are unable to redeem our souls - **Psa 49:6-9,13-20**
 - c. The love of money is a “quagmire” and a source of “self-inflicted injuries” - **1 Ti 6:9-10**
3. In other words, it is good that in coming to Jesus Christ we find these things out...
 - a. Or we might have made the same mistake many make today
 - b. Thinking that money provides true security (remember the rich fool? - **Lk 12:13-21**)

CONCLUSION

1. Even in the trials of poverty or wealth, there can be a cause for rejoicing!
2. For Jesus is “**The Great Equalizer**” ...
 - a. Exalting the poor who are rich in faith
 - b. Humbling the wealthy by basing their salvation not on wealth, but on that which cannot be bought: the blood of Jesus and the obedience of a humble and contrite spirit
3. Keeping these thoughts in mind will help us learn to be content in whatever financial conditions we may find ourselves; as Paul wrote:

“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Ph 4:11-13)

The important question is not “How rich are you?” but “How rich **in faith** are you?”

The Christian And Temptations

James 1:12-18

INTRODUCTION

1. One of the greatest challenges of living the Christian life is dealing with “temptations”
2. This is especially true for new Christians:
 - a. For it can be frustrating to know that your sins have been forgiven...
 - b. ...only to immediately find yourself bombarded by temptations to continue in your sins
3. In **Ja 1:12-18**, we find helpful words for the Christian in the form of...
 - a. A **promise** to those who endure temptations
 - b. A **caution** not to wrongfully impugn the source of those temptations
 - c. An **understanding** of how sin develops

[As we begin with **verse 12**, we notice...]

I. THE PROMISE (12)

A. THE MAN WHO ENDURES TEMPTATION WILL BE “BLESSED”...

1. The Greek word for “blessed” is “**makarios**”
2. Which means “happy, blessed”
3. The nature of the happiness enjoyed is described as the verse continues...

B. FOR AFTER HE HAS BEEN “PROVED” HE WILL RECEIVE “THE CROWN OF LIFE”...

1. The promise is that of “eternal life”
2. The promise is given by Him Who cannot lie - cf. **Ti 1:2**
3. The promise is given to those who “demonstrate” (prove) their love for God by their endurance of the temptations

[And so, to Christians facing temptations, first we have an encouraging word. As we read on, though, we notice a word of caution...]

II. THE CAUTION (13, 16-18)

A. LET NO ONE SAY THEY ARE TEMPTED BY GOD... (13)

1. That is, to blame God for their temptations
2. For God is so **holy**:
 - a. He cannot be tempted by evil
 - b. Nor does He tempt anyone to do evil

B. SO DON'T BE DECEIVED INTO SUCH THINKING... (16-18)

1. God is the source of good, not evil!
2. Every good and perfect gift comes from Him!
3. As an example, it was of His Own Will that He brought us forth
 - a. Which He did by the “word of truth” (the gospel) - cf. **1 Pe 1:22-23**
 - b. So we might be a kind of “first fruits” (the “cream of the crop”) of His creatures

[This being true, certainly God would not tempt us with evil! In fact, through the words of James God gives us insight into the development of sin which can help us to overcome sin...]

III. THE UNDERSTANDING (14-15)

A. HOW SIN DEVELOPS...

1. **The first stage is temptation (14)**
 - a. This stage involves two things:
 - 1) **Lust** (desires, NKJV) - a strong desire for something
 - 2) **Enticement** - an opportunity and encouragement to satisfy the desire
 - b. Put into a mathematical formula: **Temptation = Desire + Opportunity**
 - c. E.g., a small boy is tempted to steal some cookies...
 - 1) When he wants them (desire)
 - 2) And has a good chance to get them and not be seen (opportunity)
 - d. But remember, it is not a sin to be tempted - cf. the example of Jesus, **He 4:15**
2. **The second stage in the development of sin is sin itself (15)**
 - a. Temptation leads to sin only when you yield and **act** upon it
 - b. Sin therefore requires the added step of **action**
 - c. Putting it again in mathematical terms: **Sin = Desire + Opportunity + Action**
3. **The final stage is the consequence of unforgiven sin: Death (15)**
 - a. This refers to spiritual separation from God, which is the “wages of sin” - **Ro 6:23**
 - b. Ultimately such “death” involves eternal punishment - **Re 21:8**
 - c. Putting it once more in the form of an equation: **Desire + Opportunity + Action + No Forgiveness = Punishment!**

[Sin and Satan will have overcome if we receive this final punishment. But with this understanding of how sin develops, we are in a better position to overcome sin...]

B. HOW TO OVERCOME SIN...

1. **Change our desires**
 - a. Since this is where the process of sin begins, it is the best place for us to begin
 - b. Bear in mind that it is a part of Christian growth to change our desires - **Ro 12:1-2; Ga 5:24**
 - c. How do we change our desires?
 - 1) Notice that the **Word of God** has always been instrumental in helping people overcome sin - **Psa 119:11; Mt 4:3-10**
 - 2) How the Word of God can change our desires...
 - a) As we read of God’s love, longsuffering and mercy, we desire to serve Him - **Psa 116:12-14**
 - b) As we read of sin and its damnable consequences, we come to hate it! - **Psa**

119:104

- d. So the more we study God's Word, the less likely we will have the **desire** to sin, thereby beginning to overcome sin by "nipping it in the bud"!

[But changing our desires takes time; while engaged in the process of changing our desires, what else can we do?]

2. Limit our opportunities

- a. Remember, we are tempted only when there is **both** desire and opportunity
- b. So while we work on changing our desires, we should limit the opportunities to fulfill wrongful desires
- c. This can be done by **asking for God's providential help**, as Jesus taught - **Mt 6:13; 26:41**
- d. We can cooperate with God by:
 - 1) Purposely avoiding situations that might excite wrongful desires
 - a) Following the example of David - **Psa 101:3-4**
 - b) And the example of Job - **Job 31:1**
 - 2) Avoiding those whose evil behavior encourages us to sin with them
 - a) Again, David sets a good example - **Psa 101:6-7**
 - b) Paul also adds his warning - **1 Co 15:33**

[But we will unlikely remove **every** desire and opportunity to sin in this life, what then?]

3. Exercise self-control

- a. Remember, it becomes sin when we yield to **action** in fulfilling our sinful desires
- b. If we can control ourselves so as to not yield, then we can overcome sin!
- c. How does the Christian exercise self-control?
 - 1) Self-control is but one aspect of the "fruit of the Spirit" - **Ga 5:22-23**
 - 2) When we become Christians, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives - **Ac 2:38; 5:32**
 - 3) The Spirit is God's instrumental agent by which He imparts strength to us - **Ep 3:16**
 - 4) Strengthened by the Spirit, we are able to "put to death the deeds of the body" - **Ro 8:12-13**
 - 5) As Paul said: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." - **Ph 4:13**
- d. It is through faith in God's Word that the Christian believes that he has this divine help - **Ep 3:20**
 - 1) It is certainly proper to pray for it, as Paul did in behalf of the Ephesians - **Ep 3:16**
 - 2) But equally important, to act upon it, trusting that you are not alone as you try to do God's will - **Ph 2:12-13**
 - 3) As an exercise commercial once said: **Just do it!**
- e. The Christian, then, has no excuse for yielding to temptation - **1 Co 10:13**

[But there may be times when we don't take advantage of the strength God provides through His Spirit, and we sin; what then?]

4. Obtain forgiveness

- a. Remember that sin is victorious when it results in punishment
- b. But if we obtain forgiveness through the blood of Christ, we can avoid that punishment and thereby still overcome sin! - **1 Jn 2:1-2**
- c. Yes, Christ is truly the “propitiation” for our sins!
 - 1) By His blood, we were forgiven of past sins when united with Him in **baptism** - **Ac 2:38; 22:16; Re 1:5**
 - 2) By His blood, we can be forgiven of present sins when we **repent, pray, and confess** our sins to God - **Ac 8:22; 1 Jn 1:9**
- d. At any time the Christian can overcome sins that were committed, by repenting and confessing them to God!

CONCLUSION

1. Indeed, we can overcome sin by stopping its development at **any** one of the four stages leading to the final punishment!
2. If you noticed carefully, you should have seen that at each of the four points in the development of sin, God is able and willing to help us overcome sin...!
 - a. God helps us to **control our desires** by providing **His Word** to renew our minds
 - b. God helps us to **limit the opportunities** through **His Providence** as we pray for such
 - c. God helps us to **exercise self-control** over our actions through **His Spirit** strengthening the inner man
 - d. God helps us to **obtain forgiveness** through **the blood of His Son** as we repent and pray
3. So how could anyone say that God would tempt us to sin...?
 - a. Certainly He is the giver of every good and perfect gift! - **Ja 1:17**
 - b. Even as Paul wrote, in **2 Th 3:3; 1 Co 10:13**
4. Have you taken advantage of God’s way of escape for the sins you have committed?

If not, why not do so by obeying the gospel, the Word of Truth, and become one of the “first fruits of His creatures”?

Slow To Wrath

James 1:19-20

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Ja 1:19-20** we find a trio of graces...
 - a. “swift to hear”
 - b. “slow to speak”
 - c. “slow to wrath”
2. From the context, it appears that these admonitions are given in regards to our reception of the Word of God - cf. **Ja 1:18, 21**
 - a. They are qualities needed especially in times of trial when we need most the Word of God
 - b. I.e., we need to humbly and calmly be receptive to what the Word of God has to say
3. In this lesson, I wish to concentrate our attention on the third admonition: “**slow to wrath**”
 - a. Esp. in view of **vs. 20**: “**For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.**”
 - b. And also because “wrath” (and its close cousin “anger”) are too often excused as “minor” sins

I. AN “OVERALL LOOK” AT ANGER AND WRATH

A. DEFINING ANGER AND WRATH...

1. **Anger** - (Greek, **orge**)
 - a. “Indignation which has arisen gradually and become more settled” - **Thayer**
 - b. “**Orge** suggests a more settled or abiding condition of mind, frequently with a view to taking revenge” - **Vine**
 - c. Anger, then, is a lingering, seething emotion
2. **Wrath** - (Greek, **thumos**)
 - a. “The sudden outburst of passionate anger” - **Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia**
 - b. “The blaze of temper which flares into violent words and deeds, and just as quickly dies” - **Barclay**
 - c. Today we would call this “blowing off steam”

B. THE OT SAYS MUCH ABOUT ANGER AND WRATH...

1. In Psalms: “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret — it only causes harm.”
- **Psa 37:8**
2. In Proverbs:
 - a. “A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, And a man of wicked intentions is hated.” - **Pro 14:17**
 - b. “He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly.”
- **Pro 14:29**
 - c. “A wrathful man stirs up strife, But he who is slow to anger allays contention.” - **Pro 15:18**
 - d. “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he

who takes a city.” - **Pro 16:32**

- e. “A man of great wrath will suffer punishment; For if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.” - **Pro 19:19**
 - f. “Better to dwell in the wilderness, Than with a contentious and angry woman.” -**Pro 21:19**
 - g. “Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go, Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul.” **Pro 22:24-25**
3. In Ecclesiastes: “Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools.” - **Ecc 7:9**

C. THE NT ALSO SAYS MUCH AGAINST ANGER AND WRATH...

1. To the brethren in Rome, Paul wrote: “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.” - **Ro 12:19**
2. It is included with those things Paul lists as the “works of the flesh” in **Ga 5:19-21**
3. To the Ephesians Paul writes: “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.” - **Ep 4:31**
4. In a similar vein to the Colossians: “But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.” - **Co 3:8**

D. HAVING SAID ALL THAT, WE MUST ALSO NOTE THAT...

1. Paul seems to concede that there is a place for a certain kind of anger: “Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath,” - **Ep 4:26**
2. On several occasions Jesus expressed anger
 - a. Towards the money changers in the temple - **Jn 2:13-17**
 - b. Towards the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees - **Mt 23:13-36**
3. In both testaments, God is presented as a God of anger as well as a God of love
 - a. In the Old Testament - **Psa 78:49-51, 58-61; Isa 5:25**
 - b. In the New Testament - **Ro 1:18; 2:4-11**

[How do we then reconcile those passages which demand that anger and wrath is folly and something to be put away, with those that speak of anger on the part of God, Christ and even the Christian? A closer look may help provide the answer...]

