

# INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

## Who Was The Author?

We begin our study of this letter by considering the identity of the individual whose name is found in the introduction. “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” We are familiar with three men in the New Testament who are known as “James.” 1. James, the brother of John, both of whom were of the twelve apostles. This “James” was the son of Zebedee and Salome (Matthew 4:21). 2. James, the “Less,” son of Alphaeus, also one of the twelve (Matthew 10:3). 3. James, the physical half-brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55-56). We will not attempt to survey in this study all the various viewpoints and debates that have been presented over the years as to which “James” actually wrote this letter. We will, however, put forth one widely accepted view that the author of “James” was (#3 above) James, the blood relative of Jesus.

James, the brother of John and son of Zebedee (31 above), is ruled out because of his early martyrdom by Herod in about the year 44 A.D (see Acts 12:2). The contents of the letter indicate that it was probably written later than 44 A.D., and thus impossible for this “James” to have written it. Nothing is known about James the Less (#2 above) other than that he was an apostle. For this reason, and also due to the fact that the writer introduces himself as a servant of God, instead of an “apostle” of Jesus Christ, it is unlikely that he was the writer. This leaves James, the physical brother of Jesus, as the most likely author of this letter. It might be mentioned at this point that the Bible student should be aware that James, as well as Jesus’ other brothers and sisters, (Matthew 13:55-56), were technically his “half-brothers and sisters,” due to the fact that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Although Mary was the actual mother of Jesus, Joseph was not His father (Matthew 1:20). It would appear most likely that the Lord’s half-brother James, not only is the writer of this very important letter, but also became known as a “pillar” in the early church (Galatians 2:9). Some other passages are listed if you wish to study further the importance of James in the early church. (See Matthew 13:55-56 / John 7:3-5 / I Corinthians 15:7 / Acts 12:17 / Acts 15:13 / Acts 21:18 / Galatians 1:19 / Galatians 2:9-12) According to the Jewish historian Josephus, (who lived during the first century), this “James” was stoned to death by the High Priest in about 62 A.D.

It is fitting in any study of Biblical authorship to mention the clear Bible teaching that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God” (II Timothy 2:16). Though we may discuss the “human hand” involved, the end of the matter is that the Spirit of God is the original source of the material found within this epistle.

## When Was This Epistle Written?

As with most ancient writings, it is very difficult to determine the exact date in which the epistle of James was written. Assuming, however, that the writer was James the brother of Jesus, we can conclude that it could not have been written any later than around 62 A.D., due to the writer’s death. James 2:7 indicates that it was a common practice for the brethren to be called by “that noble name,” an apparent reference to the

name "Christian." In Acts 11:26 we find it was at Antioch that the disciples were first called "Christians." This passage in Acts can be dated at about 40 A.D. If it is the term "Christian" that James is referring to, then we may conclude that James was written after 40 A.D. In addition, the contents of the book reveal that there were orphans, widows, and many extremely poor brethren in the church at the time of writing (see James 1:27 / 2:15-18). This may indicate that James wrote his epistle after the persecutions against the church had had their effect upon the church (see Acts 8:1). History also tells us of a great famine in Judea in about 44 A.D. Putting all this information together, we may conclude that the epistle of James was written somewhere between the years of 44 and 62 A.D.

With this brief background given, we may now begin our verse-by-verse study of the epistle of James.

## Chapter 1

**:1 "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad."** The mention of the "twelve tribes who are scattered abroad" refers to Christians who have been scattered and dispersed throughout the world. Not only were many of the early Christians actual descendants of the twelve tribes, but all Christians are God's people, and figuratively are of the "circumcision" (see Romans 2:28). This expression, however, sets the tone for this letter as being strongly "Jewish" in nature. Other New Testament books, such as Hebrews and Matthew, also rely heavily upon Jewish terminology. We may conclude that the epistle of James, was not originally written to a particular congregation or individual, as were many of the other New Testament letters, but is rather a broad, far-reaching letter originally addressed to all Christians in general. Perhaps this accounts for the frequent usage and familiarity that most Christians have with the letter of James.

**:2 "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials."** Only two verses into this letter, and we are immediately hit with a severe challenge to our "human" reasoning! Why would anyone want to be happy when they are faced with troubles? A close look at this verse reveals the message. James says, "count it all joy," he's not saying we must develop some sort of inhuman ability to enjoy misery! Rather, as Christians, we must learn to see the blessings that come even through difficult times. Actually, verse three finishes the thought, but before we go on, we need to look closely at the Bible usage of the word translated "trials" (NKJV) in this verse. The Greek word "peirasmois" used in this verse is sometimes translated "temptations" in English. This is confusing to us, because in English the words "trials" and "temptations" are quite different in meaning. A little research, however, reveals that the same Greek word may convey the meaning of "trials" in one context, and more nearly the meaning of the English word "temptations" in another context. To add to the confusion, it appears that the old English word "temptation" once conveyed both meanings, seeing that the old King James Version even used the word "temptation" in this verse under discussion.

Putting aside translation difficulties, however, we may simply reason that in life's experiences the same event may be either a "trial" or a "temptation," depending upon how we face that event. For example, to fall and break your leg would be considered a definite trial, especially when you consider the loss of work, and the countless other inconveniences it would bring. However, the way in which we deal with that trial would

determine whether or not it became a temptation to us. One could be tempted to blame God and others for his miseries, and see this trial as a reason and a motive to give up in doing good. In such a case we could definitely show that this accident had become a temptation and a snare to that individual. On the other hand, for many, such trials, (although producing many hardships), have been used as times of reflection and growth. I know of one man, who as the result of a truck accident, read through the Bible and is now preaching the gospel! Simply put, trials/temptations are the proving grounds for the human soul. It is through such tests that we are determined to be of God, or submitting to Satan. There are some verses in the Bible (such as James 1:2) in which such tests are discussed from the viewpoint of God, as He greatly desires to see us persevere and to be made stronger by that trial. Yet there are other passages in which the "trial" being discussed is viewed as one designed to lead to wrongdoing by the forces of evil (see Luke 4:13 / James 1:13-15).

**:3 “Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.”** The bottom line to all this discussion is that when a child of God faces trials, he must learn to count it as joy, for only Christians can see that the end result of facing a trial and overcoming it by the "blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 12:11) is to gain greater patience. How else will we learn endurance? An athlete, (no matter how well paid), cannot excel unless continual tests and physical trials are scheduled and followed rigorously.

**:4 “But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”** I see the key word in this verse is the word "let." This whole discussion is academic unless the individual is willing to "let" the trials of life produce the results God wills to see in our lives. This is the purpose for James writing these words, to urge the brethren to stop seeing trials as frustrations, and to start seeing them as opportunities to grow up spiritually. By being tested we learn perseverance. Continual perseverance in a Christian heart will someday produce a mature servant of God, well-rounded and complete, ready to face any obstacles and any challenges to his faith. Isn't this what we all want? Isn't this what we all admire in others who are not derailed by major and even minor problems?

**:5 “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”** Although this verse introduces a new thought, there is a connection with previous verses. James had just written concerning full-grown Christians who lack nothing, now he continues in regards to those who do see a "lacking" in their lives, namely "wisdom." If in reading the first four verses his readers were convicted of not allowing trials to mature them, James now offers a solution to the immature who are searching for the wisdom to grow up. It's as though James is saying, "Now to those of you who have not yet experienced what it is like to be complete, who have not allowed the trials of life to make you stronger, this is where you start!"

First of all, if we lack the wisdom to see the good that comes from difficulties, and the presence of God's hand working in our everyday lives, then we must start praying for wisdom. The beauty of this piece of advise is that the moment we start sincerely praying for wisdom, we immediately become wiser, for the greatest wisdom man can manifest is the recognition that wisdom does not originate within man, but rather flows forth from

God! Some may say, "What's the use of praying for wisdom?" To have such thoughts, or to simply neglect praying for wisdom and guidance, is to demonstrate to God the ultimate foolishness. Solomon in his God-given book of wisdom wrote, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death (Proverbs 14:12)."

Once man accepts that all wisdom begins with God, and humbles himself to the point of asking for the gift of wisdom, the teaching of wisdom begins. We are told that this precious "commodity" is given generously, that God is not "stingy" with His wisdom, but will give to all who sincerely ask and submit to His wisdom. We also find in this verse that He gives without reproach, that is, He will not throw in our face any misuse we may have made of other gifts He has given us, and therefore refuse to give us any more wisdom. The supply is continuous, the question is, will we be persistent in our requests for wisdom?

One may ask, "Just how does God give us wisdom?" It is not skirting the issue to say that He surely must grant wisdom in different ways through different means. Foremost in our minds should be the way He gives us wisdom through the trials a praying Christian faces. I can personally look back to some of the most difficult trials and count numerous lessons and principles that I now can wisely apply everyday. The beauty of praying for wisdom is that it is "retroactive," able to use events that happened to us even before we became Christians, as our ever-abiding "teachers" of wisdom. The final thoughts here need to be, however, that if we were able to totally describe and define how God imparts wisdom to man, we would most certainly require superhuman intellect. In the final analysis, we must accept by faith His gifts, and the methods He may use to give them.

**:6 "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind."** This indeed is the condition, if God's wisdom that is so lacking in the world is to ever be ours, we must possess faith. Faith not only brings us to ask God for wisdom in the first place, but by faith we will follow the wisdom given to us as the result of our requests. Without faith we cannot recognize God's wisdom as wisdom! Without faith we choose rather to trust in what we know, (man's ways), rather than allowing God to grant us the answers and the guidance we need. To lack faith as a Christian is to be blown and driven about by the changing "winds" of life, never able to consistently chart a straight and meaningful course. To ask God and then to second-guess His answers, is to render useless the avenue of prayer.

I see the need at this point of our study, however, to discuss a common misunderstanding concerning the subject of faith and prayer. I have known some well-meaning brethren who, rather than focusing on the fact that it is God who gives us wisdom, who seem to focus more upon man's human efforts to "stockpile" faith. Some have fallen into the hopeless trap of seeking to have "faith in their faith," that is, striving to trust in one's own ability to trust. This is far removed from the point James is making in this passage. Do we remember what Jesus said about faith? The apostles had asked the Lord to increase their faith. Jesus answered that if we have faith as a mustard seed, nothing is impossible (see Luke 17:5-6). His point was that our goal as Christians should not be in amassing a large quantity of faith, but rather to direct the "speck" of faith that we have toward our God who is able to answer our requests. The power of having faith is in God, not in our faith!

**:7 “For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;”**

Those who are uncertain as to whether they are willing to allow God to take the reigns of their heart, and to relinquish their will to His will, are those who will not receive anything from the Lord. We must get this idea out of our heads that God is a harsh judge, simply waiting to see a glimmer of doubt in our requests, so that He may jerk out from under us our requests that He was prepared to give. The point of this verse is that it is our faith in God that either makes us see and able to use His answers, that otherwise would be rendered useless to us.

**:8 “he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”** It is not difficult to see how

a man with two minds might be a bit unstable! To bring ourselves to ask God for wisdom is to have a spiritual mind, but then to doubt to the point of refusing to wait for His answer, or to chose one's own direction in opposition to God's will, is to demonstrate yet another mind. We do not demonstrate a stable character before God when we "try on" His wisdom periodically to see if it is a comfortable fit, only to discard it for something else more appealing.

I have found by experience that most instability among Christians stems from a lack of faith. This, however, is often covered up by any number of "smoke-screens." Whether it be faults with a fellow Christian, consistently conflicting time schedules, or problems with difficult Bible passages, the lack of faith can usually be traced to be the real reason why those who are unstable and unfaithful in their Christian walk remain on their spiritual "roller-coaster."

**:9 “Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation,”** Verses 9-11 introduce a new

thought, contrasting and discussing poverty and wealth. There is a connection, however, with previous verses in that both poverty and wealth stand as a trial/temptation to Christians, and being in either state requires having the faith to use the wisdom God wants us to have. Here the lowly brother is told to glory in his exaltation. For those who are currently experiencing the sufferings associated with being on the bottom rung of the economic ladder, this verse may seem to be a bitter pill to swallow. "How am I supposed to glory in waiting for the first of the month to get our monthly allotment of food stamps, that will last us only three weeks? How am I to glory in having my children shunned and ridiculed for having worn and out of date clothes and shoes, while their classmates wear designer jeans?" These are thoughts we can identify with only if we have been in that position. In these verses James is not, however, saying that poverty is fun, but rather that those brethren who are poor, can glory in their being lifted up to an equality in God's sight.

**:10 “but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass**

**away.”** In contrast, those rich among the brethren are made humble, seeing that it is through God-given talents and opportunities they have acquired wealth. Although there are other passages in the Bible that speak of the snares of riches, (such as James 2:6-7), I do not see these verses as an indictment of the rich. James is simply saying that from God's vantage point, both wealth and poverty have no bearing upon worth in His

kingdom, and that both states in this life are as temporary to Him as a flower of the field is to us.

**:11 “For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.”** Whatever we are able to accomplish in this life of a material nature, will eventually be erased, of this we can be certain. Therefore the wisdom of God dictates that whatever conditions we experience in life, we allow them to increase our faith in God, (the unseen), rather than being sidetracked by those things visible, (wealth or poverty). In the end faith will be made sight, and those things now visible will someday disappear! (See II Corinthians 5:7 / I John 3:2 / Hebrews 11:1 / II Peter 3:10 / Revelation 22:3-5)

**:12 “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”** Here we are back to the "testing-grounds" again! It may seem that James is being repetitious, but a close look shows that this discussion has now gone the full-circle concerning facing and dealing with the tests of life.