II. A “CLOSER LOOK” AT ANGER AND WRATH

A. CONCERNING THE ANGER OF GOD...

1. God’s anger is **always a just reaction to evil** (as clearly pointed out in **Ro 1:18-2:11**
 - a. Being Divine, and all-knowing, His wrath is **never misguided**
 - b. He is therefore capable of properly directing anger and wrath
2. Man, with his imperfections, is not so capable!
 - a. His anger is often misguided (through ignorance, misunderstanding, etc.)
 - b. Haven’t we ever been angry about something, later regretting it when we realize we were in error?
3. Therefore, just because God may display wrath and anger, this does not necessarily justify man doing so!

B. CONCERNING THE ANGER OF CHRIST...

1. What has already been said of God could also be said of Christ
 - a. Especially in light of His ability to read the hearts of men - **Jn 2:24-25**
 - b. With such divine knowledge, He could not mistakenly direct wrath and anger
2. Also, in the examples of His anger...
 - a. There is nothing of self-interest
 - b. Only **holy anger** against unrighteousness which is abhorrent to God
3. He was angry, but only for God's honor!
 - a. When personally abused, He said nothing - **1 Pe 2:21-23**
 - b. But when it was against God, He displayed "righteous anger"
4. Again, man with his imperfections often uses anger improperly
 - a. For example...
 - 1) We remain silent when sin is exalted and **God** is dishonored
 - 2) But then get angry when someone offends **us** personally!
 - b. Too often, therefore, what we justify as "righteous indignation" is really "self-righteous indignation"!

C. CONCERNING THE ANGER IN EPHESIANS 4:26...

1. Whatever our interpretation, it needs to be in harmony with the context
2. Especially with what Paul writes just a few verses later - cf. **Ep 4:31**
3. I understand the passage, rather than justifying anger, to be directing us how to deal with it when it arises in our heart:
 - a. First, "**Do not sin**"
 - 1) The emotion must be **controlled**
 - 2) Don't allow it to manifest itself in a sinful way
 - 3) Such as saying or doing something that is wrong
 - b. Then, "**Do not let the sun go down on your wrath**"
 - 1) The emotion must be **dispelled before nightfall**
 - 2) Otherwise, we may be giving Satan ample opportunity to tempt us to sin - cf. **Ep 4:27**
4. In view of what Paul actually says in **Ep 4:26** and then later in **Ep 4:31**, it seems unlikely that he is justifying anger and wrath

CONCLUSION

1. Concerning the subject of anger and wrath, we would do well to take James' admonition to heart and to be "**slow to wrath**"
 - a. For though the "wrath of God" may on occasions accomplish the righteousness of God
 - b. It is clearly stated that the "wrath of man" does not! - **Ja 1:20**
3. Following the example of Christ, there may be a place for anger, but if so, **only** in things pertaining to the honor and will of God!

In all other things, we would do well to remember another admonition (cf. **2 Ti 2:24-26**)...

The Implanted Word

James 1:21-25

INTRODUCTION

1. This study is based upon **Ja 1:21-25**, in which we read concerning “**The Implanted Word**” (the KJV uses the word “engrafted”):

“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues [in it], and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

2. Several observations can be made about the Word of God from this passage, and the first pertains to what the Word is able to do in our lives...

I. THE POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD

A. NOTICE THE WORDS OF JAMES HIMSELF...

1. “**which is able to save your souls**” - **Ja 1:21**
2. Stated very clearly, the Word of God has the power to save our souls!

B. ITS POWER TO SAVE IS FOUND IN ITS ABILITY TO...

1. **Create anew**
 - a. I.e., to cause us to be born again - **1 Pe 1:22-25; Ja 1:18**
 - b. This is because of what the Word of God contains: God’s way of salvation through Jesus Christ!
2. **Sanctify**
 - a. The word “sanctify” means to “set apart for a holy purpose”
 - b. David sang of the Word’s ability to sanctify God’s people - **Psa 19:7-11**
 - c. In His prayer, Jesus spoke of the sanctifying influence of God’s Word - **Jn 17:15-17**
 - d. Thus the Word of God can serve to set us apart for His purpose!
3. **Preserve**
 - a. The young were told to preserve their way by the Word of God - **Psa 119:9,11**
 - b. The elders were admonished to keep the church pure by the same Word - **Ac 20:28-32**

[When we take the time to consider the **power** of the Word of God, it becomes evident that the Word is very important to the Christian! But the value of “**The Implanted Word**” can only be realized when certain conditions are met. We find those conditions mentioned in our text...]

II. BENEFITING FROM THE POWERFUL WORD OF GOD

A. THERE ARE THINGS WE MUST LAY ASIDE... (21a)

1. James mentions such things as “all filthiness and overflow of wickedness” - cf. Paul’s description of things to lay aside - **Co 3:5-9**
2. For the Word of God to bear its fruit in our lives, the “weeds of sin” must first be uprooted!
 - a. We cannot hope to benefit from our study of the Word if we continue to dwell on that which is spiritually filthy and to engage in wickedness
 - b. Could this be why many do not get much out of Bible study?

B. WE MUST HAVE A PROPER ATTITUDE... (21b)

1. James says to “receive with meekness” the Word of God
2. A humble and receptive attitude is essential to get the most out of the Word of God
3. It helps to remain humble if we remember two things:
 - a. We are sinners too!
 - b. We can be easily deceived also!
4. We should study, not to learn facts, not to win debates, but to learn God’s truth to save ourselves and those around us!
5. Is this prayer of David our own? “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.” - **Psa 119:18**

C. THE WORD MUST BE “IMPLANTED” IN OUR HEARTS... (21b)

1. It is only the “implanted” Word which can truly save our souls
 - a. Therefore we must be sure to take the words out of the pages and implant them into our hearts!
 - b. Otherwise we are no different from the Jews who gave lip service to their Words written on stone
2. A distinguishing feature of those under the New Covenant is that the Word of God is to be **written in their hearts** - **He 8:6-13**
3. Where is the Word of God today?
 - a. Is it only in ink inscribed on paper?
 - b. Or we have we read it often enough, meditated upon it enough, that it has become **implanted** in our hearts as well?
4. Is this possible without daily reading of the Bible?

D. IT MUST BE APPLIED IN OUR LIVES... (22-25)

1. We must be “doers of the Word and not hearers only”
2. Otherwise, we deceive ourselves (and usually **only** ourselves)
 - a. God is not deceived
 - b. Nor is the devil
 - c. Most likely our children will see through us
 - d. And so will many others!
3. Notice that the true blessedness of the Word comes...
 - a. **Not** by “looking into the perfect law of liberty” **alone**
 - b. **But** by “continuing in it,” and being “a doer of the work”

4. Yes, it is not just the **reading** of the Word which provides joy, peace and happiness, but the actual **application** of the Word in lives through faithful obedience!

CONCLUSION

1. Notice that James calls the Word of God the “**perfect law of liberty**” - **Ja 1:25**
 - a. This is because in its power to:
 - 1) Create anew
 - 2) Sanctify
 - 3) Preserve
 - b. ...it provides true freedom: **liberation from the guilt and dominion of sin!**
2. Of course, what gives the Word this power is the message it contains: **the gospel of Jesus Christ** (God’s power unto salvation) - **Ro 1:16**
3. Undoubtedly you have heard it...but hearing it is not enough!
 - a. You must lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness - that is, to **repent** - **Ac 17:30-31**
 - b. You must receive the message of the gospel with meekness - in other words, to **believe** - **Jn 3:16**
 - c. You must also be a “doer of the Word” - for example, to obey His command to **be baptized**
 - 1) For Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to those who **obey** Him - **He 5:9**
 - 2) And in addition to the commands to believe and repent, He calls us to be baptized! - **Mk 16:16; Mt 28:19; Ac 2:38; 22:16**

Receive with meekness these very words of Jesus and His apostles, for that is how the Word of God is able to save your soul!

Pure And Undefined Religion

James 1:26-27

INTRODUCTION

1. What kind of religion do we have? Is it like a...
 - a. **Spare tire** (used only in the case of an emergency)?
 - b. **Wheelbarrow** (easily upset and must be pushed)?
 - c. **Bus** (ridden only when it goes your way)?
2. Whatever kind of religion we have, it is of no value unless it is pleasing to God in heaven
3. In **Ja 1:27**, we find a definition of what constitutes “**pure and undefined religion before God**”
4. To be sure that our own religion is acceptable before God, let’s notice some attributes of “**Pure And Undefined Religion**” as indicated in this verse and its immediate context

[First, “**Pure And Undefined Religion**” must be...]

I. A PRACTICING RELIGION

A. IT INVOLVES DOING SOMETHING ON OUR PART...

1. This is clearly implied in the phrase “**to visit**”
2. The context prior to this verse also makes it clear that we must be “**doers**” and “**not hearers only**” - **Ja 1:22-25**
3. This echoes the teachings of Jesus Himself - **Mt 7:21; Lk 6:46**

B. IF WE ARE NOT DOERS, WE ARE DECEIVING OURSELVES (Ja 1:22)

1. And usually, it is **only** ourselves we are deceiving!
2. We are certainly not deceiving God, nor Satan
3. And it unlikely that we fool others, especially our children

[Having “a practicing religion” must be important, for later in his epistle James emphasizes again the necessity of our faith working (**Ja 2:14-17,26**). In fact, we can conclude that a religion which is not a practicing religion is a **dead** religion! Next, “**Pure And Undefined Religion**” must also be...]

II. A PRACTICAL RELIGION

A. GOD DID NOT INTEND FOR OUR RELIGION TO CONSIST SOLELY OF “GOING TO CHURCH”...

1. Extending our heart to God in worship is certainly important
2. But so is extending our hand to man in service! - **Ja 1:27**

B. IN THE N.T., MUCH EMPHASIS IS PLACED UPON DOING GOOD...

1. From the writings of Paul - **Ga 6:10; Ti 2:14; 3:8,14**
2. From the author of Hebrews - **He 13:16**
3. From the apostle John - **1 Jn 3:17-18**

[Until we apply the Word of God by showing kindness and compassion for the poor and helpless, all the preaching, teaching, and studying we may do cannot make our religion “pure and undefiled”! A further attribute of **“Pure And Undefiled Religion”** is that it is...]

III. A PERSONAL RELIGION

A. IMPLIED BY THE USE OF SINGULAR PRONOUNS IN THE TEXT...

1. “anyone” - **Ja 1:23**
2. “he”, “his” - **Ja 1:23**
3. “himself”, “he” - **Ja 1:24**
4. “he”, “this one” - **Ja 1:25**
5. “anyone”, “he”, “his”, “this one’s” - **Ja 1:26**
6. “oneself” - **Ja 1:27**

B. NOW, THERE IS A PLACE FOR CORPORATE GIVING...

1. That is, where we give in conjunction with others to meet a need
2. For example, in helping needy Christians - **1 Co 16:1-2**

C. BUT IT WAS NEVER INTENDED TO REPLACE OUR INDIVIDUAL AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY...!

1. Some might think...
 - a. That their giving on Sunday fulfills their responsibility to the poor, the widows, etc.
 - b. That it fulfills their obligation to preach the gospel
2. But God intended for “corporate” giving to only meet certain needs
3. He still expects us to fulfill our “personal” service to the poor, widows, and orphans as we have the ability and opportunity
4. Just as we find in the Old Testament...
 - a. Though the third year tithe was for the widows and orphans
 - b. They were to always help them whenever they had the opportunity!

[To practice **“Pure And Undefiled Religion”**, we must make it personal. We can’t pay someone else to do our work for us! We cannot excuse ourselves by saying “I gave at the church”! One last point I wish to make concerning **“Pure And Undefiled Religion”**; it must be...]

IV. A PURE RELIGION

A. THIS SOUNDS REDUNDANT, BUT IN OUR DAY IT MUST BE EMPHASIZED...

1. Our society has become increasingly immoral and materialistic
2. Such is wreaking havoc upon many in the Lord’s church
3. What we hear and see may only be the “tip of the iceberg”!

B. OUR RELIGION IS FOR NOTHING, UNLESS IT IS...

1. **Pure** - without blemish
2. **Undefined** - untainted
3. Capable of keeping us **unspotted** from (by) the world

C. BUT IF WE ARE SINNERS (cf. 1 Jn 1:8), HOW CAN WE EVER BE PURE, UNDEFINED, AND UNSPOTTED...?

1. It is possible, only **by the blood of Christ!**
 - a. Which can cleanse us and make us pure if we walk in the light with God - **1 Jn 1:7**
 - b. This involves keeping the commandments of God - **1 Jn 2:3**
 - 1) For example, experiencing the **initial cleansing** of the blood when we obey the commands to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins - **Ac 2:38**
 - 2) And, experiencing the **continuous cleansing** of the blood when we confess our sins to God - **1 Jn 1:9**
2. It is possible only **by the help of God!**
 - a. Who not only provides the blood of Christ to cleanse us from sin...
 - b. But also a way of escape in times of temptation - **1 Co 10:13**
3. Yes, with Christ's blood and God's help, it is possible to be pure, undefiled, and unspotted by the world!
4. And this is what makes the religion of Jesus Christ **unique!**
 - a. Other religions may be "practicing, practical and personal"
 - b. But only the true religion of Jesus Christ can present one "pure" in the sight of God! - cf. **Jn 14:6**

CONCLUSION

1. What kind of religion do **you** have?
 - a. Is it a **practicing** religion?
 - 1) Does it go beyond the walls of a building?
 - 2) Does it go beyond the printed pages of the Bible?
 - 3) Does it go beyond a superficial hearing of the Word?
 - b. Is it a **practical** religion?
 - 1) Does it consist of more than **just** "going to church, reading, and praying"?
 - 2) Does it reach out and manifest itself in compassion to those in need?
 - c. Is it a **personal** religion?
 - 1) Going beyond what we may do in conjunction with others?
 - 2) Including our personal involvement apart from what others may do?
 - d. And is it a **pure** religion?
 - 1) Involving our cleansing by the blood of Christ as we in faith repented and were baptized?
 - 2) Involving our cleansing by the blood of Christ as we confess our sins and repent of them?
 - 3) Does it include putting away sin with the help of God that we might be "unspotted by the world"?
2. If not, then whatever religion we have is **useless** and we are simply **deceiving ourselves!**

Let's always encourage one another to be sure and have a **"Pure And Undefiled Religion"** before God!

The Sin Of Partiality

James 2:1-13

INTRODUCTION

1. In the first century, A.D., polarized conditions governed society; people were either rich or poor, slaves or free, Jew or Gentile, Greek or barbarian
2. However, part of the good news of the gospel was that in Christ Jesus social barriers lost much of their strength...
 - a. As Paul wrote to the Galatians: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” - **Ga 3:28**
 - b. Again, in writing to the Colossians: “where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.” - **Co 3:11**
3. But it took a while for this truth to sink into the hearts of those who were Christians; even the apostle Peter had to be told this truth through a vision and then a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit - cf. **Ac 10:34-35**
4. From the second chapter of the epistle of James, it is apparent that showing partiality was still being practiced and its sinfulness needed to be pointed out
5. Because “**The Sin Of Partiality**” is still prevalent in some forms today, let’s examine **Ja 2:1-13** and consider what James has to say on this subject

[Consider, first of all, exactly what is...]

I. THE SIN OF PARTIALITY

A. AS MANIFESTED IN JAMES’ DAY...

1. We know from other scriptures that Jewish Christians often showed partiality in regards to the Gentiles
2. But in this epistle, the problem was one of showing partiality between the rich and poor - **Ja 2:2-4**

B. TODAY, WE CAN ALSO BE GUILTY OF PARTIALITY...

1. By showing partiality between rich and poor
 - a. For example, giving preferential treatment to visitors at our assemblies based upon their apparel
 - b. Or showing hospitality towards our rich friends, while ignoring those who are poor (sometimes, it is the poor who despise the rich)
2. By showing partiality between people of different races (again, this can easily go both ways)
3. Even by showing partiality between friends and visitors to our services

[Sadly, the sin of partiality (i.e., being biased, prejudiced, racist) is probably just as prevalent if not more so than it was in the days when James wrote his epistle! This makes the words of James very relevant and worth our consideration. Let's therefore notice...]

II. WHY CHRISTIANS CAN'T SHOW PARTIALITY

A. JESUS CHRIST IS A GLORIOUS LORD... (1)

1. It is possible that this point was being implied by James in using his appellation of Jesus to introduce the subject
2. What does our partiality have to do with the Lord of glory?
 - a. As Christians, we profess to be Christ's disciples, or followers, whose goal is to imitate Him - **Lk 6:40**
 - b. As such, our actions are likely to be considered by others as a reflection of what Christ teaches
 - c. If we show partiality as Christians, we leave the impression that Jesus Himself is partial (prejudiced, biased, racist)
3. Therefore, if we are not careful, the glory of the Lord can be tainted by our partiality!

B. WE BECOME JUDGES WITH EVIL THOUGHTS... (4)

1. God has always hated unjust judges
2. Jesus Himself warned about:
 - a. The dangers of judging - **Mt 7:1**
 - b. The need to make righteous judgment - **Jn 7:24**
3. If we judge against the poor due to our prejudice against them, we will find ourselves fighting against God! - **Ps 109:31**

C. WE DESPISE THOSE GOD HAS HONORED... (5)

1. Both then and today God has chosen to honor the poor
 - a. The gospel was proclaimed to the poor - **Lk 7:22**
 - b. The majority of those who responded were from among the poor - **1 Co 1:26-29**
2. Both then and today God has chosen to honor **all men** - **Ac 10:34-35**
 - a. Therefore, when we show partiality because of a person's race...
 - b. Or because they are a stranger we do not know...
...then we despise those whom God has honored by His offering to them salvation through the gospel!
3. Do we want to face God on the Day of Judgment guilty of such a crime?

D. WE HONOR THOSE MOST CAPABLE AND LIKELY OF OPPRESSING US... (6-7)

1. The rich were doing this to the Christians in James' day
2. Who are the ones most likely to oppress Christians today if it ever came down to "push and shove"?
 - a. Those who have the resources to do so
 - b. And most likely that would be the "majority" and the "affluent"

E. WE BREAK "THE ROYAL LAW"... (8-11)

1. Which is "**You shall love your neighbor as your self**"

2. This is one of the most fundamental laws that God has ever given!
 - a. As proclaimed by Christ - **Mt 22:36-40**
 - b. As taught by Paul - **Ro 13:8-10**
3. And, as emphasized by James, by breaking one law, we become guilty of **all** the Law!
 - a. I.e., to show partiality is to make one as guilty as if they committed adultery or murder!
 - b. This illustrates just how terrible any sin is!

F. WE WILL ONE DAY BE JUDGED BY “THE LAW OF LIBERTY”... (12-13)

1. This refers to the law of Christ, or the gospel
 - a. A law that sets us free from the bondage of sin - cf. **Jn 8:31-36**
 - b. And a law that sets us free from man-made restrictions - cf. **Co 2:20-22**
2. But if we:
 - a. Apply man-made restrictions upon others (like showing partiality)
 - b. Do not show mercy toward others...then **no mercy** will be shown toward us! - cf. **Mt 6:14-15**

CONCLUSION

1. In view of all these things, we can understand why James would say: *“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.”* (Ja 2:1)
2. We can also better understand Peter’s reasoning why he had to accept the Gentiles:

“If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” (Ac 11:17)

3. And we are more likely to heed the prayer and admonition of Paul:

“Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind [and] one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.” (Ro 15:5-7)

Brethren, we serve a **glorious Lord**, we serve to do things to His glory; may we **never** allow the sin of partiality, bias, prejudice, or racism to taint that wonderful glory in any way!

And a concluding word for the non-Christian: Notice that in our text James speaks of:

- a) The terribleness of even one sin (**2:10**)
- b) The fact of judgment (**2:12**)

Won’t you accept the mercy God offers to you in the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ?

- a) Remember, God is not a partial judge - cf. **Ro 2:4-11**
- b) Why should He show mercy to you when you despise His mercy just as much as the vilest sinner?

Accept His mercy in obedience to the gospel today!