In the early verses he had discussed "tests" as God sees them, as opportunities for the development of patience, and as the motivation for man to seek (by faith) wisdom from God. We were then given two examples of the trials of life, poverty and wealth, that we must be able to see "through as God views them. Now, however, we are looking at the trials/temptations of life within the context of such tests leading us into sin. Due to the context the same Greek word, (peirasmon), translated in verse 2 as "trials," is here translated "temptation" in most modern English translations. This difference is due to the fact that in verse 2 we were looking at trials from the direction of seeing the patience, faith, and wisdom that we can develop as a result of them. Now we are viewing trials from the angle in which they must be endured lest our salvation be endangered and even lost. "Blessed" or happy is the individual who learns to bear up under trials so that they do not become "temptations" to give in to the pressures of sin. By so enduring we are proved, that is we "pass the test," and therefore receive the crown of life.

Here the phrase "crown of life" is used, clearly referring to salvation. (Also see Revelation 2:10 / I Corinthians 9:25) Such a "crown" is not just an idle wish, but is a clear promise of God upon one condition, for those who love Him. One must not, however, interpret this statement according to man's definition of love.

**13: “Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God;" for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.”** Truly this verse stands as one of the most far-reaching and thought provoking passages in the New Testament. For here we find not only a fascinating statement of fact, but also a challenge to the human mind to comprehend the very nature of our Creator. Seeing this as such, we must realize that there is a limit to our ability to understand the full ramifications of this verse. Some may ask, "If God does not tempt, and if God created all things, then why do temptations exist?" The following verses will give us some insight into this "problem," but it is here I believe we are also taken beyond human capabilities to understand.

The presence of evil in the universe is apparently the result of God creating creatures with the ability to choose right from wrong. His desire to create free-will beings required His allowing a creation in which that which is unlike Him, (Satan and the temptation to sin), to develop and exist. Had God not created man with the ability to choose, there would be no such things as trials or temptations, for in encountering them no "proving" would occur. The nature of man would be such that he would have no choice but to submit to God's will. We may even ponder, "Would man even be "man" without the freedom of choice?" If man was made without the capability to choose right or wrong, wouldn't such a being simply be an "extension" or "fragment" of God, one who could not be tempted by evil?

It is here that we have reached the limits of our understanding and our information, but may we not miss that which we can know and learn. May we never forget that when we are tempted, it is not from God, and it can be endured and resisted! All temptations do not have to lead to sin. We do have the freedom to choose right!

**:14 “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.”** Here we learn that the temptation to sin takes root in our own desires. This is in contrast to the mistaken idea mentioned in verse 13, that temptation comes from God. It is something within us, a potential inside us, that can draw us away from God's ways and entice us to sin.

**:15 “Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”** The "desire" as mentioned could refer to any longing of the human body and mind that looks toward sin for satisfaction. Many see this passage as speaking only about sexual desires and sins. Certainly such would apply, but are sexual sins the only desires that lead to sin? What about the desire to be popular, powerful, smart, wealthy, etc? Each of these in their own way can lead to sin.

The thoughts in verses 14 and 15 are progressive, or perhaps we should say, “digressive.” It starts with our desires. The tests of life are then encountered, and some of those tests prove to be temptations, for they appeal to certain desires we have that can be satisfied (at least temporarily) by sin. Thus those tests, to us, become temptations. The combination of desires and temptations is the "conception" of sin, which leads to the "birth" of sin. This is not to say that all temptation must lead to sin. Jesus Himself proved that temptation can be resisted and sin avoided (Hebrews 4:15). However, when one is "drawn away" by his desires and is motivated by his temptations, sin is brought to life. The picture here is very vivid. The birth of a child is the joyous occasion in which a new life enters the world. James captures our attention by describing the ugliness of sin from God's viewpoint, as the birth of “Satan's child.” It is an ugly baby, for in truth it is not a new life at all, but in effect this new arrival is named "Death.” Can you imagine a child named "Death?” Like a scene from a horror movie, this child is brought into the world. The most frightening thing about this illustration, is that in reality such “births” take place every minute, as multitudes of men and women are introduced to temptations to which they succumb.

Sin is born every second and in every possible way. Examples: the young father whose desire to "get ahead" giving birth to a family built around finances, that disintegrates without Christ. The young girl who needs the love of her father, allowing

her desires to be tempted to submit to the selfish lusts of older boys, giving birth of fornication. The young man who's desire to "be a man" drives him to excel at sports at the expense of all else, giving birth to a man who lives only to win the game while his life is in shambles.

Such "births" must be named "Death," for that is what they are! "Sin" was its childhood name, but as it matures and becomes full-grown, its true identity is discovered to be "Death." The point must be made here that this is not the way it has to be! Desires do not have to lead us to temptation, temptation does not have to lead to sin, and sin does not have to lead us to death. The chain can be broken at any of these points. But we stand warned that once in motion, the domino effect does pick up momentum. Few are those who resist temptation, who submit to God (see James 4:7,8). And few are those who, upon finding themselves in sin, are willing to confess it, seeking God's power to overcome sin (I John 1:9). The good news is that, no matter what "phase" of sin we are in, we can break the cycle if we so desire, and if we are willing to take God's way out. A rehabilitation center is not enough. Marriage counseling is not enough. Alcoholics Anonymous is not enough. Without God we may find some relief from the consequences of our sins, but once "Death" is born, there is no escaping it until we put on Christ in humble submission (Galatians 3:27). Jesus told us, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," there is no other escape (John 14:6)!

**:16 “Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.”** Having revealed to his readers the developing stages of sin, James now quite fairly tells his brethren to not be deceived. There is no reason for us to be deceived if we understand the ways of the Deceiver. The point is that even though every Christian is guilty of transgressing God's commandments, if we are in touch and informed, these mistakes do not have to run their course! We do not have to be deceived unto "death!" Our sins do not have to lead to a separation from God. And in fact, we can even be led away from temptation before sin develops, if we are looking to God for the proper direction to turn (see Mtt. 6: 13). Sin is sin, but the most damaging form in which sin comes to us is when it is packaged so beautifully that we no longer believe it to be sin. It is at this point that we are deceived, and a spiritual death can develop (see I John 1:5-10 / I John 5:16-17).

**: 17 “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”** Those who are not deceived and understand the "inner-workings" of Satan and sin, are those who realize clearly that all good gifts come down to man from God. The contrast is here made to those who may wish to blame God for temptations, when it is He, rather, who gives us all that which is good. God is not changeable. He does not one moment give us a good gift, and the next try to deceive us! He is the Father of all creation, and a part of that creation includes the "lights" of the heavens. However unlike His creation, He does not "turn" thus casting shadows, bringing about darkness where there was once light. Do we need to discuss the question of evil any further? If the comments on verse 13 do not satisfy, perhaps we can deal with the "existence of evil" in this way. If you think God should eliminate all sin, evil, and temptation from this earth by midnight tonight, how many of us would be here to enjoy the "paradise" that would be found tomorrow? There is indeed a heavenly paradise in store for each of us who remain faithful, but only

because we who are both capable of good and evil choose to endure temptation, resist it, and glorify God as the only source of good gifts. It is He who through His Son has given man grace and mercy. Salvation is the gift of the Lord!

**:18 “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.”** Being the Father of all that is good, it is God who brought us forth. The "us" refers to all Christians, the "bringing forth" obviously refers to the new birth that occurs when one who has been enticed and deceived by sin is enlightened by God's word that is without deception. Rather than being our "Tempter," God is our unmoving light of truth, making it clear to all who seek, the difference between truth and deception, life and death!

Those who have the faith to seek wisdom from God, are thereby granted the status of being the "first fruits" of His creation. A little research is helpful concerning the use of the term "first fruits." In Leviticus 23:9-12 we find commandments given to the Jews concerning the wave offering of the first fruits of the harvest. Such commandments made the obedient child of God remember that all that he would soon harvest was of God and from God. Before the blessings of the harvest could be realized, this token offering of the first fruits must be made to God (See also Deuteronomy 26: 1-4). Revelation 14:4 also uses this expression when referring to the faithful, and in I Corinthians 15:20 Jesus is described as the "first fruits of those who are fallen asleep." James is simply saying that those brethren to whom he wrote were by God's will in a sense the "first fruits" of God's harvest among men. The key word being that it was God's will, even though the presence of temptation/trials had made some blame God for their troubles, the truth is that it is only due to the will of God that anyone may become a part of God's harvest.

The question may here arise, "Can we, nearly two thousand years later, also consider ourselves the first fruits of His creatures"? Obviously in terms of time we no longer stand at the beginning as did the first century Christian, but it would seem that to make "time" the issue here is to miss the point. Man tends to think of generations in years, when in fact each day a new "generation" comes of age in awareness of sin and the need for a Savior. To each new generation the Christian stands as God's first fruits. By our example and offering of ourselves to God's service, we "wave" before a lost and dying world a remembrance of God, the source of all that is good!

**:19 “Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;”** The use of the word "therefore" indicates a connection between what is being said in this verse with what has been discussed previously. Even though our Bibles may have a new subject heading between these verses, we must realize that subject headings, (as well as chapter and verse divisions), are all the additions of man. This is not a criticism, for by having numbers and subject headings we are assisted in our studies, however we at times need to be reminded of their origin lest they break a thought that was originally intended to be continued.

The connection between verse 19 and those previous is this; if we are to be His "first fruits," we must then get down to the daily application of His will. One cannot be the product of His word of truth and at the same time be one who refuses to listen! A child of God is not one who is quick to "spout off" and ever so easy to "fly off the handle"!

The Christian qualities that shine through when under fire make us so much more clearly God's people in the sight of the world.

The simplicity of these three communication guidelines has been appreciated through the centuries. Too often man tries to stifle his tongue and his temper, when the guidance offered here is to slow them down! Certainly this is a form of control, but the point is we can't just quit talking, (as some monastics have tried), and we can't surgically remove every trace of pride that brings about anger. Rather the practical solution is to give time to both. Thinking slowly and prayerfully before we speak brings about godly communication. Giving consideration to God's principles not only allows the Spirit of God time to temper our anger, but also may give us the insight to see solutions, rather than charging ahead in a violent state of mind. The guidelines offered here, however, go beyond the proverbial "count-to-ten" advice, for the context leads us to consider spiritual principles rather than a memorized set of numerals. It may be so simple we miss it. If our tongue and our temper continue to blaze out of control, we are simply forgetting to remind ourselves of what we are. We are God's first fruits of this generation. We are His people to whom He has given righteousness through the sacrifice of His Son. Implanting and remembering verses 16-20 at times in which our tongue and our temper are tested, would be a sure method of "counting to Him" before we blow away our Christianity in a moment of anger or thoughtlessness.

**:20 "Far the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."** What good has ever come from the wrath of man? It is here contrasted as an opposite to the righteousness of God. Some cite Jesus cleansing the temple as an example of wrath producing good. We must clarify, however, that the emotions Jesus exhibited at the temple are not akin to the wrath of man. Jesus' indignation was not an uncontrolled rage, but rather a thought-out and rightful removal of those who were turning the temple into the "First National Bank." Others point to Ephesians 4:26 in which we read, "Be angry, and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath." Certainly we can see that these instructions to the Ephesians do not endorse the "wrath of man." These are guidelines given to man that his anger may be channeled and controlled in a godly manner. Such is precisely the point of James 1:19-20. May we never excuse our sin by abusing the word of God (see II Peter 3: 16).

However, the question still remains, "Is there a form of "wrath" that is good?" To avoid confusion perhaps we can here use the word "indignation," rather than the word "wrath" to refer to a godly zeal directed against evil. Such was the motivation behind the emotions Christ displayed in the temple. Verse 20 itself would indicate that a "wrath" or "indignation" that does produce the righteousness of God would not be in the same category with the "wrath of man." Such reasoning must not be used, however, to justify fits of temper by "religious" people concerning matters of "religion." Instead we must, in the footsteps of our Savior, bring even our wrath under God's will, to produce godly results. A Christian should not be ashamed or feel that he must hide all his emotions of joy or concern in the Lord's service. An "emotionless" Jesus is the creation of Hollywood, and is not the true Jesus revealed to us in the gospels. John comments concerning the cleansing of the temple, (John 2:17), by recalling Psalm 69:9 and applying it to Jesus, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." We must ask ourselves these

questions, "Are my emotions the result of godly convictions, or am I using my beliefs as an excuse for venting anger and frustration?" Are my emotions under the control of God to the extent that they serve His purposes, or are they getting in the way of my service to Him?"

**:21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**" This very poetic verse of scripture has been translated a number of ways in various translations. In the King James Version it is also probably one of the most difficult to decipher. The New King James Version helps by clarifying "superfluity of naughtiness" as being the "overflow" or "abundance of wickedness." James is now bluntly challenging his readers to take off and lay to the side all the evil behavior that has collected in their lives, (such as an angry tongue), and in meekness allow His word to be implanted into their lives. Such a "heart transplant" will result in the salvation of the soul! The impact of this thought is that in order for God's word to be grafted in, evil works must first be pulled out by the roots. Both cannot be stored in abundance within the same heart and life. With these words we now are set to begin a thought-by-thought discussion of Christian works and their relationship to faith in the Christian life. One might say we have been building up to this discussion from the beginning of this letter, but verse 22 clearly sets the stage for the remainder of this epistle.

**:22 "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."** Earlier, in verse 16, we learned of the danger of being deceived into thinking that temptations come from God. Now we find that we can even deceive ourselves by simply being "hearers" and not "doers." Much will be said concerning this in the verses to follow, but by way of introduction may we be cautioned with a few thoughts. First, if I am a "hearer" but not a "doer," I am in the process of being deceived. Therefore, I may find it difficult to see or to even understand the instructions that are to follow, that instruct me in Christian works. Therefore, if I am to gain any benefit from these instructions, I must give complete personal consideration in applying these teachings in my life, even if I think myself to be a "doer" of God's word! Secondly, I must pray that the Lord may open my heart, my eyes, and my understanding to His teachings, as they apply to me. The very idea of being "deceived" is to be unaware of or "tricked" into believing that "I have not done wrong," or "I have no need to change in this area." Eve was deceived in the garden, being made to believe that eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would not bring death, but would actually bring wisdom and a better life. In effect, Eve was deceived into believing that disobedience would be good for her, and that it was God who was somehow "bad," in not allowing what was "best" for her! Now that's heavy-duty deception, but we need to realize that all sin deceives us, and eventually leads to such conclusions. Deception always scrambles the two-way messages between man and God, making us see Him differently than His true nature, and making us not see ourselves as we truly are in God's sight. Deception removes God as the standard of truth, and replaces that standard with the easily corrupted standard of man.

**:23 "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 those "inactive" members of the Lord's church who

have deceived themselves into believing that they are doers of the word, we now are given a clear description of what a "hearer only" is like. The illustration is of a man who looks at his own face in a mirror. Whether we like it or not, most of us are socially bound to view our own face daily in the mirror, (some jobs depend upon it)! The value of such viewing, however, depends upon what we notice about ourselves, and how we respond to what is seen.

**:24 “For he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.”** In this illustration, the one who looks at his own face in the mirror could have saved himself the trouble, for as soon as he turns away, he forgets every detail about himself. In such a case the mirror had served no purpose, for everything revealed by it had been forgotten. The fault, however, lies not with the mirror but the man who continues on unaffected by the sights reflected therein.

**:25 “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.”** The "mirror" illustration continues with one final possibility, and that is another type of individual who looks into that mirror, (here referred to as the "perfect law of liberty"), and does not forget. Not only does he allow the enlightenment he has seen concerning himself in that mirror to stay fixed within his mind, but he also then allows that knowledge to bring about definite change in his life. To such an individual blessings will now come freely, for he has allowed the process to begin which God intended for man.

God's plan is to not only forgive man, but also to change him for the better! We speak so often about the imperfections and the sins of mankind, that we may forget that our following His plan will remake us. We are not here speaking of a separate, second work of grace, (as some refer to it), but rather a continuation of the process started at the point of conversion. (See Titus 3:5 / Colossians 3:1-10 / John 3:1-7 / Acts 2:38) Having our sins washed away at the point of baptism, (Acts 22:16), we are "born again" of the water and of the Spirit, as Peter promised to the 3,000 who accepted the invitation on the day of Pentecost. Such is the description given to Titus, a "washing of regeneration," and "renewing of the Holy Spirit." The regeneration of God begins at the point of baptism! There is no "waiting period" for His grace to "fall upon us" a second time. To believe such is to open oneself to the deceptions of Satan that we have just previously discussed.

To the contrary, however, we must not submit to the idea that "all sins take years to overcome." Although it is true that many may struggle with certain sins for years after their conversion, such must not be used in determining our doctrines. If we were to give more credit and devote more teaching to the power of regeneration that takes place at conversion, we may not find so many aging within the church, still strangled by the same sins they came in with! Once this "inability to change" becomes the standard of the majority within a congregation, such negative "peer pressure" becomes almost overwhelming to those new converts who are added to the Lord's church. Telling a new convert to "live by faith," when all his newfound brothers and sisters in Christ are "living by sight," is a losing proposition!

In verse 25 the term "law" is used to refer to those rules of action that apply to Christians. We are familiar with the word "law" referring to the commandments given to man under the old covenant. However, there are several passages in our New Testaments

in which "law" is used in reference to the new covenant. (See James 2:12 / Galatians 6:2 / I Corinthians 9:21 / Romans 8:2 / Romans 13:10) There are some who have attempted to contrast the old covenant with the new by indicating the old was a "law" and the new is by grace. Certainly Romans 6:14 makes this contrast. However, in light of those verses cited above, we must conclude that under the new covenant, there are still "laws" or "rules of action" in place today within the Christian dispensation. Although "the law" and "grace" are often placed in opposition to one another within God's word, this is not to say that once God's grace has been revealed to man through the sacrifice of Jesus, that there would no longer be rules guiding the actions of God's people. Law keeping for the sake of the law is a hopeless prison from which man cannot escape. Allowing God's laws to change us and direct us, however, is the privilege given to a "liberated" people, those saved by the blood of the Lamb!

**:26 “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.”** James now reaches back to previous comments made in verse 19 concerning controlling our communication. One who is truly a "doer of the word" is one who "bridles" his tongue. We will be discussing the tongue in more detail in chapter 3, but here it is mentioned as a prime example of a doer and not just a hearer.

Here again we find the subject of self-deception being discussed. Bluntly we are told that a "religious" person who has an unbridled tongue is not religious! He has been deceived, and what's worse, he has deceived himself! Is it common to meet those who have a problem with gossip, for example, who are aware of their sin? The answer is that they are commonly not aware, or do not accept the fact that what they do with their tongue is sinful. We are warned that those who are self-deceived have made their religion useless. The frightening meaning here is that not only has their religion become of no value to themselves, but it has also become of no value to those they know and love. This is the heart of James' message to Christianity. Either live it, or expect nothing to come from it!

**:27 “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”** In the beautiful simplicity of his epistle, James now gives us a simple definition of pure religion. Visit those who are alone and lacking, and don't let the world stain you with its filth. Put simply, "religion" is the "outside" of our faith. It is the part of our inner convictions that "shows" for the world to see. Now it depends upon what we believe in, (on the inside), to determine what our religion will be, (on the outside). Those who believe in false gods will demonstrate their "religion" by worshipping the idols of their faith. Those who worship worldly possessions will display a "religion" of materialism. Those who worship a loving, sacrificing Jesus, will demonstrate to the world a love that sacrificing, and reaches out to orphans and widows, a religion that keeps on giving!

James is not attempting to leave out all other aspects of Christian service, nor is he placing undue emphasis upon the visitation of widows and orphans. However, with these simple illustrations he shows to us what true religion is. It is not talking about great principles and ideals, but it is rather doing something about carrying out even the most basic of Christian works that we find before us. We cannot hide behind our lack of

## Commentary On The Epistle Of James

knowledge, in not serving Him! The work is before us, and any of us can find some service we can carry out in His Name.

1. What is an "epistle"?
2. Did James address this letter to Christians or non-Christians?
3. Did James say we are to consider trials as something to dread?
4. How should we look at trials?
5. A poor brother and a rich brother both have something in common, what?
6. What does a "doubter" and a "wave" have in common?
7. What is wrong with saying "I am tempted by God"?
8. Find two verses that tell us about the nature of God.
9. What do orphans and widows have to do with being pure?
10. What kind of "mirror" is not vain for us to continually look into?
11. Name two things we must slow down, and one we must speed up.
12. What ugly "baby" grows up to become "Death"?
13. Name two ways we can deceive ourselves.

## Chapter 2

**:1 “My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.”** James is now again showing a case in point of those who fail to practice their Christianity. Although we have discussed riches and poverty in 1:9-13, we now look at the problem of showing partiality according to economic status.

**:2 “For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes,”** The example now being given is that of two men entering the Christian assembly, one very rich, the other very poor. It is here that one's Christianity is tested. Am I going to be a "doer" of the word? Am I going to allow my human prejudices to block my ability to accept the poor man on an equal standing with the rich?

One comment needs to be made concerning the word "assembly." In the King James Version this is translated "synagogue," which is the literal translation of the Greek word "sunagoge." It must be pointed out, however, that the use of the Jewish term for their assemblies is in this passage being carried over to refer to the Christian assembly of the brethren. (Note the comments on James 1:1.) Although the term "synagogue" to us indicates the Jewish assembly and sometimes the building in which they assembled, we must here understand that the basic meaning of the word "sunagoge" in this context is "an assembling together of men."

In the study of Biblical words, it is of utmost importance to define the original words as they were used then, in equivalent words that we would use today. That is indeed the job of the translator, and hence the value of modern, up-to-date translations of God's Word.

**:3 “and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool,"** The actions described in this verse reflect the typical non-Christian attitude demonstrated by the world. But what makes this worse, James is warning of such an attitude being shown by a Christian toward a visitor to the assembly!

Someone might say, "It's natural to show favoritism, and to not want to be around someone that's dirty and wearing filthy clothes." That's the very point. If we are to be doers of the word and the work of God, we must allow our Christian beliefs to bring about a change in the way we would respond to such a situation. Being a doer of the word brings about a difference in our "doing" than what we would have done without the word in our hearts!

**:4 “have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?”** Partiality is here shown to be the result of two things. First, it is the desire to quickly judge our fellow man. The word "prejudice" is actually akin to the idea of "pre-judging" another, to pass judgment upon another without sufficient investigation. To judge a man by his clothing, and therefore consider him an undesirable in the assembly, while promoting the rich man to a seat of honor upon his first visit, is to judge both by their physical appearance, rather than seeing them both as souls equal in God's sight (see comments on James 1:9-11). Such judging produces “Christians” who are not "doers" God's word.

The "evil thoughts" spoken of here could be many. Would it not be evil to think of the rich man as a good man to know for personal reasons, rather than seeing him as a soul needing salvation? Would it not be evil to think of the poor man as a problem and a liability, and also offensive to one's senses, rather than a soul needing salvation? Such thoughts we must avoid, and allow the word of God to affect not only our actions, but also our thoughts!

**:5 “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?”**

We must here ask the question, "Has God chosen the poor simply because they are poor?" To believe such about God would be to make Him an unrighteous Judge, judging man on a materialistic level, only to the opposite extremes that man judges his fellow man. Certainly our experiences in life have shown us that there are those who are poor that are very ungodly. The point of this verse is that, as a rule, it is the poor who have a richness of faith and love for God.

The point has often been made that the terms "rich" and "poor" are relative terms, that is, it depends upon whom we are compared to as to whether we would be considered rich or poor. This is a valid point. Compared to 90% of the world's population, even the poorest among us here in America are the elite of the world. On the other hand, if our status were to be compared to that of Gates, Winfrey, or Trump, we would appear quite poor! What then can we conclude about ourselves? The principle is clear that the more we possess, the more difficult it is for man to be "rich in faith." This is not to say it is impossible to have both. On the other hand, we must also take into account the human motivations and methods used to acquire that wealth. In America, the amount of effort and time required to have the basic standards of "civilized" life, (hot and cold running water, etc.), is very small when compared to third world countries. I am not attempting to justify Americans, but simply making the point that it is not how much we have that determines our spiritual abilities to have faith in God, but it is rather how much our possessions have us! How much of our "soul" have we sold to have what we have materialistically?

**:6 “But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?”** One commentator on these verses has said, "It is odd to honor one's executioners while injuring one's friends!" The thought being that it was usually the wealthy and the powerful that were persecuting Christians, not the poor. Yet the temptation to favor the well to do and to treat the poor poorly was ever present.

It may be noted here that we usually think of wealth as derived from secular business, yet in our Bible studies we can see that most of the persecutions leveled toward the early Christians were from a religious/political power base, (see Acts 4:1-3, Acts 5:17-18, Acts 12:1-4). Christians will not find persecution coming from business unless Christians oppose the products or services that they offer. (For example, the movie industry.) We will find, however, that as this nation moves farther from God, most persecution will again come from the politically powerful, and those of false religion who have aligned themselves with the politically powerful.

To round out this discussion we refer to I Corinthians 1:26 in which we learn that not many "mighty," and not many "noble" are called. Paul does not rule out the possibility,

but rather states how unlikely and seldom it does occur that those of position and power humble themselves before God.

Yet another angle needs to be discussed in regards to poverty today in America. One would be foolish to say that it does not exist. However today, due to our welfare system, there is a growing segment of our population that may fall under the category of the "professionally poor." These are those who have learned how to fulfill the government requirements of "poverty" in order to continue being kept by the government. Due to such programs, it may be more difficult for the Christian today to recognize the truly needy from those who only know dependence. We must not, however, grow skeptical and bitter toward the poor, but rather wisely discern those who have integrity, while not allowing the church to be used by those who do not. Unfortunately, with any generation there have probably been those who seek to abuse the generosity of others.

In modern America, however, this problem has been greatly intensified as the result of well-meaning social programs. In reality, social programs that are built upon the foundation of Christian principles will not work effectively when that foundation is no longer there. I find it sad to hear humanists discussing and reporting the daily news concerning our social problems, while still clinging "religiously" to the root of the problem. Murder, abortion, AIDS, prostitution, rape, drug abuse; what are the answers? New social programs? Government sponsored education? The government has already "sponsored" the education of a generation by taking God out and implanting evolution and humanism in His place! We are now reaping the results.

**:7 “Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?”** Some see this verse as a reference to the name "Christian" by which the disciples were called first at Antioch (Acts 11:26). "Christian" is simply a descriptive name given to those who are "of Christ." Whether James is referring to the term "Christian," or simply those who were "of Christ," the point remains the same.

By the very definition of the word, one cannot blaspheme names belonging to men. To "blaspheme" is to speak irreverently of God and of sacred things. If our "faith" is called after the name of a man, whether ancient or modern, we do not have in common "that noble name" by which the first century disciples were known.

**:8 “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well:”** Although we may tend to think that this chapter has been concerned with the evils of wealth, the real issue all along has been love, loving our neighbor just as we love ourselves, and that means our neighbors on both sides of the tracks!

This verse draws upon Old Testament Scripture (Leviticus 19:18), and describes it as the "royal law." The word translated "royal" means "of or belonging to a king." Such a passage reminds us of Jesus' statement when asked, "What is the great commandment of the law?" Jesus answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This indeed is His "royal" law, the law that governs all other laws given to man.

It is worthwhile for us to note here that the same word for "law" (nomon), is used here as in James 1:25. There the "perfect law of liberty" is unanimously understood to

refer to the New Covenant, while here in verse 8 the same word is used to speak concerning Old Testament commandments. This serves to show that we must not only read the words, but also consider the context or the ways in which those words are used. It will also serve to help us in our understanding if we stop seeing the Old and New Testaments as opposites, and start seeing them as they were meant to be, the New fulfilling the Old (Matthew 5:17)!