Three Kinds Of Faith

James 2:14-26

INTRODUCTION

1. Faith is certainly an essential element in the Christian life...
 - a. Without faith, it is impossible to please God - **He 11:6**
 - b. The Christian is saved by faith - **Ep 2:8**
 - c. The Christian is to walk (live) by faith - **2 Co 5:7**
 - d. Whatever we do apart from faith is described as sin - **Ro 14:23**
2. It is important to realize, however, that there are different kinds of faith, but only one that is truly “saving faith”
3. In **Ja 2:14-26**, we find James discussing different kinds of faith, with an emphasis upon that faith which works to the saving of the soul

[Beginning with **vs. 14-17**, we notice the first kind of faith. We might call this kind of faith...]

I. DEAD FAITH (14-17)

A. THIS KIND OF FAITH...

1. Substitutes words for deeds (consider James’ example)
 - a. People with this kind of faith:
 - 1) Know the correct vocabulary for prayer and sound doctrine
 - 2) Can even quote the right verses from the Bible
 - b. But their “walk” does not measure up to their “talk”!
2. Is only an **intellectual** faith
 - a. In one’s mind, he or she knows the doctrine of salvation
 - b. But they have never really submitted themselves to God and trusted in Jesus for salvation
 - c. They know the right “words”, but they do not back up their words with their “works”!

B. CAN THIS KIND OF FAITH SAVE...?

1. **No!** Three times in this passage, James emphasizes that “faith without works is dead” - **Ja 2:17,20,26**
2. Any declaration of faith that does not result in a changed life and good works is a false declaration: **A dead faith!**
3. Dead faith is counterfeit faith and lulls the person into a false confidence of eternal life

C. DO WE HAVE THIS KIND OF FAITH...?

1. We do, if our **walk** does not measure up to our **talk**!
2. We do, if our **works** do not measure up to our **words**!

[We need to beware of mere intellectual faith. As Warren Wiersbe has said, “**No man can come to Christ by faith and remain the same, anymore than he came into contact with a 220-volt wire and remain the same.**” (compare this to **1 Jn 5:12**) The next kind of faith discussed by James is...]

II. DEMONIC FAITH (18,19)

A. EVEN DEMONS HAVE A KIND OF FAITH...!

1. They believe in God (no atheists or agnostics here!)
2. They even believe in the deity of Christ - cf. **Mk 3:11-12**
3. They also believe in the existence of a place of condemnation - cf. **Lk 8:31**
4. And they believe Jesus will be the Judge! - **Mt 8:28-29**

B. WHAT KIND OF FAITH DO DEMONS HAVE...?

1. We saw that the man with “dead faith” was “touched only in his intellect”
2. The demons are “touched also in their emotions” (note that they “believe and tremble”)
3. This is one step above a “dead faith” - it involves both **intellect** and **emotions**

C. CAN THIS KIND OF FAITH SAVE...?

1. **No!** A person can be enlightened in his mind and even stirred in his heart and still be lost forever!
2. True saving faith involves something more, something that can be seen and recognized: a changed life! (cf. **Ja 2:18**)
3. Being a Christian involves trusting Christ and living for Christ!
 - a. You first **receive** the life...
 - b. Then you **reveal** the life!

D. DO WE HAVE THIS KIND OF FAITH...?

1. We do, if we just **believe** the right things and **feel** the right things
2. We do, if our service to God does not go beyond...
 - a. Intellectually adhering to the right doctrines
 - b. Emotional experiences while attending services

[Thus, James has introduced us to two kinds of faith that can **never** save: **dead faith** (involving the intellect alone), and **demonic faith** (involving the intellect and the emotions, but stopping there). He closes this section by describing in **vs. 20-26** the only kind of faith that can save...]

III. DYNAMIC FAITH (20-26)

A. WHAT KIND OF FAITH IS THIS...?

1. We know from other passages that such faith is based upon the Word of God - **Ro 10:17**
2. Dynamic faith involves the **whole man**
 - a. **Dead faith** touches only the **intellect**
 - b. **Demonic faith** involves both the **intellect** and the **emotions**
 - c. **Dynamic faith** involves the **intellect**, the **emotions**, and the **will!**
 - 1) The **mind** understands the truth
 - 2) The **heart** desires and rejoices in the truth

- 3) The **will** acts upon the truth
3. True, saving faith, then, leads to **action**
 - a. It is not intellectual contemplation
 - b. It is not emotionalism
 - c. It is that which leads to obedience in doing good works

B. TO ILLUSTRATE, JAMES REFERS TO ABRAHAM AND RAHAB...

1. You could not find two more different persons!
 - a. Abraham was the father of the Jews; Rahab was a Gentile!
 - b. Abraham was a godly man; Rahab had been a sinful woman, a harlot!
 - c. Abraham was the friend of God; Rahab had belonged to the enemies of God!
2. What did they have in common? Both exercised saving faith in God!
 - a. Abraham demonstrated his saving faith by his works - **Ja 2:20-24**
 - b. Rahab demonstrated her saving faith by her works - **Ja 2:25-26**
3. We learn from this passage that:
 - a. Faith without works is a dead faith - **Ja 2:20,26**
 - b. That “faith only” (the only time this phrase is found in the Scriptures) cannot justify one - **Ja 2:24**
 - c. That **perfect faith** necessitates works - **Ja 2:22**

CONCLUSION

1. It is important that each professing Christian examine his or her own heart and life, and make sure that they possess true saving faith, which is a dynamic faith
2. Satan is the great deceiver; one of his devices is imitation...
 - a. If he can convince a person that counterfeit faith is true faith...
 - b. ...then he has that person in his power!
3. Here are some questions we can ask ourselves as we examine our faith:
 - ◆ Was there a time when I honestly realized I was a sinner and admitted this to myself and to God?
 - ◆ Was there a time when my heart stirred me to flee from the wrath to come? Have I ever been seriously worked up over my sins?
 - ◆ Do I truly understand the gospel, that Christ died for my sins and then rose again? Do I understand and confess that I cannot save myself?
 - ◆ Did I sincerely repent of my sins, making the decision to turn from them? Do I now hate sin and Fear God? Or do I secretly love sin and want to enjoy it?
 - ◆ Have I trusted Christ and Him alone for my salvation by responding to the commands He has given?
 - ◆ Have I confessed my faith in Christ and then been baptized for the remission of my sins as He and His apostles commanded?

- ◆ Has there been a change in my life? Do I maintain good works, or are my good works occasional and weak?
 - ◆ Do I seek to grow in the things of the Lord? Can others tell that I have been with Jesus?
 - ◆ Do I have a desire to share Christ with others? Or am I ashamed of Him?
 - ◆ Do I enjoy the fellowship of God's people? Is worship a delight to me?
 - ◆ Am I ready for the Lord's return? Or will I be ashamed when He comes for me?
4. To be sure, not every Christian has the same degree of faith; those who have had more time to grow should be stronger in faith
 5. But for the most part, the above spiritual inventory can assist a person in determining his or her true standing before God

May our prayer be similar to that of the Psalmist's:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.”
(Psa 139:23-24)

Note: Much of the material for this outline was adapted heavily from **The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 2, by Warren W. Wiersbe, pages 353-357.**

Let Not Many Of You Become Teachers

James 3:1-12

INTRODUCTION

1. In our study of “**The Epistle Of James**”, we now come to the third chapter
2. In **verses 1-12**, we find...
 - a. A **warning** against too many becoming teachers - **Ja 3:1-2**
 - b. A **discourse** on the untamable tongue - **Ja 3:3-12**
3. In a time where “verbal abuse” is often epidemic, and where “self-proclaimed teachers” engage in all sorts of heated religious discussions, there is much we can learn from this passage

[First, let’s notice...]

I. THE WARNING (1-2)

A. “LET NOT MANY OF YOU BECOME TEACHERS...”

1. Note carefully:
 - a. James does not say, “Let not many of you **be** teachers”
 - b. But rather, “Let not many of you **become** teachers”
2. This passage is not just a rebuke of those who try to **be** teachers before they are ready, but a warning that many should not even **become** teachers in the future!
3. It is a mistake to believe that everyone should become a teacher at some point in their service to Christ!
 - a. Paul illustrated time and again that the body of Christ has many members, and not all members do not have the same function!
 - 1) To the saints at Rome - **Ro 12:3-8**
 - 2) To the church at Corinth - **1 Co 12:12-31** (note esp. **vs. 29**, where Paul with a rhetorical question implies that not all are to be teachers)
 - b. Peter likewise taught that God’s grace toward is “manifold” (multifaceted) and that we should exercise our respective abilities accordingly - **1 Pe 4:10-11**
4. In view of what Paul, Peter, and James wrote...
 - a. We should be careful before we apply **He 5:12-14** to mean that **everyone** should one day be teachers
 - b. The author of Hebrews may have been writing to a select audience, whom he knew ought to have been teachers

B. WHY MANY SHOULD NOT BECOME TEACHERS...

1. Teachers shall receive “**a stricter judgment**”
 - a. There is a grave responsibility involved in teaching others
 - b. We can lead people to **truth** - but we just as easily lead them to **error**!
 - c. Just as with elders (**He 13:17**), those who teach will be held accountable if they mislead

others!

2. Because we all **“stumble in many things”**
 - a. Everyone has faults, and with many people the improper use of the tongue is a major one
 - b. But it takes spiritual maturity (**“a perfect man”**) not to stumble in word!

[So James cautions against many people trying to become teachers. This should not discourage any from trying to find out if teaching is a gift that they might have if nurtured along, but one should proceed with humility and caution. In **vs. 2** James briefly mentions the power of the tongue over the body. He elaborates on this theme as we now consider...]

II. THE DISCOURSE ON THE UNTAMABLE TONGUE (3-12)

A. THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE BIT AND RUDDER... (3-4)

1. Both illustrations are used to demonstrate that a small member (like the tongue) can control the body
 - a. A bit controls a horse
 - b. A rudder controls the ship
2. So our tongue controls the body...
 - a. If you speak a lie, it won't be long before you find yourself living a lie
 - b. If you speak suggestively in an immoral manner, it won't be long before you begin acting immorally!
3. The power of the tongue to direct is easily applied to the dangers of teaching...
 - a. The teacher's speech can easily set the mood of the class or congregation
 - b. He can easily direct the congregation in an uplifting way, or just as easily direct the congregation in a discouraging way
4. Should not this power to direct via the tongue humble those who teach, and caution the spiritually immature?

B. THE ILLUSTRATION OF A LITTLE FIRE (5-6)

1. A small fire can easily cause great destruction (remember the Great Chicago Fire?)
2. So it is with the tongue!
 - a. A loose tongue can ruin one's reputation
 - b. It can also destroy churches, families, friendships
3. In describing an uncontrolled tongue, James uses very vivid terms to make his point: The tongue is...
 - a. A fire
 - b. A world of iniquity
 - c. So set among our bodies that it defiles the whole body
 - d. That which sets on fire the course of nature
 - e. That which is itself set on fire by hell!
4. Should not this power to destroy and defile both ourselves and others caution us in becoming teachers?

C. THE DIFFICULTY OF TAMING THE TONGUE... (7-12)

1. Despite being able to tame wild animals, man is unable to tame the tongue!

- a. It is an unruly evil!
- b. It is full of deadly poison!
2. I understand James to be somewhat hyperbolic here for the sake of emphasis...
 - a. It is true that no **man** (by himself) can tame the tongue
 - b. But with **God's help**, we can tame it (as David prayed in **Psa 141:3**)
 - c. And with **God's help**, we **must** tame it - cf. **Ep 4:29; Co 4:6**
3. As a further example of how difficult it is to tame the tongue, James uses a very common (and relevant) problem
 - a. I.e., blessing God and cursing men
 - b. Something we are very likely to do, especially on Sundays
 - 1) We spend time in worship, blessing God
 - 2) But in driving home, we might curse men (other drivers who pull out in front of us)
 - c. Racists and bigots are often guilty of "blessing God and cursing men"!
4. But with the illustrations of a spring, a fig tree and a grapevine, James shows the inconsistency of this!
 - a. What comes forth is a true indication of what is inside
 - b. Just as Jesus taught in **Mk 7:20-23**
 - c. Despite all the praises we offer God, it is the curses against man that reveals the true person inside!

CONCLUSION

1. Again, these examples of the misuse of the tongue should humble and caution all those who would become teachers
2. But they should also serve as a warning for us all, whether we teach or not, that we need to seek God's help in controlling the tongue!

May David's prayer be our own:

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer." (Psa 19:14)

Heavenly Wisdom Vs. Earthly Wisdom

James 3:13-18

INTRODUCTION

1. In the Old Testament book of Proverbs, we are encouraged to seek after wisdom - **Pro 3:13-18; 4:7-9**
2. Likewise, in the New Testament we are exhorted to walk with wisdom - **Ep 5:15-17**
3. But in **Ja 3:13-18**, we learn that there is more than just one kind of wisdom

[In this lesson, we will take a look at what James describes as two different kinds of wisdom: **“Heavenly Wisdom Vs. Earthly Wisdom”**. [In discussing these two, James does so by making several contrasts; the first being...]

I. A CONTRAST IN THEIR ORIGIN

A. EARTHLY WISDOM IS NOT FROM ABOVE... (15)

1. It is **earthly**
 - a. I.e., worldly
 - b. Wisdom that is according to the world’s standards
 - c. But this wisdom is foolishness to God - cf. **1 Co 1:20**
2. It is **sensual**
 - a. Appealing to the senses, the emotions, the passions
 - b. Wisdom according to what **feels** right (but that doesn’t make it right)
3. It is **demonic**
 - a. The kind of wisdom possessed by the devil and his angels
 - b. A wisdom that often finds its origin in the influences of Satan!

B. HEAVENLY WISDOM IS FROM ABOVE... (17)

1. It comes from **God** - cf. **Ja 1:17**
2. It comes via **prayer** - cf. **Ja 1:5-8**

[Knowing the origin or source of each kind of wisdom ought to encourage us to select the right one. But if that is not enough, then consider how James describes...]

II. A CONTRAST IN THEIR NATURE

A. EARTHLY WISDOM... (14,16)

1. Full of **bitter envy**
2. Possessing **self-seeking** in the heart
3. This wisdom extols as virtues such qualities as:
 - a. Power

- b. Position
- c. Privilege
- d. Prestige
- 4. It was this kind of wisdom...
 - a. That prompted Satan and his angels to rebel against God
 - b. That prompted the disciples to argue over who would be the greatest in the kingdom

B. HEAVENLY WISDOM... (17)

1. It is first **pure**
 - a. Above all else, it is true to God's Will
 - b. Not one to compromise truth for the sake of peace
2. Then it is **peaceable**
 - a. Holding firm to the truth, it makes every effort to be at peace - cf. **Ro 12:18**
 - b. For example, speaking the truth in an attitude of love - cf. **Ep 4:15**
3. **Gentle**
 - a. That is, kind in one's dealings with others
 - b. Not harsh, even when right and dealing with those who differ - cf. **2 Ti 2:24-25**
4. **Willing to yield**
 - a. Not in matters of truth
 - b. But in matters of opinion - **Ro 14:1**
 - c. In matters of liberty - **Ro 14:19-21**
5. **Full of mercy**
 - a. Quick to forgive the offenses of others
 - b. Wisely understanding one's own need of mercy - cf. **Ja 2:13**
6. Producing **good fruits**
 - a. Notice **vs. 13**, where it says we are to show by our conduct our true wisdom and understanding
 - b. This wisdom takes one beyond being a hearer to being a **doer** - **Ja 1:22**
 - c. Understanding that "faith without works is dead" - **Ja 2:26**
7. **Without partiality**
 - a. Showing no respect of persons - cf. **Ja 2:1-13**
 - b. Rather, treating all fairly, on the same basis
8. **Without hypocrisy**
 - a. Indicating that all of the above is not an "act", a "show"
 - b. But that it comes from a heart desiring to please God, not man

[Certainly the superiority of "Heavenly Wisdom" over "Earthly Wisdom" is apparent in this passage. But as additional proof, notice also...]

III. A CONTRAST IN THEIR FRUITS

A. EARTHLY WISDOM... (16)

1. Causes **confusion**
2. And **every evil thing**
3. Makes you wonder what kind of wisdom...
 - a. Is behind denominationalism

- b. Is often manifested in some congregational meetings

B. HEAVENLY WISDOM... (18)

- 1. Produces **peace**, instead of confusion
- 2. Bears the fruit of **righteousness**, instead of every evil thing

CONCLUSION

- 1. Certainly when we compare their origin, nature, and fruits, the wisdom to be preferred is **heavenly**
- 2. What kind of wisdom do we have...?
 - a. Those who have **earthly** wisdom boast of theirs - **Ja 3:14**
 - b. Those who have **heavenly** wisdom show theirs by their good conduct done in meekness - **Ja 3:13**
- 3. What kind of wisdom do we want...?
 - a. If **earthly**, then no effort is necessary
 - 1) Just do what the world tells you
 - 2) Just do what feels right
 - b. But if **heavenly**, then we must be diligent
 - 1) To seek such wisdom from God
 - 2) To demonstrate such wisdom by our conduct
- 4. What kind of wisdom do you have in regards to the gospel of Christ...?
 - a. **Earthly** wisdom makes no response to the gospel, or if any, only that which is convenient
 - b. **Heavenly** wisdom receives the commands of the gospel joyfully and obediently - cf. **Mk 16: 15-16; Ac 2:38**

Have you demonstrated **heavenly** wisdom?

How To End Wars

James 4:1-12

INTRODUCTION

1. Have you ever heard of...
 - a. “The War of the Whiskers?”
 - b. “The War of the Oaken Bucket?”
 - c. “The War of Jenkin’s Ear?”-- These were actual wars between nations, and you can read about them in many history books
2. War is too often a fact of life in spite of treaties, world peace organizations, etc....
 - a. Not only wars between nations
 - b. But there are wars of one kind or another on almost every level of life - even “gas wars” between gas stations!
3. In our text, we find James discussing this important theme of “war”...
 - a. He describes three types of wars going on in the world
 - b. He also tells how these wars can be stopped

[For example, there is...]

I. WAR WITH EACH OTHER (1, 11-12)

A. EVEN AMONG CHRISTIANS...! (1)

1. Surely “brethren” ought to live together in love and harmony - cf. **Psa 133:1**
2. Yet often they do not
 - a. Lot quarreled with Abraham
 - b. Absalom created a war with his father David
 - c. The disciples of Jesus argued over who would be greatest
 - d. Paul and Barnabas had great contention over John Mark
3. Even churches in the New Testament often had problems...
 - a. **At Corinth**
 - 1) Brethren were suing each other
 - 2) They were competing in the public assemblies
 - b. **In Galatia** - brethren were “biting and devouring” one another
 - c. **Even at Philippi** - two women were having trouble getting along with each other

B. IN HIS EPISTLE, JAMES IMPLIES SEVERAL DIFFERENT KINDS OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS AMONG BRETHERN...

1. Class wars - **Ja 2:1-9**
2. Employment wars - **Ja 5:1-6**
3. Church fights - **Ja 1:19-20; 3:13-18**
4. Personal wars

- a. Notice **Ja 4:11-12**
- b. Where we are admonished not to speak evil of one another, nor to judge one another

[And so, we can easily be at war with one another. Why? James begins to answer this question by explaining a second war that is going on...]

II. WAR WITHIN OURSELVES (1-3)

A. THIS IS THE REASON WE WAR WITH ONE ANOTHER...! (1)

1. It is the “war in the heart” that causes the wars in the church and elsewhere!
2. Our desire for things to satisfy our pleasures (like power, possessions, etc.) is what makes us fight with others
3. Putting it simply, the key problem is “**selfishness**”

B. SUCH SELFISH DESIRES LEAD TO...

1. **Wrong Actions (2)**
 - a. “you murder...you fight and war”
 - b. Perhaps not literally, but certainly so in God’s sight - cf. **1 Jn 3:15**
2. **Wrong Praying (3)**
 - a. The kind of praying that goes unanswered
 - b. Because the prayers are for selfish motives

[This is why people are often at war with one another. Every war or angry disagreement has people who are first at war within themselves! Why is this so? Why are people at war within themselves? Once again, James gives us the answer when he describes another war that is going on...]

III. WAR WITH GOD (4-10)

A. HERE IS THE “ROOT CAUSE” OF EVERY WAR, INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL...

1. Rebellion against God!
2. In some way...
 - a. ...those at war with others...
 - b. ...are also at war within themselves...
 - c. ...because they are first at war with God!