**:9 “But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.”** Hence the point James has been making all along, that if we show partiality we are guilty of sin. From verse 1 of this chapter James has been pressing this point. If we are to be of Christ, we will hold the faith without partiality. We are now told that if we fall to the temptation of being partial to some, it is not just a social error, we are guilty of sin! The words translated "show partiality" in the New King James Version could also be literally translated "receive the face." It is an unusual compound word in the Greek, here referring to the human error of judging people due to their outward appearance, rather than on a spiritual basis.

When Christians behave in such a way, it is the law that convicts them as transgressors. Here again we find the word "law" being used. In this case I find it more difficult to determine which "law" the author is referring to (see comments on verse 8). The context would indicate that the Old Testament and the law it contained is our subject (see verses 8,10,11). Yet in verse 12 James sums up this discussion and speaks again of that "law of liberty." Looking closely at verse 9, we find that the "law" that is spoken of is referred to as "convicting" in the present tense. James is not warning Christians concerning violations of a law that is no longer in effect!

The solution to this discussion is to more fully understand how that the "law of liberty" did not bring about an end to God's moral laws. Certainly God's view of what is right and wrong in man's social behavior has not changed. Such a position would contradict James 1:17. Yes, we can quote Ephesians 2:15-16, and Colossians 2:14-15, and make the point that the old law was abolished, and nailed to the cross. Yet we must be cautious about over-simplifying this important doctrinal issue. Although we often say that the entire Old Testament was abolished and nailed to the cross, is it not also true that we now follow the example of Christ, who Himself lived a perfect life according to the old law? The point is that we do now live under the new law of liberty, but we must see that contained within that law of liberty, is the old law fulfilled! Jesus did not destroy the principles God had worked so long to instill within the stubborn hearts of man, but rather Jesus has now satisfied the demands of that law by His perfect example. We now live perfected lives through His atonement on the cross, and by His Spirit that lives within us, we are enabled to keep those principles that God still wishes for man to follow. "Love your neighbor," "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," such is still God's will for mankind.

Was then the old law nailed to the cross? I believe it would be more accurate to say that the message of Colossians 2:14-17 is that it was not just the old law that was taken away, but rather through His death on the cross the accusations that law holds against sinful man were answered, they were, in effect, nailed to the cross. This indeed is the key to the new law, for contained within it is both law and the answer to law, the

perfect life and sacrifice of Jesus. Hence contradictory terms can be used in describing it both as "law" and "liberty"!

It must also be remembered that much of what was written within those "handwriting of requirements" were ordinances and ceremonial requirements that were given in preparation for the Messiah who was to come (see Hebrews 9:11-15 / Hebrews 10:1-4). Moreover, before His coming, God chose to prepare the world to be blessed by His Son through His chosen people, the Jews. Both goals have now been accomplished. Thus it is necessary for us to view those things which "were written before were written for our learning," (Romans 15:4), "yet taken out of the way," (Colossians 2:14). May we allow Jesus as the fulfillment of that law to be our teacher, and those to whom were given the keys to the kingdom of heaven, (Matthew 16:19 / II Peter 1:20-21), to further explain the application of His teachings here on earth. This is certainly an important part of "rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15 / Hebrews 9:16-22).

**:10 "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all."** The principle now recited is a basic principle of "law" in general. It matters not what law we are discussing, for the above statement to be true. Break one part of the law, and you are guilty of breaking the law! We do not have to, for example, violate every traffic law on the books to be found guilty and fined. It only takes one violation, (how well we know!) James is not now trying to bury us beneath the burden of our sins, but is simply preparing us for his conclusion in verse 13.

**:11 "For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law."** James illustrates his point from the previous verse, by contrasting two of the Ten Commandments. One could be eternally loyal to his mate, and yet be a perpetual sinner, if he chooses to disregard God's law concerning murder. The same is true if we keep all Ten Commandments, and yet fail to love our neighbor.

**:12 "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty."** We are to be ever conscience in our daily speech and behavior, that the way we treat others will someday be taken into account when we are judged. What is James now saying? Is he saying that there is no room for error? Will we someday be judged by our own merits? Many have missed the point of this remarkable letter. Some have even seen it as a contradiction to the doctrine of grace. Martin Luther viewed it as such. Let us read on, that we not miss the point that James has been building to since verse 2:1.

**:13 "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."** We might say, "What goes around comes around." To show partiality always means to leave someone out. To mistreat one due to his poverty is to show no mercy, being void of God's love. If we are unable to have mercy toward others, how can we receive mercy from above? We may still want mercy, even beg for it, but blessed only are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7).

The bottom line of James' message is not one of hopelessness, but rather an encouragement to "get with the program"! Apply your religion! Don't just think about it,

do it! In the end mercy will win out over judgment, for we will be judged by that law of liberty. Praise Jesus that we can make such a claim.

**:14 “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?”** The reader may now be able to take a breath between verses 13 and 14, but only a breath, for James now begins a new thought from yet another angle concerning practical Christianity. The question posed is this; Is there any value in a "faith" that does not produce works? This opens a discussion that has occupied Christian minds since the beginning! Is there such a thing as faith without works? Is faith alone good enough? Is our faith what we say it is, or is it what we show it to be? The New International Version reads; "Can such faith save him?" The New American Standard Version says; "Can that faith save him?" These versions more clearly state the question James is asking, that is, can a "faith" that produces no works really be a saving kind of faith? Surely we know his answer before we read it!

**:15 “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,”** The theoretical question asked above, is now "planted" in an everyday situation to more fully show the difference between an active, working type of faith, and a dead, faith in "name only.”

**:16 “and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?”** It is refreshing to see how that ancient arguments can be solved in a moment of simple application. How can there be any support for such a "faith" as described above? Such a "faith" is not worthy to be called faith, for it demonstrates no evidence of its existence. James is speaking of a "faith" that simply does not work in real life situations! What value is it, to both the one in need, and the one who claims to "have it"? The answer is clear.

**:17 “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”** Man has a way of producing things that God never meant to be. Murder, the Tower of Babel, human kings, denominations, broken marriages, and the list goes on. Such is the subject of this verse. A "faith by itself" is a form of "faith" that was never meant to be. It is a human "creation" (perversion) from what God originally meant for man to have. James calls it a "dead" faith. It has no life. One might say it is a "faith" that has lost its faith! A “faithless” faith is no faith at all.

**:18 “But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”** The key words that need to be emphasized in this verse are "without" and "by.” Like the challenge Elijah made to the prophets of Baal, the proof is in the pudding. The true God will be determined by the results. In like manner, true faith is determined by the results it produces in the life of the one possessing it. James here puts forth an impossibility in order to make his point, "show me your faith without your works.” Here the argument is taken to its absurd conclusion in order to disprove it.

**:19 “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe -- and tremble!”** This written debate that James has been developing over the past four verses is now in full swing. To the man who thinks he can have faith without works, this thought is now presented. If your faith does not produce works of faith, then your "faith" is basically just an intellectual acceptance of the existence of God. James says, to have such a "faith" is to do well. Some see this statement as a bit of sarcasm, in essence saying, "Great! Even the demons have that kind of "faith"! Although examples of sarcasm can be found in the scriptures, this statement "You do well" could also be taken at face value. Perhaps the meaning is literally “You do well” to believe in the existence of the one God. The problem, however, is that those who merely believe in the existence of the one God and allow such faith to take them no farther, have really not distinguished themselves from the evil spiritual realm, who also definitely believe in the existence of God!

This verse truly gives us food for thought. We cringe at the thought of demon possession as found in the first century. We are appalled at the thought of Satanic cults now practicing their demonic rituals in secret gatherings. Now to our horror we learn that if we have a "action-less" faith, we have a great deal in common with the demon realm!

James even goes so far to say that demons believe to the extent that they tremble. Several references can be cited to give a further understanding of why such a fear should be found among demons. (See Revelation 20:10,15 / Revelation 12:7-12 / Matthew 8:29 / Luke 8:28-29 / I John 4:18 / II Peter 2:4) A brief study of these references will reveal that the demon realm not only believes in the existence of God, they unquestionably expect to face torment for what they are and whom they serve.

The question that begs to be answered at this point is, what are demons, and where did they come from? Certainly we would like to have more information to conclusively answer this question that Christian scholars have debated for generations. Some very prominent names and respected scholars have held to the theory that demons are disembodied spirits of evil men who somehow have been able to influence the minds and bodies of living people. Guy N. Woods in his commentary on James leans toward this concept, and I have read that Alexander Campbell once gave a speech to that effect. (I have not been able to find that speech in print.)

A second theory is that demons are wicked angels, which left their proper domain, and somehow are able to assist Satan and trouble humans before they are thrown into the lake of fire (see Jude :6 / II Peter 2:4).

Although either of these theories may be difficult to fathom, we do not really have any other more plausible explanation as to what demons are. We can be thankful that answering such questions are not necessary for our salvation.

**:20 “But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”** Such faith can only be described as "dead"! Whether one speaks of the "faith" of demons, or the "faith" of a spiritually idle man or woman, "life" cannot possibly be present under such conditions. Demons are creatures that are spiritually devoid of life for eternity. So will be the destiny of all human beings who choose to allow their faith to remain idle and fruitless.

**:21 “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?”** A case in point is now brought forth to center stage. Keeping with the "Jewish" flavor and tone of this letter, James brings out his "big guns" to make his point. To both Jewish and Gentile Christians alike, Abraham was, (and still is), respected as one of the few men whose faith reached such heights. Notice that Abraham is said to have offered his son on the altar. We know that Isaac was not actually sacrificed, (for God stopped Abraham), but the fact remains that Abraham did “offer” him on that altar is one of the most powerful examples of faith found anywhere in the Bible! The only reason Isaac lived to tell about it was due to God's intervention. Can we conceive of such faith? It was such a faith that justified Abraham before God. God had tested his servant, and His servant had passed with flying colors!

Some critics (and even some theologians) see James now writing in contradiction with the writings of Paul, particularly in Romans 4:1-4. If we were to isolate one sentence from each passage, it would appear that there was a contradiction. Such interpretation, however, lacks integrity and is basically dishonest. We must read and understand the whole passage if we are to properly compare these Bible teachings. James is saying that if it had not been for Abraham's willingness to put his faith into action, God would have been unable to use him in His service. Abraham's faith, if he persisted in being idle with it, would have been a dead, useless faith. Paul, however, in contrast to what James is saying, is dealing with the question of salvation, and upon what basis man is saved. His point throughout the book of Romans is that man is saved by grace through faith, and it is not something man can or ever will be able to earn by works! Paul is denouncing the idea of "works of merit" for the purpose of earning salvation, while James is teaching us about "works of faith" that flow naturally from the faithful heart of a Christian.

To sum up, if we have faith in the saving grace of God, (Paul's point), we will have works, (James' point). On the other hand, if we fail to have a faith that produces action, (James' teaching), we will most likely fall into the category of those who seek to justify themselves by the few ritualistic works that they do carry out, (Paul's teaching). It was truly a enlightening point in my life when I found that in practice it is those who are legalistic and trusting in their own works who are often the least productive in the Lord's service, while it is those who's faith is in the grace of God and not in themselves who are able to "move mountains." How would you describe your works? Are they "works of merit", or "works of faith"? Now try your hand at contrasting and comparing these two passages. You will find it a rewarding study.

**:22 “Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?”** James now questions his reader, and challenges our ability to perceive the basic key to Abraham's justification before God. Abraham's faith was demonstrated and made complete by his actions. Had Abraham not striven to carry out God's will, but simply remained at home, his faith would have been clearly seen as a dead faith. What would we think of Abraham today, if history had recorded that upon receiving God's command to offer his son, Abraham then leaned back in his chair, and began to explain why and how he had faith already, and did not need to further demonstrate it?

**:23 “And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.”**

With this verse we again find many who are confused between the ways that James and Paul uses this very same Old Testament quote in apparent opposition. (Romans 4:3 / Genesis 15:6) As has been discussed in the comments on verse 21, the contradiction does not exist. James is now summing up his point, and that is that Abraham was credited as a righteous man based upon his faith. His faith (belief) was proven to exist by his actions (works). James is not saying that a man is justified by his works alone, any more than Paul is saying that a man is justified by faith that refuses to work.

**:24 “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”** We can be very thankful that the Lord saw to it that this subject be thoroughly covered. James leaves no room for misunderstanding as he informs his readers that faith only is not enough. It is surprising that in light of this clear teaching, that there are so many today who do hold to the "faith only" doctrine. Then there are others who say they do not, yet in practice believe and teach that faith without works is a faith that can justify man before God. Such reasoning comes from a misunderstanding of grace. For fear of taking away from the doctrine of grace, man has missed the point now being made, that no matter how great our faith in God's saving grace is, if we respond with no effort and no obedience, there is therefore no justification!

May we be cautioned, however, to not overstate this point. James is not saying that faith + works = justification (salvation). Our faith does not earn 50% of our salvation while our works earn the rest! To believe such is to omit the blood of Christ entirely! It is the blood of our Redeemer upon which our confidence before the throne of God lies. James is only saying that your faith in Him must also be accompanied by works to be legitimate. It is His blood that paid 100% of the cost for our sins, (Ephesians 2:8-9), but it is only through a working, active faith in that blood, that man may find redemption.

**:25 “Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?”** In addition to the object lesson of Abraham's faith, we are now reminded of the actions of a much "lesser" figure in Jewish history. Rahab was not only a harlot (prostitute), but she was also not a Jew. Yet she too found justification in the eyes of God, due to her role in keeping and protecting those Israelites sent out to spy upon the city of Jericho. The point may here be made, that even those who are not of the spiritual "elite" can find the peace and protection of God through their willingness to do as He would want. Rahab did the work of God that was before her, and as a result she was found justified, and even may now find her name among the ancestry of Jesus (Matthew 1:5).