B. HOW DOES A BELIEVER DECLARE WAR AGAINST GOD...?

1. By being friendly with God’s enemies!
2. James mentions three enemies we must not fraternize if we want to be at peace with God:
 - a. **The World (4)**
 - 1) That is, human society that is contrary to God
 - a) Any conduct, belief, thought...
 - b) ...which is anti-God, antiChrist
 - 2) To be a friend of such...
 - a) Makes one an enemy of God!
 - b) Makes one a spiritual adulterer or adulteress!
 - b. **The Flesh (1,5)**

- 1) The unlawful desires that would lead us away from God
 - 2) These desires wage war within us, but we must not give in to them - cf. **1 Pe 2:11**
 - 3) Such desires are in direct conflict to what the Spirit of God would have us to be and do - cf. **4:5; Ga 5:16-26**
 - 4) To submit to these desires of the flesh sets one contrary to God and His Spirit!
- c. **The Devil (6-7)**
- 1) Pride is Satan's greatest temptation
 - 2) When we give into pride, we become friends of the devil and enemies of God - **4:6**

C. HOW TO ENJOY PEACE WITH GOD...

1. **Submit To God (7)**
 - a. Literally, "get into your proper rank"
 - b. When a buck private acts like the general, there is going to be trouble!
 - c. Unconditional surrender to God is the only way to victory!
 - d. Submission is saying: "Not my will, but Thine be done"
2. **Resist The Devil (7)**
 - a. He is behind every war that we have
 - b. But if we just resist, then he will flee!
3. **Draw Near To God (8)**
 - a. And He will draw near to us!
 - b. How do we do this?
 - 1) "**Cleanse your hands**" - Get your sins forgiven!
 - 2) "**Purify your hearts**" - Be single-minded in your devotion to God! (not double-minded, like a spiritual adulterer)
4. **Humble Yourselves In The Sight Of God (9-10)**
 - a. It's possible to submit outwardly and not be humble inwardly
 - b. True mourning for our sins (cf. **4:9**) is how we can humble ourselves before God
 - c. The end result of such humility? God will lift you up! - **4:10**

CONCLUSION

1. If we obey these four instructions, then God will draw near to us, cleanse us, and forgive us!
2. **Only then will the "wars" cease...!**
 - a. For we will not be at war with God
 - b. So we will not be at war within ourselves
 - c. And we will not be at war with others!
3. As Solomon wrote in the Book of Proverbs: "*When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.*" (**Pro 16:7**)

Are we diligent in making sure our ways are pleasing to the Lord...?

Note: Much of the material for this outline was adapted heavily from **The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 2, by Warren W. Wiersbe, pages 366-370.**

Making Our Plans

James 4:13-17

INTRODUCTION

1. In the text for this study, James discusses the subject of making plans:

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what [will happen] tomorrow. For what [is] your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you [ought] to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do [it], to him it is sin.” (Ja 4:13-17)

2. This subject is very relevant for us today, for we all make plans of one sort or another...
 - a. Plans for college, jobs
 - b. Plans for marriage, family
 - c. Plans for vacation, retirement
3. Making plans, in of itself, is not wrong...
 - a. Paul often made plans in regard to his travels - **Ac 15:36; 18:20-21; 1 Co 16:5-9**
 - b. In fact, making plans (or setting goals) is a key to success in any venture we undertake in life
4. But there is a “right” way to plan, and a “wrong” way; and James discusses both!

[First, let’s consider the “right” way to **“Making Our Plans”**...]

I. WE CAN SUBMIT TO GOD’S WILL

A. I.E., SUBMIT OUR PLANS TO THE WILL OF GOD...

1. We can make our plans, but we should make them contingent to God’s approval - **“if the Lord wills” (15)**
2. This is what Paul did
 - a. **“God willing” - Ac 18:21**
 - b. **“if the Lord permits” - 1 Co 16:7**
3. Saying “if the Lord wills” assumes our faith in two things:
 - a. That God does have a will for us (even in mundane matters)
 - b. That God can intervene (via providence) to carry out His will
4. The wisdom of making our plans contingent upon the will of God will become evident later, when we consider the “wrong” way to plan

B. IF WE REALLY WANT OUR PLANS TO SUCCEED, THEN WE WILL SEEK FIRST TO DISCERN GOD’S WILL, AND PLAN ACCORDINGLY...

1. To a great degree, this is possible, for God wants us to:
 - a. Understand His Will - **Ep 5:17**
 - b. Be filled with His Will - **Co 1:9**
 - c. Prove His Will - **Ro 12:2**
2. Of course, this relates especially to His **revealed** will
 - a. Which pertains to matters right and wrong
 - b. Which is found in the pages of the Bible
 - c. When we know God's "revealed" will (from our study of the Bible), then we can act or plan accordingly
 - d. Until then, the right way to plan is to show our submission to God by leaving our plans subject to His will
3. There is also God's **permissive** will
 - a. Which pertains to matters not right or wrong, but good and better
 - b. Even so, we should still show our trust and dependence upon God in such matters by committing our plans to His Will

[Now let's look at the "wrong" way in "**Making Our Plans**"...]

II. WE CAN IGNORE GOD'S WILL

A. TO PLAN THIS WAY IS FOLLY... (13-15)

1. Because life is **complex** (13)
 - a. There are the complexities of **time** (today, tomorrow, when?)
 - b. There are the complexities of **activities** (buy, sell?)
 - c. So many decisions to make, so many mistakes might be made
 - d. If it's possible to know God's will on any matter, that would increase the likelihood that our decisions and plans will be correct
2. Because life is **uncertain** (14a)
 - a. No one has a guarantee of tomorrow
 - 1) Whether there will even be one
 - 2) Or what will happen
 - b. Only God can bring about what He wills for the future without fail
 - c. Since this is true, we should certainly desire to make plans that are in keeping with "His" plans!
3. Because life is **frail** (14b)
 - a. It is like a "vapor" - cf. **Psa 39:5-6,11**
 - b. How substantial is a "vapor" or "shadow"?
 - c. How quickly we can succumb to sickness or an accident illustrates our frailty
 - d. It is foolish, then, to think "we" have the strength within ourselves to "make" our plans happen - remember **Ja 1:10-11**
4. Because life is **brief** (14c)
 - a. "appears for a little time"
 - b. This is something Job observed - **Job 9:25-26; 14:1**
 - c. Since life is so short, it is important we do God's will and not our own - cf. **1 Jn 2:17**

B. TO PLAN THIS WAY IS BOASTFUL ARROGANCE... (16a)

1. To plan without considering God's will is to set ourselves up above God Himself!
2. How could one be more arrogant than that?

C. TO PLAN THIS WAY IS SIN... (16-17)

1. It is sin because it involves arrogance and boasting which is evil - **16**
2. It is sin because we who are Christians know better - **17**
 - a. We know what is good: to plan with God's Will in mind
 - b. To do otherwise is to sin!

CONCLUSION

1. How do we make our plans?
 - a. If we plan without considering the will of God, then we are foolish, arrogant, and sinful!
 - b. If we make our plans subject to the approval of God, then we are wise, submissive, and righteous in God's sight!
 - c. If we endeavor to plan as much as we can within the framework of God's "revealed" will, then we increase the likelihood of success!

2. What about your "plans" for eternity?
 - a. There is no doubt what the Lord's will is on this subject - cf. **Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15-16; Ac 2:38; Ro 10:9-10; 2 Pe 1:5-11; Re 2:10**
 - b. We can be certain of "success" if we submit to God's will in the matters of faith, repentance, confession, baptism, and living a faithful Christian life
 - c. But to ignore it is folly in view of life's **uncertainty, frailty, and brevity!**

Have you done **as** the Lord wills? (i.e., as "He" would have you do it?)

Note: Parts of the material for this outline was adapted heavily from **The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 2, by Warren W. Wiersbe, pages 366-370.**

When God Gets Angry At The Rich

James 5:1-6

INTRODUCTION

1. Compared to many people in the world, **we are indeed blessed**; in fact, in comparison with most people who live now and who have lived in the past, **we are very rich!**
2. Now, it is important to stress that God does not condemn the rich for being rich...
 - a. Some of the most godly people in the Bible were rich
 - b. E.g., Job, Abraham, Joseph, David, Solomon, Barnabas, Philemon, Lydia
3. However, Christ does speak of the difficulty of the rich being saved - cf. **Mt 19:23-26**
4. And there are times when God is very angry at the rich, as in our text - **Ja 5:1-6**:
5. As we consider this passage more carefully, we shall do so by trying to answer four questions...
 - a. Who is James addressing in this passage?
 - b. What is in store for these rich people?
 - c. Why is God so angry at them?
 - d. What applications can we draw from this passage?

[We begin, then, with the first question...]

I. WHO IS JAMES ADDRESSING IN THIS PASSAGE?

A. ARE THEY CHRISTIANS...?

1. Are these rich Christians who had been guilty of oppressing their brethren?
2. Possibly, but unlikely for several reasons...
 - a. They are not addressed as “brethren” as is often done in this epistle - **Ja 1:2,19; 2:1, 14; 3:1,10; 4:11**
 - b. There is no call to repentance in this passage
 - 1) As there is throughout this epistle in those passages in which it is clear brethren are being addressed
 - 2) Here there is only condemnation!
 - c. The brethren are not addressed until **verse 7**, in which they are told to be patient in light of what has just been said

B. MORE LIKELY, THOSE ADDRESSED ARE RICH UNBELIEVERS...

1. Who had been oppressing the Christians - cf. **Ja 2:6**
2. This tirade of judgment upon them appears to serve the purpose of comforting the brethren who were being oppressed by them - cf. **Ja 5:7**
 - a. The Lord has heard their cries - **Ja 5:4b**
 - b. Judgment is coming upon these rich oppressors

- c. Therefore the Christians are told to be patient

[But even if this passage does not have direct reference to rich Christians, there are still things to which we should give careful heed. And so, we ask...]

II. WHAT IS IN STORE FOR THESE RICH OPPRESSORS?

A. MISERIES THAT WILL CAUSE THEM TO “WEEP AND HOWL”...! (1-3a)

1. So certain are these miseries to come, that James speaks of them already occurring!
 - a. Riches are corrupted
 - b. Garments are moth-eaten
 - c. Gold and silver are corroded
2. When this “corrosion” of their riches occurs...
 - a. It will serve as a witness against them (that they were guilty of the things to be mentioned shortly)
 - b. It will eat their flesh like fire
 - 1) The anguish and misery of poverty usually affects the hardest those who were once rich!
 - 2) Thus, when poverty strikes, it will make them “weep and howl” as though they were on fire!

B. THE MISERIES SPOKEN HERE MAY HAVE REFERENCE TO WHAT LATER OCCURRED IN THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM IN A.D. 70...

1. Not long after this epistle was written, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans
2. Many of the rich Jews who had oppressed their Christian brethren literally “wept and howled”
3. What they had failed to realize was that they had heaped up treasure “in the last days” (**Ja 5:3b**)
 - a. Like the man in the parable of the rich fool (**Lk 12:16-21**), they thought they were laying up riches for their latter days
 - b. When in fact, it was the “last days” of the Jewish economy when they were so busy storing up wealth!
 - c. Like some today, who store up for retirement and then die before they retire!

[The miseries that came upon these rich people were terrible indeed (as described by Flavius Josephus, an eyewitness of the destruction of Jerusalem). Even if it did not come in the destruction of Jerusalem, it certainly came upon them when they died, as it did upon the rich man in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (**Lk 16:19-31**)! This leads us to the third question...]

III. WHY IS GOD SO ANGRY AT THESE RICH PEOPLE?

A. BECAUSE OF HOW THEY GOT THEIR WEALTH...

1. It was through wicked means - **Ja 5:4**
2. Specifically, by withholding wages from those who had worked for them
3. Just as some people today get rich through dishonest schemes or unjust labor practices!

B. BECAUSE OF HOW THEY USED THEIR WEALTH...

1. They hoarded their wealth - **Ja 5:3b**
2. They spent it on themselves with pleasures and luxury - **Ja 5:5** (fattening themselves like cows for the slaughter!)
3. They used the power that comes with wealth to oppress “the just” - **Ja 5:6**
 - a. Possibly a reference to Christ
 - b. Or the Christian whom they also oppressed

[The manner in which they got their wealth and used it caused those who were oppressed to cry out, and the Lord heard their prayers (**Ja 5:4**). Now, God who is just is about to bring judgment upon these rich oppressors! Having examined this passage more closely...]

IV. WHAT APPLICATIONS CAN WE DRAW?**A. WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL HOW WE OBTAIN OUR WEALTH...**

1. To do so at the expense of others will bring God’s wrath upon us! - cf. **Deu 24:14,15**
2. It is wrong to think that success can only come by stepping on others
3. This might be an appropriate place to add what we learn from Paul in **1 Ti 6:9-10**
 - a. It is not riches that are wrong, but the **desire** to be rich that is wrought with danger!
 - b. Riches are not wrong if they are the **byproduct** of our endeavors, and not the **goal**
 - 1) I.e., one may desire to be a doctor to help the sick, or a plumber because of one’s skill or interest in such matters, and receive riches as a byproduct because of the value society might place on such services
 - 2) But to enter such professions solely because one’s goal is to get rich thereby, then we are ensnared by the love of money!
4. So how do we obtain our wealth?
 - a. If we do it honestly and in compensation for a job well done, God is not displeased
 - b. If we do it by hurting others and by making wealth our primary object, then we are in danger of God’s wrath!

B. WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL HOW WE USE OUR WEALTH...

1. To spend it on luxurious living when others are suffering...
 - a. Is exactly what James has described in this passage
 - b. Is an indication of the lack of the love of God - **1 Jn 3:17**
2. According to the New Testament, the purpose of working is not to obtain wealth for our own gratification, but to help those less fortunate!
 - a. As commanded by Paul - **Ep 4:28; 1 Ti 6:17-19**
 - b. As exemplified by Paul - **Ac 20:34-35**

CONCLUSION

1. Living in the country and society in which we do, we have much for which to be thankful
2. But we also have much of which we need to beware...
 - a. We live in a society where it is quite easy to become wealthy
 - b. We live in a society where covetousness or the desire to be rich are not considered sins

- c. We live in a society where heaping up treasures for our own gratification is considered an inalienable right!
 - **It is easy to be influenced by these values!**
- 3. Perhaps we need to ask ourselves constantly: Are we laying up treasure in heaven, or on earth?
 - a. Those who lay up treasure in heaven are those who use their wealth to do good and help the poor and less fortunate - cf. **Mt 19:21; 1 Ti 6:18-19**
 - b. Those who lay up treasure on earth are actually storing up for themselves miseries and wrath!
 - 1) Miseries...when their wealth fails them in their time of true need
 - 2) Wrath...from God in the Day of wrath that is yet to come

These are sobering thoughts worthy of our careful consideration. Have you even begun to lay up treasure in heaven by obeying the gospel of Christ?

When You're Being Oppressed

James 5:7-12

INTRODUCTION

1. Do you feel like someone is out to get you? That they are trying to take advantage of you? That you are being oppressed?
2. What should you do when you are oppressed? What should you **not** do?
3. In **James 5**, James gives instructions to those who appear to have been oppressed by the rich...
 - a. Notice **Ja 2:6**
 - b. The rich had been holding back their wages - cf. **Ja 5:4**
 - c. The rich had been oppressing the righteous - cf. **Ja 5:6**-- **What were the oppressed Christians to do?**
4. In **Ja 5:7-12** (and surrounding verses), we find principles and instructions which should govern Christians when they are oppressed

[These principles are just as applicable today when we are oppressed by others. They include...]

I. DON'T RESIST

A. SUCH WAS THE BEHAVIOR OF THOSE BEING OPPRESSED IN JAMES' DAY...

1. Notice **Ja 5:4,6**
2. Though treated unjustly, they did not resist

B. NOT RESISTING IS CONSISTENT WITH OTHER SCRIPTURES...

1. Consider **Lk 6:27-30**
2. Also **Ro 12:19-21**
3. And **1 Pe 2:18-23**

C. ADMITTEDLY, THIS IS CONTRARY TO HUMAN NATURE AND WISDOM...

1. Human nature moves one to react in "justifiable anger"
2. Human wisdom calls for "standing up for one's rights"

D. BUT NOT RESISTING IS BASED UPON TWO THINGS...

1. An **awareness** that the Lord is coming to judge - **Ja 5:8-9**
 - a. The coming of the Lord in this passage may have reference to His coming in judgment upon Jerusalem (as foretold by Jesus in **Lk 21** and which occurred when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70)
 - b. But it may also refer to the Lord's final coming on the Day of Judgment yet to occur
 - c. Likewise, we can look for the coming of the Lord in judgment in various ways (death, the second coming, etc.)

2. A **willingness** to let Him be our avenger - cf. **Lk 18:7-8**

[It is not easy to keep one's self from resisting, and to wait for the Lord to take care of it. That's why there is a need for the next principle...]

II. BE PATIENT

A. THE WORD FOUND HERE IS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT THAN THAT FOUND EARLIER IN THIS EPISTLE...

1. In **Ja 1:3**, the word is "**hupomone**"
 - a. Which means to bear up under trials
 - b. Which normally means to be patient in reference to **things** or **circumstances**
2. In **Ja 5:7-8,10**, the word is "**makrothumia**"
 - a. Which means to suffer long
 - b. Which normally means to be patient in reference to **people** (like oppressors)
 - c. As **Vincent** defines it:
 - 1) A patient holding out under trial; a long-protracted restraint of the soul from yielding to passion, especially the passion of anger
 - 2) The thought links itself naturally with that in the preceding verse: "the righteous does not resist"

B. THREE EXAMPLES ARE GIVEN TO ENCOURAGE US TO BE PATIENT...

1. The **farmer** - **Ja 5:7**
2. The **prophets** - **Ja 5:10**
3. **Job** - **Ja 5:11**

C. EACH OF THESE EXAMPLES TEACH US...

1. To place our trust in the Lord, that He will eventually reward us for our trust in Him
2. To be steadfast, in the meantime, in our service to Him

[But such patience or long-suffering is not easily acquired. Therefore, there is a need to apply the third principle in this passage...]

III. ESTABLISH YOUR HEARTS

A. THE WORD "ESTABLISH"...

1. Means "to fix, make fast, to set" (**Vine**)
2. Is translated "strengthen" in other places
3. To establish one's heart, then...
 - a. Involves strengthening our heart in a certain way
 - b. Here, it means to strengthen our heart so as to be patient and not resist evil being done

B. THE KEY TO ESTABLISHING OUR HEARTS...

1. Is the Word of God - cf. **2 Pe 1:12**
2. Through constant and careful study of God's Word...
 - a. Our faith in God and His eventual justice is made stronger

- b. Patience and strength to not resist is developed - cf. **Ro 15:4**

[With hearts rooted and established in God's Word, we are more likely to act as we should when oppressed. But there are some things we are likely to do when under stress due to unjust oppression. James goes on to mention two that we are to avoid. The first of these is...]

IV. DON'T GRUMBLE

A. ESPECIALLY AGAINST ONE ANOTHER... (9)

1. When others oppress us, we are likely to vent our frustrations as those closest and dearest to us
2. For example, a man after a bad day at work often takes it out on his wife and family
3. So brethren are likely to direct their frustration towards each other when being oppressed from outside

B. WE HAVE GOOD REASON NOT TO GRUMBLE...

1. **"lest you be condemned"**
2. The sin of grumbling is a serious one - cf. **1 Co 10:5-11**
3. The same Lord who will judge those who oppress others will judge those who murmur and grumble!

[So don't let the oppression of others cause us to be condemned by our mistreatment of our brethren. Another warning is given...]

V. DON'T SWEAR

A. THIS IS SOMETHING ELSE ONE IS LIKELY TO DO WHEN IN TROUBLE...

1. In other words, make rash promises
2. Promises which God will hold you to, even if not serious - cf. **Ecc 5:1-7**

B. THIS PROHIBITION APPLIES ESPECIALLY TO "FLIPPANT OATHS"...

1. In Jesus' day, many Jews were prone to swear in this fashion
2. Where they made a distinction between oaths using God's name and other oaths (those using His name were considered binding, while the others were not)
3. Both Jesus and James condemn this distinction between different kinds of oaths - cf. **Mt 5:33-37; 23:16-22**

[The solution is to refrain from oaths altogether, and stand by your word. Finally, in times of oppression, those who are God's children have a powerful weapon in their arsenal. To utilize it, they should...]

VI. PRAY

A. THIS IS THE KEY THING TO DO WHEN OPPRESSED...

1. As we learn from **Ja 5:13**
2. This is what the Christians of James' day were doing - cf. **Ja 5:4**

B. WHEN WE PRAY, GOD HEARS...!

1. As seen in **Ja 5:4**
2. As promised by both Jesus and James, the Lord will avenge His righteous ones - **Lk 18:7-8; Ja 5:7-8**
3. It may not come when we want it, and the Lord may “bear long with us” - cf. **Re 6:9-11**
4. But when the time is ripe, the oppressed will be avenged!

CONCLUSION

1. Therefore, when we are being oppressed...
 - a. Don't resist
 - b. Be patient!
 - c. Establish your hearts!
 - d. Don't grumble
 - e. Don't swear
 - f. Pray!
2. When we react this way to oppression...
 - a. We follow the example of Christ and the early disciples
 - b. Who committed themselves to God who judges righteously
 - 1) Christ - **1 Pe 2:23**
 - 2) The disciples - **1 Pe 4:19**
3. With such a righteous God on our side, it should be a lot easier to endure those who oppress us!

Is the righteous God on your side? Or rather, are you on His side?

A Call To Prayer And Praise

James 5:13-18

INTRODUCTION

1. As is common in many of the New Testament epistles, we find various commands and exhortations as we draw near to the end of the epistle of James
2. In **Ja 5:13-18**, we find a call to pray and sing praises, with guidance as to what to do and when

[For example...]

I. IN TIMES OF SUFFERING, LET US PRAY (13)

A. WHAT KIND OF SUFFERING DOES JAMES REFER TO...?

1. The word used refers to suffering of any kind
2. Such as sickness, bereavement, disappointment, persecutions, loss of health or property
3. Later, James will deal specifically with sickness

B. FOR WHAT SHOULD WE PRAY...?

1. For **removal** of the suffering, if it be the Lord's will - cf. Paul in **2 Co 12:8**
2. For **strength** to endure the suffering, if it be the Lord's will that we bear it - cf. **1 Co 10:13**
 - a. God may not always remove the source of our suffering, for it may be for our ultimate good - cf. **Psa 119:67,71,75**
 - b. But at least He promises to help us endure it!