**:26 “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”**

We are now given an excellent definition of death. The body without (or separated from) the spirit is dead. Death is a separation. Physical death occurs when the life and the spirit of man no longer abides within that physical temple. James uses this common piece of information to illustrate what should be obvious to all by now, and that is that faith separated from works is also just as dead. To pay our respects to a loved one who has died, we visit the body that lies in state at the funeral home. Although our affections

are stirred by viewing the physical body of our loved one, we accept reality and allow that body to be buried. It must be, for it no longer lives. Such is the picture of our "faith" without works. It has no life, and no future.

## Chapter 2 Exam

1. In chapter 2:1-9, James is making the point that; A. All those who are rich are blasphemers and oppressors. B. Christians should not show partiality. C. All those who are poor are rich in faith.
  2. Showing partiality is in violation of what Bible teaching?
  3. Find the verse in this chapter that indicates that the early church assembled together.
  4. According to one verse in this chapter, the meaning of sin is \_\_\_\_\_.
  5. To keep from being guilty of breaking the whole law, how many could one break?
  6. If such is the case, what hope do we have?
  7. Can faith without works save us?
  8. Faith separate and apart from works is; A. A young faith. B. A dead faith. C. An inward faith.
  9. Which is possible, to show our faith without works, or to show our faith by our works?
  10. Name two people from the Old Testament who showed their faith by their works.
  11. Using this chapter, give a definition of "death."
  12. Now define a dead faith.
- BONUS! Explain the difference between the point Paul is making in Romans 4:1-4, and the point James is making in James 2:21-24.

### Chapter 3

**:1 “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall all receive a stricter judgment. :2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.”** We

begin our study of chapter 3 with a verse that, when taken by itself, may convey to some a completely different thought than that which was intended. Such a mistake would be in understanding "teaching" as a work to avoid, rather than a responsibility we must meet! James is certainly not contradicting the great commission, in which every Christian is to be a part of taking the gospel unto every nation. Nor is James saying that teaching is only for a "privileged few" to carry out. If such had been the case with the first century church, we most certainly would not have seen the phenomenal growth that occurred in their generation.

James is saying, however, that many should not (yet) become teachers, who upon self-inspection find their tongue to be uncontrolled and capable of doing much damage to those whom he may teach. The mistake is to understand James as disqualifying most people from being teachers, when in fact he is simply stating the qualities required of a teacher. To illustrate this point we might say, "Let not many of you become bus drivers, because we know that a bus driver has a much greater responsibility than others." We all know too well the results of a bus driver who fails to control his vehicle. Yet the search for new drivers willing to arise to the challenge continues. If you want to work, you don't let the qualifications disqualify you, instead you practice, study, and prepare that you may meet those qualifications!

The same must be true with all Christians. Some who "hide" behind James' warning, are in effect saying, "I don't qualify and I don't care." Yet others may be saying, "I don't qualify and I don't believe that I ever can." Still others are saying, "I am so afraid of failing as a teacher, I will not take the first steps toward becoming one."

For those who have a "don't care" attitude, we must not first be concerned about their becoming a teacher, but rather their becoming a Christian! Being a Christian and not wanting to teach others, is to live a contradiction. To be a Christian is to care.

For those who don't believe they can become a teacher, they reveal a serious problem in their very words. Such is a lack of faith, not in ourselves, but rather in God. To "not believe" in our ability to become what God wants, is to "not believe" in His power to change. We may think ourselves to be very humble with such statements, but in reality we are showing a total lack of faith in God to be able to change us. In fact, for them He *is* unable, for they refuse to look at Him, and choose rather to stare at themselves! These same points also apply to those who fear trying. They too are so faithless and caught up in themselves, that the thought of reaching out to others, (and thus out of themselves), overwhelms their feeble faith in God.

Once we get past the objections, however, we must qualify what is meant by "teaching." Certainly the Lord does not expect everyone to be a "classroom" teacher. Such passages as Ephesians 4:11 and I Corinthians 12:29 reveal that not everyone is given the "gift" of teaching. It should be obvious to us that it is those who have a particular talent or gift of teaching who should be given the opportunities to teach in group situations on a regular basis. To not do so would be to allow gifts from God to be left unused. Yet we must see that teaching goes far beyond the classroom. We must remember that no matter what our gifts, we each have responsibilities to teach in other

ways. In Titus 2:1-10 we find older men being instructed to teach with the virtues of their lives, older women teaching the younger women with their examples and their experience, and elders (Titus 1:9 / I Timothy 3:2) being described as men who are able to teach others due to their own ability to hold tightly to the word. Even parents must sooner or later come to grips with the fact that they too must be teachers. It is in accepting each of our individual roles as "teachers" that the work of the Lord is carried out. In joyfully accepting this great responsibility, we just may find that our abilities to teach and influence a sin-sick world are far greater than we ever would have imagined! But then, isn't that what "faith" is all about?

**:3 “Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.”** The most basic of all teaching tools is not visual aids or class materials, it is the tongue. The tongue is not the only way to teach, but it is the most frequently used and flexible tool a Christian has to teach the untaught. Yet with all its promise, it is also the most difficult to control. This becomes an extremely dangerous fact when we realize how much the tongue controls us! The illustration of turning a horse with the bit in its mouth, fitly describes how man can be controlled by his mouth as well.

**:4 “Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.”** Without being either knowledgeable of ships or horses, the point should now be coming home clear to us. Large ships and large animals are controlled and steered by small steering devices.

**:5 “Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!”** The relatively small size of the tongue does not mean that it is incapable of exerting a tremendous influence upon humanity. Unfortunately this great influence can either be for good or bad. The subject on through verse 12 is that of the bad influence and destruction the tongue can bring to the soul for whom it speaks, and to all others within reach.

**:6 “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.”** The illustration of fire now being developed is even more frightening to me than the previous illustrations. Because I failed to check on a wood-burner stove as a teenager, my parents lost two sheds and contents, and had it not been for the unusually quick response of the local fire department, we would definitely have lost everything! Over the years I have thought many times about the power that was unleashed by that single match I had used to start that fire a few hours earlier. As great as the fear and helplessness I felt as that fire raced out of control, I now realize how true it is that the tongue can do even more damage. Although "the fire" is a permanent part of my memory, I carry hurts and scars left from hateful words that go much deeper. The same is true for anyone who has lived in this world.

As a fire can be "set" or started with combustible materials, so the tongue is so "set" or positioned within our bodies that it has access to enough materials to defile and eventually destroy the whole body. The tongue may draw upon all the memories, knowledge, and words that the brain can conceive. The tongue even can "burn" on the feelings and emotions generated by the soul. The tongue, despite its great potential for good, is granted such a powerful position within the body that, more often than not, it seizes that power to blaze a trail of self-willed destruction.

This "destruction" is described as setting "on fire the course of nature." The KJV translates this the "wheel of nature," literally the "wheel of birth or generation." Some today see this expression as a reference to the false doctrine of reincarnation. The expression "wheel of birth" is similar to some expressions of Buddhism, however we must not read into a passage some pre-conceived idea. The point here is not to imply any "wheel of birth" in which man *continually comes back* in different life forms upon this earth, but rather the point is how the whole of life is set on fire by the misuse of the tongue. It is not incorrect to speak of life as a "cycle," however it is quite different to speak of the soul of man as "re-cycling"!

**:7 "For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind."** Since Adam and Eve man has shown his ability to use the power given to him by God in having dominion over the animal kingdom (Genesis 1:28). It may be argued that there are some animals man has not "tamed," however we must accept this verse as a statement of general fact that man has gained the upper hand upon all creatures. In a generation in which the largest land and sea animals are facing extinction, and the most vicious are reduced to caged performances at the crack of a whip, man's dominion over the animals should be clearer than ever. However we must see that verse seven does not stand alone, it is merely an illustration of the point to follow.

**:8 "But no man can tame the tongue, is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."** There are two points that must be made here, lest we misunderstand. We must first of all emphasize the word "man." Indeed no man can tame the tongue. James is not saying that the tongue cannot be controlled. To say that would be to make God out to be one who gives man an impossible task. A large segment of God's will for man is concerned with man's control and proper use of the tongue. James is not now saying that's impossible! The emphasis is that man *himself* cannot tame it. Paul's remorse over his sins in Romans 7 conclude with a statement of desperation, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" His answer happily follows, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

It may also be helpful to place some emphasis upon the word "tame." No man can tame the tongue in the sense that it will always have the capability of returning to its previous uncontrolled state. There are no guaranteed methods by which the human tongue can be permanently rendered harmless. Man, who can tame the savage beast, cannot tame his own tongue, unless Jesus is consistently at the controls of our heart.

**:9 "With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God."** The horror of the "tongue problem" is the contradictions it creates. Hypocrisy is the one trait that all men seem to hate. Other sins are sometimes glorified by man, but I know of no one who would speak well of a hypocrite. In this light, it is quite a blow to our consciousness to think of the times we have used the same tongue to curse a man, having praised God just moments before!

Perhaps we do not see this verse as applying to ourselves, especially if we do not have a problem with cursing or swearing. We must realize that one does not have to verbally "curse" another to use the tongue for that purpose. To use the tongue as a weapon against another human being, is to begin the process of "cursing men." How many children have been "cursed" by their parents? How many wives have been

"cursed" by their husbands? How many lives have been destroyed by the "curses" placed upon them by a hateful and uncontrolled tongue?

Such thoughts are upsetting, but at the same time we must not give up hope. That is not the point of this letter. James is, however, bringing us to the point of conviction over our own sins, that we may be so concerned and so determined to stop these excesses, that we will allow the solutions provided by the gospel to take root in our heart, bearing fruit through the very use of our tongues.

**:10 “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.”** In the movies the Native Americans often condemned the white man for speaking with "forked tongue." James proclaims such a problem should not exist, with anyone! To use the tongue to speak good and at a different time and place to speak evil, is to have a "forked tongue" even if no promises are broken to man, for in essence we have broken our promise to God.

If nothing else has reached us in this passage, perhaps this will. The next time we speak evil to or about another, or are tempted to use the tongue in any evil manner, we must first consider that the one to whom we are speaking is made in the likeness of God. To speak evil of anyone is to speak evil of God. This does not mean we cannot correct one another, or point out sin. Yet regardless of the sin in that person's life, he is still God's creation. By separating the sinner from the sin we can make tremendous headway in our battle with the tongue.

**:11 “Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?”** This chapter is rich in illustrations. Those who are familiar with country life have fond memories of crystal-clear springs with which the family or livestock was continuously supplied with clean fresh water. A spring that you had known for years posed no threat of bitterness or poison one day, and fresh again the next. A spring just doesn't change like that. In the same way the tongue is abnormal to behave in such a way.

**:12 “Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs?”** No spring can yield both salt water and fresh. In the same way the plant kingdom does not send out mixed signals. Plants do not bear fruit that is a contradiction to the nature of the plant. A fig tree that bears olives as its fruit would be brought into question as to being a fig tree! Likewise a Christian whose tongue bears fruit that resembles the fruit of a non-Christian brings into question his Christianity. Just who is in the driver's seat behind an out-of-control tongue? To say it is the Spirit of God is a serious accusation. We must conclude that to continuously allow the tongue to speak bitterness is to relinquish as least a part of oneself to Satan's guidance.

With these thoughts we come to the close of this specific discussion of the tongue, yet we must understand that the subject is not closed. James now moves on to further tie together the various thoughts of this great letter. Seeking wisdom, facing trials, showing partiality, being doers and not just hearers, faith without works, and the dangers of the tongue, have all been subjects of these first 3 chapters. Now we discuss further the background and the solutions to these matters.

**:13 “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.”** It sounds like we are now back to chapter 2 and the subject of faith and works! This also goes back to 1:5 concerning wisdom. But now these background thoughts are brought together. Here James issues the challenge, "Are you wise?" (Most of us would like to think so!) "Then show it with

your good conduct!" If your behavior is bad, at times contradicting what you stand for, then your source of wisdom is questioned. Where do we "shop" for our wisdom? Is our wisdom a "hodge-podge" of left-over philosophies and superstitions we have collected over the years from countless unreliable sources? We can only know by the behavior our wisdom produces.

**:14 "But you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth."** A smart shopper knows that it is the quality of the product itself, and not the packaging, that counts. If the spirit of a man holds envy and is basically selfish in his heart, he can make all the claims he wants about being wise and spiritual, but James pronounces him a liar.

**:15 "This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic."** We now dig even deeper into this unpleasant business of analyzing the problem of bad behavior, bad fruit, and the contradictory Christian life.

A so-called wise man that still harbors bitterness and selfishness in his heart is running on the wrong fuel. Such wisdom is not wisdom at all, and is only viewed as "wise" in the eyes of the world. This evil-producing "wisdom" has its roots in this world, is tied to sensual desires, and is directly connected to the demon realm! With these words James eliminates any middle ground. One is either Godly wise or Devil-driven. To live in this world and enjoy the blessings of God is not evil, but to live *for this world* and for the satisfaction of the physical appetites is to join the team both in the flesh and in the spiritual realm that are in Satan's service.

**:16 "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there."** Those who have joined Satan's "all volunteer" army also join themselves to a complex set of social problems. One doesn't invite an invading army into one's home without expecting chaos. While envy and selfishness may seem "wise" to the individual, by the time Satan has finished marching through one's life with his troops, little will remain that is not tangled and destroyed. Satan does not allow man to take only the sin of his choice. He always sells packaged deals. Confusion and every evil thing is part of the deal.

**:17 "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."** The wisdom that is now to be discussed is the opposite of the false "wisdom" mentioned in verses 14 through 16. In those verses "demonic wisdom" from the depths of evil are contrasted with God's wisdom which is from above. These two "kinds" of wisdom are totally different, and derive their power or motivation from the most opposite sources in the universe. After studying the "wisdom" that is ultimately from Satan, we now look closely at the true wisdom that is from above.

First, it is pure, that is, set apart. Godly wisdom is unlike any wisdom of this world. The God-given wisdom that Solomon possessed excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt, to the point that the queen of Sheba exclaimed concerning his wisdom, "indeed the half was not told me" (I Kings 10:7). To think that the very same source of wisdom is available to Christians today, who "ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach" (James 1:5).

Secondly, heavenly wisdom is peaceable and gentle. Jesus pronounced a blessing upon the peacemaker in Matthew 5:9, for to strive to make peace is the earmark of wisdom. To seek to use one's wisdom in such a way to create discord or strife, would

overwhelm whatever wisdom one would otherwise have to share. Discord is to be avoided when at all possible, without compromising that which is pure and good in God's sight. Gentleness is a part of being peaceable. Such wisdom does not attempt to bring about that which would discourage or harm another.

Third, Christian wisdom is "willing to yield." Some translations have it "easy to be entreated." The thought contained in these words is to possess the attitude that makes one easy to talk to, and able to re-evaluate matters as they occur. This quality should not be only in matters of conflict, but in everyday life. By constantly "adjusting and tinkering" with one's life and all the values and beliefs he possesses, man is able to grow daily in the wisdom he possesses from above.

Forth, man is encouraged to develop the kind of wisdom that is full of mercy and good fruits. In this way wisdom is manifested to others more than perhaps any other way. Our theories and thoughts of wisdom are of little value when we show no mercy toward our fellow man, and when our fruits of the Spirit are not seen (Galatians 5:22-23). James concludes that having such Godly wisdom will naturally eliminate partiality and hypocrisy, taking us back to the subject matter of the previous chapter of James. All that James has taught us thus far in God's wonderful letter, is to help the reader develop true wisdom from above.

**:18 "Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."**

This chapter concludes with a verse that is quite simple, yet very profound. It connects with the heavenly wisdom we have been studying. The good fruit that comes from such wisdom is the righteousness that God wills and brings about in the faithful Christian's life. However we find here a "cycle" being described. That cycle is what we might call the "cycle of peace." One who gets his wisdom from God will sow or plant righteousness while being at peace, but only because he has endeavored to make peace. It is a cycle. Those who make peace will be better able to "plant" peace, like a righteous tree saved and nourished by God.

## Chapter 3 Exam

1. What does a "bit" in a horse's mouth have in common with the human tongue?
2. Name two other illustrations James gives showing the power of the tongue.
3. Why does James start out talking about teachers, (masters KJV), and end up talking about the dangers of the tongue? A. teachers usually have more problems with their tempers B. only teachers can misuse their tongues C. the more we say, the more good or bad can be done with the tongue
4. When James says, "Let not many of you become teachers" he is: A. trying to discourage Christians from teaching B. warning his brethren that teachers have a greater responsibility for the words they utter C. saying that only a small percentage of Christians should teach
5. According to James, what is the opposite of earthly, sensual, demonic wisdom?
6. According to James, what kind of people are able to sow the fruit of righteousness?
7. If the same tongue (person) blesses God and curses men, how has that person contradicted himself?
8. When James says in this chapter, "No man can tame the tongue" he means; A. man has no hope in controlling the tongue B. without God's wisdom from above the tongue becomes a deadly poison C. the less we say the better
9. If envy and self-seeking are continually present in our lives, then what else will be in our lives?
10. James uses the word "teacher" to mean; A. those who use their tongue to instruct others B. only those who teach publicly in a classroom C. only those who teach strangers or non-Christians

## Chapter 4

**:1 “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?”** One would have to say chapter 4 comes in with a "roar." We are at first surprised by the extremely strong words used, but even more so when we consider to whom James is speaking. Throughout this letter we find the phrase "my brethren" used repeatedly. There is no doubt that James is writing to Christians. With that in mind we must accept the fact that some very serious contentions had arisen within the early church, not long after its establishment. We cannot assume that such strife was in every congregation or church, but it is clear that to those to whom this letter was originally written, such fighting was known and present. We may assume that, (beginning with verse 1), James is no longer speaking of minor differences or discord in this chapter, but rather major outbursts of contention that could be classified as "fights" and "wars." James informs his readers that such extreme discord among the brethren was to be blamed only upon the most vile of motives. In this case he ties-in the wars that were raging, directly with the lusts for pleasure that were within those responsible.

The words "desire" and "pleasure" usually bring to mind desires of a sexual nature, but it is not likely this is the meaning here. There are many other forms of evil desires that bring a form of "pleasure" to the wicked. Just the desire to prove another wrong, or to prove oneself right, could easily be implied. Also the desire to gain power or to assert authority is another aspect of those evil desires that could bring about such disputes. The word "members" could be interpreted two ways in this verse. It may refer to the members of the church, but it is more likely referring to the members within the individual himself. Such is the use of the word in James 3:6. In either case the same result is seen, and that is with such desires warring within, the church will most certainly be at war.

**:2 “You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.”** The individual(s) being described here could, in modern terms, be described as "armed and extremely dangerous." James is not speaking of a physical war with actual weapons, however, but in a spiritual sense a war was taking place. One who has strong desires and is not willing to bring them under subjection to God, is conflict waiting to happen. As men lose faith in God, so also are removed the invisible restraints upon man's lusts. When this happens within the church, the results are devastating.

The ironic note of this verse is that it is all so unnecessary! Those that were responsible for the "war" did not have what they wanted simply because they chose to take it by force, rather than by prayer.

**:3 “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”** They did not have because they did not ask. God was left entirely out of the picture, while they waged a needless and useless war. The "war" referred to here was most likely a verbal war, that is, a war of "tongues." This is not to rule out physical acts of violence, for any war of tongues both then and now most assuredly lends itself to physical expressions of anger. Regardless of how far this enmity had gone, the point of this passage is to reveal the root causes of wars and fights.

Let's summarize the reasons for discord in the church as discussed in this chapter thus far.

1. Uncontrolled desires that thirst for that which we do not have
2. Not having because of a failure to ask of God
3. Not having because of a failure to use what we have or seek as God would want

Upon close inspection, these three errors are the basic reasons for the unrest of mankind. Certainly many of the wars and social problems of our time are quite complex, and may go back many years and through many generations, but the root cause of the wars of man can always be traced back to the problem of seeking "man's kingdom" rather than God's! If all mankind were in submission to and a part of God's kingdom, how could "wars" possibly exist?

To ask "amiss" is to "miss" the target. To pray with selfish, sensual motives, with sinful intentions and at the expense of others, is like aiming at the wrong target. Such "stray" prayers cannot possibly be expected to "hit," that is to be granted God's blessings.

Both in verse 1 and verse 3 "pleasures" are mentioned as a part of the motivation for strife among mankind. Without detracting from this point, it is also important for us to not misunderstand and go to the extreme of believing "pleasure" in itself to be evil. I Timothy 4:3-5 speaks of the pleasures of life that are to be received with thanksgiving in the manner in which God has prescribed. It is impossible to read I Corinthians 7 without seeing God's stamp of approval upon the proper fulfillment of the sexual desires. A balanced view of God's will for man is that pleasures can be a part of a Christian's life, however those who have broken away from God's control must realize that those same pleasures can become the source of all forms of evil.

**:4 "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."** Some translations do not contain in this passage the word "adulterers" in its masculine form, but the message is still the same. Any and all, (both men and women), who chose friendship with the world over friendship with God, have become guilty of adultery in their relationship with God. It appears that only "adulteresses" was used in the original text, signifying the relationship between mankind and God (see Revelation 21:2 / Galatians 3:28).

It is important to understand the accusations of this verse are in regard to mankind's spiritual relationship with God. There are various passages of scripture in which the term "adultery" is used to refer to unfaithfulness in a spiritual sense. A similar usage of "adulterous" is found in Matthew 12:39, in which Jesus denounces an entire generation for their seeking after signs rather than accepting the good news He was proclaiming. On another very similar occasion in Matthew 16:4 Jesus makes almost an identical statement using the word "adulterous" in this way. On yet another occasion recorded in Mark 8:38, we find Jesus using this familiar description of the generation to whom He was preaching. In Ezekiel 23:37 we find the word "adultery" referring to the unfaithfulness of Israel and Judah, to God in their going after idols, and even offering human sacrifices to their false gods. The point of James 4:4 is now clear, that those who seek to be "true blue" friends of the world end up being true "enemies" of God.

**:5 “Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?"** In what is one of the most difficult verses in this letter to interpret, beginning with the word "or," James continues his discussion of the enmity between God and the world.

One of the problems we face in understanding the exact meaning of this verse is that there is no passage of Scripture that contains this exact statement. It may be concluded therefore that rather than this being an exact quote from the Old Testament, James is perhaps referring to a basic teaching of the Scriptures found in many places. To determine what that teaching is, we must also determine which "spirit" is being spoken of. The original language does not employ capitalization as does English, therefore the "spirit" is capitalized in English based upon the context in which it is found. Due to the sentence in which we now find the "spirit" being discussed, some translators have decided to omit the capital "S," seeing this verse as speaking of the spirit of man. Other translations, however, capitalize "Spirit," thus saying that it is the Spirit of God that yearns jealously (see the New King James Version). Rather than belabor the pros and cons of this issue in this brief commentary, may it suffice to say that both interpretations do no violence to the Scriptures. It does, however, seem to be more fitting with the context (verses 1-4), that it is the Spirit of God, (who dwells within man), that yearns jealously for man, when he is unfaithful to God by becoming friends with the world.

In Exodus 34:14 we are told that God is a jealous God, and that His name is Jealous! We may be shocked by such a statement, but being clear scripture it is our job to accept and understand it. Jealousy, when applied to man, usually denotes an evil ill will toward those who have that which we want. We must realize that there are some things which are wrong for man, yet are appropriate for God, due to the fact that He is God. Does not God command our worship? Yet no man may accept the worship of others (see Acts 10:26). Does God not have the right to earnestly desire our affections, at the exclusion of all others? Also we must realize that human terms and emotions are often used to help man understand God. For example, God, seeing the evil of mankind, "repenting" or being "sorry" that He made man (Genesis 6:6-8). For man to be jealous of that which is not rightfully his, is a far cry from the jealousy that God has for man, whom He not only created, but that He also gave His own Son in order to redeem!

**:6 “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."** The first sentence of this verse is connected with the thoughts of verse 5. If the "Spirit" of verse 5 is referring to the Spirit of God, (as proposed above), then it follows that it is the Spirit of God who gives grace to mankind due to man's adultery against God. It is due to God's love and mercy that man has received grace. Man certainly cannot point to his great spiritual "track-record" as a basis for receiving God's grace. If it were not for God's great love for mankind, the grace of God would most definitely not be available to man.

The last half of this verse is a definite quote from Proverbs 3:34. The context in which this verse is found sheds further light on this thought. For those who seek to "have it their way" and live in wickedness, the curse of God will be upon them. Those who choose to resist God will be resisted by God in turn. But for those who choose to humble themselves to God, submitting to His ways, grace will be given. Mankind must understand that he can't enjoy freedom *away from* God, and at the same time expect the rich blessings that come with being His children. One eliminates the other. The pride of

man leaves no room for the grace of God. It is not a matter of there being a shortage of grace, it is a matter of incompatibility. A Goldfish cannot dwell with a piranha. The bad must go, or the good will be destroyed.

**:7 “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”** As each verse builds upon the one previous, the principle quoted from Proverbs is now spelled out. To those brethren who are at war with one another, and to all who seek to serve the Lord, the cure is simple. Submit to God! You can say what you want, argue for weeks, and reason indefinitely, but if there is no submission to God, there will be no peace.

In conjunction with submitting to God, the reader is also instructed to resist the devil. Would it not be doing injustice to God's word to attempt to practice one side of this commandment without the other? To simply try to resist the devil without drawing near to God would be a losing proposition (see Matthew 12:43 / I Peter 1:22 / Ephesians 4:27-5:2). To attempt to draw near to God while not resisting the devil, would be an equally impossible task.

It is my experience that one's success in keeping either side of this commandment is "mirrored" by the other side. If one chooses to not draw too near to God in his life, he will also find the devil quite "irresistible" at times. Choosing to only occasionally resist the devil will definitely make drawing near to God a chore. This is not a "chicken and the egg" situation, however, for we are promised the strength to resist if we wholeheartedly turn from Satan in our determination to submit to God's grace (Ephesians 6:11-17 / James 4:10). The message is, we must avoid half-measures! Such efforts meet only with frustration and defeat (Revelation 3:15-16).

**:8 “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”** For those who are constantly stumbling, and losing ground daily in their Christian walk, the solution is now given. Draw near to God and He will be there! You can't expect to be close to God if you moved away from Him, or have always kept Him at a distance. Would it not be correct to say that God is everywhere, except within the human heart that refuses Him? The question may now be asked, "What is the "substance" that puts distance between man and God?" The answer is quite obviously not miles or any earthly matter, but rather the human will. The will of man that has, from the beginning chosen to know evil over obedience to God, is that which has driven man from the presence of God. To draw near to God is to jettison man's stubborn will. Once done the process of cleansing may begin, both outside, (hands), and inner, (heart), cleansing is brought about by submitting the will of man to the will of God.

**:9 “Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning your joy to gloom.”** To the reader who is convicted of his sin, these words go directly to the heart. The repentance that James hopes to bring about in his readers will produce the events described in this verse. When rebellious sin of the heart brings about serious conflicts within the church, it is a time of mourning, not laughing! This is a good indicator of the condition of one's heart in relation to God. Does the realization of sins bring about lamentation? Are we still able to feel the "sting" of sin, or have we grown dull and insensitive to the darts of the evil one (Ephesians 6:16 / Matthew 5:4 / I Timothy 4:1-2)?