C. FOR WHOM SHOULD WE PRAY...?

1. Certainly for ourselves, as implied above
2. But also for those who may be the source of our suffering
 - a. As Jesus taught in **Lk 6:28**
 - b. Doing this can help greatly to endure the suffering

[So in times of suffering, let us pray! It is a wonderful privilege to pray, and a great source of comfort when afflicted. Next, we learn from James that...]

II. IN TIMES OF CHEER, LET US SING PRAISES (13)

A. THE WORD "CHEERFUL"...

1. Denotes pleasantness, agreeableness
2. It suggests a state of mind free from trouble -- the opposite of affliction -- happy!

B. IN SUCH A STATE OF HAPPINESS, ONE SHOULD SING PRAISES...!

1. For singing praises is becoming of God's people
 - a. Consider the attitude of David, the sweet singer of Israel - **Psa 92:1-2; 96:1-2; 101:1;**

111:1; 113:1-3; 146:1-2; 147:1; 149:1

- b. David was a man after God's own heart, shouldn't we be also?
- 2. For singing praises has the power to make good situations better - cf. **Ep 5:18; Co 3:16**

C. WHY DON'T SOME CHRISTIANS SING PRAISES MORE OFTEN, MORE FERVENTLY...?

- 1. Are they that "afflicted"?
- 2. Hasn't God done enough in our lives to prompt us to praise Him fervently in song?
- 3. What excuse can we possibly give for refusing to praise God for His glory and goodness?
 - a. We cannot use the excuse that we cannot sing
 - b. God "commands" all to sing, and unless we are "mute" the command applies to us
 - c. Fortunately, God is not concerned with how it sounds, but that it is coming from the heart, therefore all who can speak can and should sing!
- 4. Heaven is described by John in the Book of Revelation as a place where singing praises to God and Christ is an ongoing activity
 - a. If we don't sing praises to God on earth, though able...
 - b. Can we really expect to be allowed to praise God in heaven?

[Singing praises to God is just as important as praying to God! Perhaps our prayers would be answered more often, if we would praise God more often! The rest of our text deals with prayer as it applies to a special need...]

III. IN TIMES OF SICKNESS, LET US PRAY (14-18)**A. ADMITTEDLY, THIS PASSAGE IS DIFFICULT...**

- 1. Questions abound concerning it
 - a. Is the sickness physical or spiritual?
 - b. Is the anointing with oil medicinal or symbolic?
 - c. Is the healing through providential means or miraculous?
 - d. Is the healing spiritual or physical?
- 2. First, I believe the sickness and healing in this passage is physical, though spiritual needs are taken into consideration
 - a. This is in view of the phrase "and **if** he has committed sins, he will be forgiven"
 - b. This implies the sickness is physical, though it **may** be accompanied with spiritual sickness as well
 - c. But the conditional "**if**" makes it clear that the illness may not be accompanied by sin, which if true, would mean the illness is not spiritual, but physical
- 3. With the assumption that physical illness is being discussed, then there are two feasible alternatives...
 - a. This passage refers to **miraculous** healing
 - 1) The elders were called because they possessed the gift of healing
 - 2) The anointing with oil was symbolic, representing the influences of the Holy Spirit - cf. **Mk 6:13**
 - 3) The healing was miraculous
 - b. This passage refers to **providential** healing
 - 1) The elders were called because they were likely the most righteous in a

- congregation - cf. **Ja 5:16**
- 2) The anointing with oil was medicinal, as was commonly practiced in those days - cf. **Lk 10:34**
- 3) The healing was providential
- 4. I lean toward the latter explanation...
 - a. The first explanation must assume that the elders in every church possessed the gift of healing, which is not likely for two reasons:
 - 1) We have no record of such in the New Testament
 - 2) The qualifications for elders did not require this gift - cf. **1 Ti 3:1-7; Ti 1:5-9**
 - b. In illustrating the efficacy of prayer, James uses an example of God **providentially** answering prayer - cf. **1 Kin 18:41-45**
 - 1) God was indeed answering Elijah's prayer
 - 2) But God did so, providentially, working through natural means

B. WITH THIS UNDERSTANDING, LET'S MAKE THE APPLICATION...

1. In times of physical sickness, call for the elders of the church
 - a. You want the prayers of the "righteous" working in your behalf, don't you?
 - b. Notice: You are to call for them, not wait for them to call on you!
 - c. Have the elders pray with you...
 - 1) In **faith** (trusting in the Lord's power to heal, if it be His will)
 - 2) With **fervor** ("the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.")
2. Elders should not only pray, but see that appropriate medical aids are provided
 - a. In a century where hospitals were nonexistent, and physicians rare, anointing with oil was a common treatment - cf. **Lk 10:34**
 - b. Today, this would involve the elders making sure the sick receive the treatment needed
3. The sick should also confess their sins, if they have any...
 - a. **Verse 15** makes it clear that sickness is not always the consequence of sin
 - b. But **verse 16** and others (like **1 Co 11:29-32**) suggests that illness may be God's loving chastisement for sin, in an effort to direct us back to Him
 - c. In any case, sins need to be confessed and forgiveness sought if we hope to have God hear our prayers

CONCLUSION

1. However one interprets **Ja 5:14-16**, there is no dispute over the main thrust in this passage...
 - a. Prayer and praise are very special privileges for the Christian
 - b. There is not a time in our life when we shouldn't be doing one or the other
 - c. We must be careful not to underestimate:
 - 1) **The importance of praise**
 - 2) **The power of prayer**
2. But to truly benefit from these two spiritual exercises, we must be in a right relationship with God...
 - a. Which involves being open to God's Word - **Pro 28:9**
 - b. And being a doer of God's will - **Mt 7:21**

Are we?

Restoring Straying Saints

James 5:19-20

INTRODUCTION

1. As James comes to the close of his epistle, he stresses the importance of restoring those who wander from the truth - **Ja 5:19-20**
2. Restoring straying saints is a responsibility given to **all** who are truly the children of God - cf. **Ga 6:1-2; 1 Th 5:14**
3. Yet, it is a responsibility that is so easy to neglect, and in most cases **is** neglected!
4. The purpose of this lesson is twofold...
 - a. To impress upon our minds the importance of engaging in this work of restoring straying saints
 - b. To suggest how we should carry out this important work

[To appreciate the grave importance of restoring saints who have strayed, consider this question: "What is the condition of those who have wandered from the truth?"]

I. THE CONDITION OF SAINTS WHO HAVE STRAYED FROM THE TRUTH

A. AS DEFINED BY JAMES IN OUR TEXT...

1. They are in danger of death! - **Ja 5:20**
2. One who has wandered from the truth has also wandered from the from the source of forgiveness - cf. **1 Jn 1:6-7**
3. Separated from the blood of Christ to cleanse him of his sins, he is in danger of suffering the consequences of sin: (spiritual) death! - cf. **Ro 6:23**

B. AS DEPICTED BY PETER...

1. "the latter end is worse for them than the beginning" - cf. **2 Pe 2:20-22**
2. That such a person is in danger of more serious punishment is stressed in **Lk 12:47-48**

C. AS DESCRIBED IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS (He 10:26-31)...

1. "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" - the blood of Christ is no longer available for him in this state!
2. "but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation" - all that remains is to be eternally lost in hell!
3. "much worse punishment...will he be thought worthy" - because such a person is trampling underfoot the Son of God, counting the blood of Jesus which had sanctified him a common thing, and is insulting the Spirit of grace!
4. "the LORD will judge His people" - for those who despise His mercy, they will face His righteous indignation!

D. AS DECLARED BY JESUS HIMSELF...

1. Such will be removed from His presence! - cf. **Re 2:4-5**
2. He will expel such from His presence! - cf. **Re 3:15-16**

[When we truly understand the spiritual condition of our friends and loved ones who have strayed from the truth, it should move us to do something! But how shall we carry out this responsibility?]

II. RESTORING STRAYING SAINTS**A. IT REQUIRES SPECIAL ATTRIBUTES...**

1. People who are spiritual - **Ga 6:1**
 - a. Those who are producing the fruit of the Spirit in their own lives - cf. **Ga 5:22-23**
 - b. Unqualified personnel need not apply for this work
 - 1) They might best work on themselves first - **Mt 7:3-4**
 - 2) Then they can help others - **Mt 7:5**
2. A spirit of gentleness - **Ga 6:1**
 - a. We are engaged in delicate “soul surgery”
 - b. This is not the time to misuse the “sword of the Spirit”!
3. A constant sense of self-examination - **Ga 6:1**
 - a. If we are not careful, we can easily fall into the same fault!
 - b. As many do when they counsel those with marital problems without proper supervision
4. A willingness to bear one another’s burdens - **Ga 6:2**
 - a. Which involves an expense of time and energy to help the weak to overcome their faults
 - b. Our responsibility is not fulfilled by simply pointing out our brother’s faults!
5. Humility
 - a. This is implied in **Ga 6:3**
 - b. It is stated outright in **2 Ti 2:24-26**
 - c. People will not accept correction or advice coming from an arrogant person!
 - d. In many cases, we may need to confess our own sin of negligence first! (for not coming sooner)
6. Ample knowledge of God’s Word - **2 Ti 2:24**
 - a. We must be able to teach and apply God’s Word to the situation
 - b. It is important they respond to God’s word, and not just to our views or opinions!
7. Patience (longsuffering) - **2 Ti 2:24**
 - a. The same kind that we receive from God for our faults
 - b. The same kind that Paul showed towards the church at Corinth - cf. **2 Co 1:23-2:3**
 - c. If repentance is not forthcoming, we can wait for only so long - cf. **2 Co 13:1-2**
8. A sincere demonstration of love
 - a. Both at the time of rebuke - cf. **2 Co 2:4**
 - b. And at the time of repentance - cf. **2 Co 2:6-8**

B. IT REQUIRES THE PROPER PROCEDURE...

1. The wrong procedures:
 - a. Running around and talking to everyone but the person who needs to be corrected and restored!
 - b. Preaching about these people from the pulpit at the very outset!

- c. Bringing it up at congregational business meetings at the very first!
2. The proper procedure is outlined by Jesus in **Mt 18:15-17**
 - a. Even though the sin may not be against you personally...
 - 1) This is still a good way to avoid misunderstanding
 - 2) This is still more likely to succeed
 - b. Therefore...
 - 1) Go to the person first
 - 2) Then take others, if necessary
 - 3) Then tell it to the church, if necessary
 - 4) If he won't hear the church, withdraw any association that might appear to give approval to their behavior - cf. **1 Co 5:1-13; 2 Th 3:6-15; Ro 16:17**

CONCLUSION

1. The work of restoring or correcting saints may be unpleasant at times, but it has the potential for great joy!
 - a. Both in heaven - cf. **Lk 15:7**
 - b. And in our hearts - cf. **3 Jn 4**
2. It comes down to this...
 - a. Do we really love God?
 - b. Do we really love our straying brethren?
 - c. Read **1 Jn 3:16-19**, and substitute "spiritual goods" for "world's goods" to answer our question

Brethren, let us love one another!