It should be mentioned, however, that this verse alone was never meant to be an outline of how Christians should behave as a way of life. To live a life of "gloom and doom" is not in keeping with the example Christians should portray to the world, but rather here is described as the appropriate response to sin. Jesus Himself said that He had come to give us life, and that we may have it "more abundantly (John 10:10)." Is there any doubt that Christians are and should be the happiest people on earth (Matthew 5:12 / I Thessalonians 5:16 / II Corinthians 6:10 / Philippians 4:11)?

**:10 "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."** A popular hymn quotes the words of this powerful verse. Humility was mentioned in verse 6 as the virtue necessary to receive grace from God. There it is placed in opposition to the human vice of "pride." If man is ever to come to peace with God, it will only be through total humility.

It would be easy to misunderstand the intent of this verse. James is not saying that we must put ourselves down so that God will lift us up. The meaning of the word "humility" is not "to put yourself down." "Humility" is, in a sense, a "lowering" when compared to "pride," however the end result of humility is to neither think more or less of yourself, but rather to not think of yourself at all! James is speaking to those who are proud, who have instigated "wars" and fights within themselves or within the church, and now he is urging them to humble themselves so that they may be able to submit to God. In so doing, an amazing spiritual phenomena will take place, those who humble themselves (according to God's view), will be lifted up!

**:11 "Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge."** Most versions of the Bible show a new paragraph beginning with this verse. Where we were previously considering man's relationship to God, we now return to problems of the tongue among the brethren.

In this verse speaking evil of another (Christian) is equated to speaking evil of the law. To "speak evil" of another here refers to speaking against or slandering (with impure motives) a brother or sister. We can be sure James is not condemning the practice of correcting and even rebuking a brother or sister who has become caught up in sin. Such an interpretation would be in direct contradiction with many other passages of scripture. The following verses teach Christians to correct one another (II Timothy 4:2 / Matthew 7:1-5 / James 5:19 / Titus 1:13).

Speaking evil of a brother can be exaggerating the facts, or placing one's own interpretation upon insufficient facts, placing another in an unfavorable light. One may also speak evil of a brother by telling the truth, but doing so with the wrong motives. Our motives should always be to bring about the will of God, both in our lives and in the lives of others. Slander has nothing to do with the will of God. It is offered only to degrade and to hurt. The motive may be to make oneself look good by putting down another, or even to draw attention away from oneself, with the result always being destructive.

To speak evil of another in such a manner is to put ourselves on equality with God. Such have appointed themselves both Judge and Lawgiver. Such is also the height of arrogance and blasphemy. May we never cross that line between humbly teaching those in sin, and assuming a judgmental attitude toward others.

**:12 "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?"** We are simply to understand that there is only *one* Lawgiver, which

leaves no room for any others! No man can be a Giver of the Law, it is rather our duty to be doers of the Law. Not only is man not a Lawgiver, he is also not empowered with the ability to save or destroy (condemn) anyone. In the final analysis it will be God and God alone who will determine those who are to be saved and those who are not. Once man has these basic principles clear in mind, he can then go about carrying out his purposes as a Christian that is to obey in his own life, and to teach and instruct others in God's Law.

It must again be made clear, however, that this verse does not prohibit Christians from exhorting and counseling those, who by their fruits, have shown a lack of respect and submission to God's will (Matthew 23:15-20 / I Thessalonians 5:14 / I Corinthians 5:1-5). Primarily at stake in this discussion is this basic question: "When I teach or correct another, am I allowing God's will and His word to be my guide, or am I assuming the role of God in my assumptions concerning His word and my fellow man?"

**:13 "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;"** Yet one final paragraph is included in this chapter, as man and his plans for the future are discussed in light of eternity. As has been the nature of this letter, we find many new thoughts and directions being taken throughout each chapter, yet at the same time familiar themes keep re-occurring, and connecting threads are usually to be found. Here the connection seems to be the reality of man's plight. Rather than attempting to fill God's role as the final judge of mankind, we must be ever conscience of how fragile and temporary our existence upon this earth truly is.

Beginning with this verse, James assumes the role of debating with one who has great plans. He even supplies the one with whom he is debating a statement revealing the error of his ways. The plans have been made, the time and the business venture has been determined. What has this ancient businessman left out?

**:14 "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."** We now learn of his error. It was not that his plan was flawed, it was rather his assumption that he would be alive to carry it out! Man has the remarkable ability of making absolutely definite plans while having absolutely no assurance that tomorrow will come!

James now questions the nature of ones life itself. What is it? Looking from eternity life has the duration of a vapor. The brevity of a puff of steam, (perhaps one's own breath on a cold night), is a fitting illustration of just how brief life really is.

**:15 "Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."** The point is that for man to make any plans or goals without seriously considering the will of God first, will someday find time has run out. Eventually all godless men and women will learn that the life they have been living was not their own!

The instruction to say "If the Lord wills" is given for the purpose of reminding each of us to plan according to His plan, leaving room in our lives for His will to supersede our will. This verse should not be taken as a literal injunction to use these exact words preceding every statement we make concerning future plans. However it is quite appropriate to speak such words as a reminder of the brevity of life. Even more importantly, do we as Christians make each and every future plan according to His will? If not, we fall into the category described in the next verse.

**:16 "But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil."** James describes making plans without considering God's plans, as being boastful and arrogant.

We may not see it this way, especially if we are habitually guilty of such, yet we must now allow God's word to affect and change our wrong thinking. Even if my plans will bring both prosperity and joy to my family, I must first pray and consider, "If the Lord wills, I will do this or that."

Some take the view that if it weren't God's will, He wouldn't allow a Christian to carry out those plans. This argument, however, hinges entirely upon how much that Christian is in submission to his Lord. If one carries only the name "Christian," yet does what he pleases, will God always force His will upon him? This is the whole point of this passage, and that is to be actively and daily in submission to the will of God in our daily plans. To do any less is to be arrogant and evil.

**:17 "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."** This verse may seem to want to stand alone, (and many choose to use it that way), but it should be understood in its context. Verse 17 is simply completing the thought that those who make plans without considering God's will, are sinning, for they are failing to do that which they should be doing.

We can, however, broaden the application if this verse to anyone who refuses to submit to God in any of the ways taught elsewhere in His Word. Those who knowingly resist doing the good works before them are sinning against God. In this sense many souls that may not appear to be at war with God may in truth be in stark disobedience to His will. This application of this verse has been popular among those who rightly teach concerning sins of "omission" in contrast to sins of "commission." All Christians should be aware that there are some sins that are committed by doing that which we are commanded not to do, (such as murder), and that there are some sins which are constituted by not doing that which we should, (such as loving one another). However, the meaning of this verse can be overextended to place a burden upon man that he cannot bear.

Certainly there is no limit to the good that could be done during our every waking moment. God, however, knows that we have basic human needs. May this verse be motivational to us in doing more to obey God's positive commands, as well as avoiding those sins that we are forbidden to partake of. At the same time, however, we must avoid taking this verse to the extreme that we never feel at peace with God, unable to enjoy even a quiet moment with our families, or to take time for our own spiritual, physical, and emotional recreation. Even Jesus found the time and the need to get away from the endless demands of his ministry during His time here upon the earth. To do so is to extend our ability to serve Him on a long-term basis!

## Chapter 4 Exam

1. When James speaks of "wars" and "fights" he is referring to; A. political struggles within the Roman government B. internal, spiritual, and perhaps verbal battles within the early church C. gang wars in the first century
2. Give two reasons why some did not have what they needed from God.
3. What is the most likely reason James referred to his brethren as "adulteresses" in James 4:4? A. all the church members were unfaithful to their spouses B. he used these strong words to get their attention C. by being friends with the world, they had become unfaithful to God
4. If God gives grace to the humble, how does He respond to the proud?
5. [True / False] We can resist the devil without submitting to God.
6. [True / False] If we resist the devil, he will flee from us forever.
7. [True / False] If we draw near to God, He might draw near to us.
8. [True / False] Verses 13 - 17 tells us it is wrong to make plans for the future.
9. Fill-in the verses that talk about the evils of judging. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Briefly describe the difference between judging and correcting a brother.

## Chapter 5

**:1 “Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!** Although this letter is addressed to Christians, much is said about non-Christians and their effect upon believers. This is the third time James speaks concerning the effects of wealth in this epistle (see James 1:9-11 / 2:1-7 / 5:1-6). Upon this observation it would be safe to assume that James' readers had been facing some particularly trying times at the hands of the rich, and that perhaps even some of the believers who had excelled financially had reached such depths spiritually.

Regardless of the historical context of this epistle, however, the principles speak as clearly today as then. To those who are rich and their god is their riches, prepare to weep, howl, and to face misery! There can be no doubt that this passage speaks of the fate of the self-seeking rich man, who, (trusting in his wealth), has become the enemy of the righteous. The question may be asked, "Is this speaking of Christians "gone bad," or simply of those of the world who prey upon others, especially Christians?" It could easily apply to both. It is very much within the context of this letter, (see James 4:1-3), that some believers could have become prosperous and thus abusive with their financial power. We can also be certain that any Christians living in any generation will face some abuse by those of the world who have no reason *not* to abuse the power they have gained over others.

**:2 “Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.”** The source of much of the ungodly rich man's miseries is the fact that those things for which he lives will not last. James uses the word "corrupted." This indeed is the inherit problem of all earth-based securities, and that is they are made of non-eternal materials, and are temporary at best! Even our bodies themselves must "put on incorruption" to inherit eternal life (I Corinthians 15:50-54).

**:3 “Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.”** We can imagine clothing becoming moth-eaten, but even man's most "permanent" symbols of wealth, (both gold and silver), will eventually "corrode." They are not eternal! In the sermon on the mount Jesus spoke along a similar vein, encouraging His listeners to lay up "treasures in heaven," where permanence is found (Matthew 6:19-21). Such treasures are spiritual in nature, and thus will be compatible to our eternal home with God. It is so ironic to think of man as the eternity-bound spiritual being that he is, desperately busying himself with storing away and accumulating material, temporary items stamped "For Earth-Use Only." Some true deception is going on here!

The word picture given in this verse is that of the earthly treasures themselves someday standing as witnesses against their owner, and actually "eating" his flesh like fire. The obvious reference is to the fires of hell and eternal damnation. The treasure here described is the direct opposite of the "treasures" mentioned in Matthew 6:20:4. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. The personification of "treasures" witnessing against the rich man in the previous verse is now given a "face." Behind each treasure accumulated through fraud, is the face of a financially helpless worker striving to make ends meet.

Some see these verses as indictments against capitalism in general, but we must see it is the *misuse* of such power that is here being condemned. If James were

condemning the employing of others and the making of profit in business, then not only would there be no rich, there would also be no employment! Perhaps we would all be more spiritually focused if it were possible for all to go back to the land to survive, and we were no longer a part of a consumer-oriented economy, but that is not the point of this verse. The point is that he who *uses* others in an ungodly manner will not go unnoticed by the Lord.

The word "Sabaoth" as used in this verse means "hosts" or "armies." In this context it refers to the "Lord of hosts." "Sabaoth" is not related to the term "Sabbath." "Sabaoth" is found only twice in the New Testament. In Romans 9:29 it is found as a quote from Isaiah 1:9, in which we find the phrase the "Lord of Hosts." This Hebrew word meaning "the Lord of Hosts" or the "Almighty" was transliterated into Greek in these New Testament passages. To "transliterate" means to retain the original sounds as found in the original word so that it is pronounced nearly the same in another language. I've noticed that some translations, as the New International Version, have not done this, and have actually translated this phrase into English. Another example of this was the transliteration of the word baptism into English, rather than translating it to mean immersion (For similar problems of translation see Matthew 27:46 / Hebrews 4:8).

**:5 "You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter."** One must understand that to live in luxury at the expense of "stealing" from others, (either legally or illegally), is simply preparing oneself for the slaughter. The picture used here is that of fattening an animal in preparation for a meal or a sacrifice. The irony of this picture is that the one who is being fattened for the slaughter is the one who is "consuming" others here on earth! Satan can so deceive as to prepare a human being for destruction who is totally unaware of the materialistic trap he has built for himself.

**:6 "You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you."** Whether or not an actual murder takes place, simply "working a man to an early grave" is a form of abuse that brings about great suffering to those whom they take advantage of their employees. It is not within the power of a man to condemn another spiritually, however it is within the scope of man to condemn another (in this lifetime) to unmentionable horrors. Such is made clearly evident by reading a newspaper. Often the victims of such abuse do not resist, for they see themselves as being powerless to do so.

**:7 "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain."** Verses 1 through 6 were directed to the rebellious and the ungodly, while verses 7 through the end of this epistle are for the faithful and true. To those who may be on the "receiving" end of the selfish abusers, the encouragement is for patience. The extent of a Christian's patience is until the coming of the Lord. It is until then that we must endure the persecutions of ungodly people.

The illustration given is that of a farmer waiting patiently for his crops to bear fruit. He may fertilize, he may plant, he may weed. But it is upon the Lord He waits to receive the rain and the increase. Even those who irrigate depend upon the Lord for the rain, or in time there would be no irrigation! Although fewer today see it this way, to be a farmer or a gardener is to be a partner with God. It is the entering into of a relationship with the laws of nature that God has created, in order to bring forth fruit.

**:8 “You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”** The challenge is to be as patient in waiting for the rains to come as we are in waiting for the Lord to come. It is surprising to find many who willingly face the "drougths" of life and continue on in their business endeavors, (be it farming or something else), yet spiritually have no patience in waiting upon the Lord. Why the double standard? If the same patience the atheist gardener employs in waiting upon the rain were called upon in waiting upon the Lord, would he not find the answers to "life" he seeks? The charge is to "establish your hearts," take courage! For soon the Lord will return.

It is here we find one of the many "relative" phrases found in the Bible. The tone of the New Testament throughout is that of the imminent return of Christ. Seeing now that nearly 2,000 years have passed and He has yet to return, some conclude that verses such as this are untrue. Note that in no place do any of the Bible writers give a specific time or date. In fact the Lord Himself said; "No one knows that day and hour" (Matthew 24:36). To say that the Lord is near may mean a few years, but not necessarily. We must admit that if we had been among those to whom these words of James were first written, we would have probably understood them to mean "any day now." Although Jesus has not yet returned, the early church was very active and productive due to their confident expectation of the Lord's return in their lifetimes. It is beneficial for each generation to expect His return at any moment.

This is not a case, however, of "holding a carrot" in front of the mule! The Holy Spirit simply wants those of every generation to see that the Lord's coming is near, and when it does finally happen, we will see how near it was! In light of eternity is 2,000 years very long to wait? Seeing that life is just a vapor, (James 4:14), is a lifetime too long to wait? If we were to die tonight, would we not be meeting our Maker? It is indeed to our spiritual benefit that we live by faith believing that the Lord's coming is at hand.

**:9 “Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!”** The brethren are now urged to not be foul-tempered toward one another, due to the trials they had been facing at the hands of ungodly men. Under the miserable conditions that many first-century Christians were forced to live under, it is easy to understand how the second coming of Christ was not only looked forward to, but was longed for with a passion. To those living in relative comfort, it is difficult to feel the urgency felt by our first-century brethren. Yet it is that "urgency" we must share. May we always live in such a way to be eager for His return.

If we continue to grumble against one another, watch out! The Judge is at the door. The same One that we long to see will then become the One we may seek to hide from at the last day.

**:10 “My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.”** No better example of bearing up in patience under suffering can be found than the prophets of old. What comes to mind? The picture of Jeremiah in the slimy cistern, calling it "home"? David in the lion's den? Elijah, a fugitive and hated man for preaching the truth? By comparison it is doubtful that any of us living today could honestly say that our trials could even begin to equal those of the prophets.

**:11 “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord - that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.”** Job is specifically mentioned since few other Old Testament figures more clearly demonstrate the point now being made. To endure is to be blessed. It's that simple. To serve the Lord through good times and bad, is to reap the benefits of our faith. From the very beginning of the book of Job we learn how God feels about him, and the reasons for Job's sufferings. Yet Job struggles and wrestles with his trials, as his wife and friends "encourage" him to curse God and die. Thankfully Job never sees it their way, but persists in his faith, though repeatedly asking "why me?" With the benefit of knowing the whole story, we can see that what happens to Job in the end is what God intended for him from the beginning. This is the thought to take "home" with us. Sleep on it. Meditate upon it. No matter what our trials, if we endure our destiny is to be blessed.

**:12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.”** The one thing any commentary on James must strive to do, is to connect one verse with another. At times it seems as though James is just giving us numerous bits of information, which in some cases do not have any connection with the previous verse, like a collection of New Testament "Proverbs." Yet in most cases a connection can eventually be seen. Verse 12 can stand alone in teaching a basic principle that Jesus Himself proclaimed, (Matthew 5:34-37), or it can be seen as a continuation of the paragraph begun with verse 7. I see it as connected to the previous verses, in that Christians who are under "fire" with the trials of life, must be on guard against the temptation to swear. One who is patient, one who does not grumble against others, and one whose faith can endure, is one who can resist the urge to resort to the use of oaths in his daily communications. The example of Peter "under fire" is a clear example (see Matthew 26:72).

The patience of a man can be determined not only by what he says, but also by what he does not say. To add an oath to one's statements, is to imply that without the oath that statement is somewhat less reliable. If your "yes" is never simply "yes," but rather "I swear to God," your words are to be understood to mean, "Since I have declared an oath, my "yes" now has added weight, and can now be trusted." Christians must not develop such a habit of speaking, for it is with our words and our lives that Jesus is demonstrated to the world. Therefore allow godliness to enter into the very words you speak, and get used to simply allowing your "yes" be "yes," and your "no" be "no."

There remains the question as to how far these thoughts should be applied. Does this verse, (and the similar words of Jesus in Matthew), also prohibit the taking of an oath in a court of law? Most commentators do not see this as the point of this verse. To reply "I do" when asked "Do you swear to tell the truth?" is agreeing to be placed under oath, while James is warning the brethren about their personal misuse of oaths in their daily language. To refine to submit to the governing authorities in a court of law would do nothing but cast doubt upon the truthfulness of one's testimony. Some have chosen to say "I do so affirm." To say such may avoid using the word "swear," but we must see that it is not the word "swear" that constitutes swearing, but rather the concept. To say "I affirm" is still accepting the position of being "under oath." Dishonesty and the abuse of

oaths to "cloak" dishonesty, are the issues here. May we see the point and never fall into this ungodly habit.

**:13 "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms."** As we come to the close of this letter, it is as though James is striving to solve or answer any remaining situations the brethren may be encountering.

First, for those who are suffering, pray. It is not defined as to what type of suffering, whether physical or emotional. We can conclude that James is saying that one who suffers in any form is in need of prayer. Where else can we turn? We can seek out therapists, doctors, and friends, but the ultimate healing can only come from God.

Secondly, those who are cheerful are entreated to sing. We may wonder why there would be instructions for those who are happy. The answer is that it is in times of joy that we can strengthen the bond with God that can carry us through the trials. Often it is during those cheerful times that man is tempted to seek that which will only dampen his joy eventually, rather than provide a release for it. Sing psalms! Sing not just as one of the "five acts of worship," but sing whenever you're happy, and wherever you are. Spontaneous praise is often the most pure and sincere. May we not fear "unstructured" praise to His high and holy name!

**:14 "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."** In what is perhaps one of the most debated verses in the book of James, the Christian response to sickness is discussed. It is debated first of all, whether "sick" here refers to physical or spiritual. Verse 15 indicates that physical sickness is indeed the topic, however any form of illness should lead one to prayer.

It is, however, the Christian's *response* to personal sickness that is now to be considered. The instructions given in this verse are to "call for the elders of the church," that they might pray over him, while anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. The center of the controversy is whether James is here discussing the miraculous gift of healing as demonstrated by the apostles and the Lord Himself, or whether these instructions are for those of all generations who pray in faith, that providential healing from God may take place.

There are several passages that could be referenced to show that it was only the apostles (including Paul, an apostle "untimely born") who were capable of "passing on" miraculous gifts to others through the laying on of their hands. Those who received miraculous gifts were apparently unable to pass on those gifts, for we find no Bible record of that happening (see Acts 6:3-6 / Acts 8:14-19).

However practical experience must also be considered here. Would it not stand to reason that if the ability to transfer miraculous gifts had been given to each generation, there would be those living today who would be using such gifts in such a way that even the enemies of Christianity could not refute them? Rather than famous "healers" building hospitals, they could dismantle hospitals for lack of need!

With these thoughts in mind, let us consider the possibility that James is here speaking of the *miraculous gifts* of healing being exercised by the elders of the church. First of all, although it is possible, it is highly unlikely that the elders of each and every church of the first century (of those "which are scattered abroad" James 1:1) to whom this letter was addressed, had received gifts of healing at the laying on of the apostles' hands.

Secondly, there is no Bible basis for the idea that elders, simply by the virtue of their office, possess the miraculous gift of healing.

If not miraculous, then the healing which James speaks of is that which all have experienced. All healing comes from God, whether it be of a miraculous nature, (as in the days of the apostles), or of an ordinary nature. Such "ordinary" healing is so common to us that we often fail to recognize it, (as in the gradual healing of a wound).

The third area of controversy is whether or not these instructions apply to Christians today. This question is perhaps the most difficult to answer. Our challenge here is distinguishing between passages in which current customs may be employed as an example of Christian behavior, and those in which a timeless commandment is given to Christians of all ages. Indeed upon this point the battle has raged over such subjects as foot washing, women wearing veils, and greeting one another with a holy kiss.

Much can be said about the customs of the first century, and the important part "oil" played in connection with both healing and with prayer, from ancient times up through the time of this epistle. It is clear that at times oil was, (and still is), quite useful for medicinal purposes. In Luke 10:34 it is clear that oil was used to soothe the wounds of the man victimized by robbers in the story of the Good Samaritan. It is also equally clear that oil would in some cases be of no physical value. Since the advice of this verse is offered for any sickness in general we can conclude that the purpose of the "anointing with oil" went beyond a mere medicinal use.

The emphasis of this passage is the power of the Lord to heal, and the need for prayers of faith to receive His blessings of healing. Yet it seems that the "oil" of this passage has received all the attention.

To the first century church, the practice of anointing with oil was not only a standard practice of caring for the sick, but it also carried with it some deeply religious overtones for those of Jewish background. Frequently in the Old Testament we find that being anointed with oil was in many cases the sign that the Spirit of God was being given (see I Samuel 10:1,10 / II Samuel 2:4 / I Chronicles 29:22). With that in mind, it is perfectly natural to the first readers of this letter to think of praying for the sick while anointing them with oil. To modern Americans, however, we tend to look upon such a practice as being mysterious, perhaps even some sort of "formula" for healing. We also have the additional problem of sorting out the great amount of "disinformation" being spread by professional "faith-healers" who have found oil to be a tremendous gimmick in their ministries.

The question still remains, however, "Is the use of oil here being required in order to carry out God's command to pray for the sick?" To say that we must anoint with oil in order to pray for the sick is to say more than James wrote. Yet we may also ask, "Is it wrong for the elders of the church to anoint and pray for the sick who request such attention?" Perhaps the greatest danger in such a practice today would be the temptation of some to think that the power to heal resides within the hands of the elders, or mysteriously abides within the oil itself. With the proper understanding of this passage, anointing one with oil would simply be an outward sign of one's faith in God to heal.

Note, however, that it is the sick that call for the elders, rather than the elder or some professional evangelist calling for the sick to come to him for anointing. The bottom line of this discussion is that it is the sick who must call, and it is the elders of each congregation who must study this and other passages to determine their proper

response to their fellow man before God. Leaving the subject of the "oil" completely, in my observations even the practice of calling for the elders to pray over the sick has been nearly forgotten. In view of the variety of illnesses today, is it not time we begin looking more to God's instructions for healing rather than to man?

**:15 “And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”** The bottom line to these instructions is not the power of "oil or elders" but rather the importance of the prayer of faith be offered by man. It is effective, and it brings results! A prayer built upon our trust in our God whom we cannot see, is a prayer built upon the power of the Creator. When focused upon Him, (and not upon ourselves or anything we may do), we reap the results prayer was meant to have. "The raising up of the sick" clearly speaks of them being made well. The following sentence also includes the forgiveness of sins as the benefit of that prayer of faith.

The reader should not conclude that this verse indicates there is always a connection between physical and spiritual sickness. Our own experiences reveal, however, that in some instances such is indeed the case. In fact, some illnesses are almost always the result of spiritual sickness. Yet the point of this verse is that the prayer of faith is effective in both areas, whether connected or not.

James was not the only inspired writer to speak of the power of prayer offered in faith. Jesus Himself stated, "All things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive (Matthew 21:22)." Again He said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you (Matthew 7:7). In Matthew 11:24 Jesus says, "Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them." If we find these passages hard to believe because they are "too good to be true," then it must be pointed out that such an attitude is indeed the reason our prayers are unproductive. Faith is lacking! If we enter into prayer thinking our requests will not be granted, and that it is too much to expect of God, such expectations will be "fulfilled."

It must also be stated that we must pray according to God's will, and that "if it is His will" that which we request will be done (see Matthew 6:10 / Matthew 26:39-42 / James 4:15). It is also true that the Bible does not teach it is always God's will that everybody should experience perfect health at all times (see II Corinthians 12:7-10). Indeed we will all someday reach the point where it is God's will for us not to recover! If it were not so, Christians would never physically die! Yet we must not allow such exceptions to be our "disclaimer" tacked onto our prayers, explaining away a multitude of unanswered prayers, when the true reason for our prayers being unproductive is a lack of faith. No one has a "corner" on knowing absolutely God's entire will concerning any given individual, yet a mature Christian who has lived a prayerful life of faith should have a good grasp of what God's will must be in most cases. If we do not know His will, what better way to find out, than to pray that His will be revealed to us? Is that too much to ask or expect? If you think so, you must ask yourself, "Where is my faith?" Re-read these verses and the ones referred to above. May we concentrate on what He says, and not on what we think.

**:16 “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous avails much.”** Having discussed the value of prayers of faith being offered for those who are either physically or

spiritually sick, James now continues to urge the brethren to confess their trespasses to one another. The clear connection with the past verse is that rather than allowing sin to sit and "ferment," producing not only greater spiritual problems, and perhaps even physical problems, the encouragement is to get them out into the open, that prayers of faith may be offered. This verse, however, broadens the scope from just the elders, to everyone praying for everyone. It is not just the responsibility of the elders to pray for the sick, but rather all Christians are involved in this matter, both as the "confessor" and as the "listener." We cannot construe this verse to say one must confess his or her sins to only one certain individual, whether it be an elder, preacher, deacon, or "priest." Concerning such thinking Martin Luther wrote, "A strange confessor! His name is One another." Luther's sarcasm reveals the frustration from centuries of forced confession to the local priest, rather than the free and productive confession to one another as the Lord intended for His church.

Although we may be able to clearly see what this verse does not mean, it remains for us to implement the instructions contained within it. It could be said that this is both one of the most abused verses in the Bible, and at the same time one of the most ignored. Those who abhor the abuses that various religious groups have made of this passage, have often gone to the other extreme of considering any confession to another human being as "evil" or "dangerous." We can easily see the reasons for this fear, for not only has the practice of confession been abused, but also the potential for evil is always present when we trust others enough to reveal ourselves.

Some interpret this verse to mean that the only trespasses needing to be confessed to another are those that were against that individual. It is certainly in keeping with other passages to say that such confessions must be made (see Matthew 5:23-24 / Matthew 18:15-17). Yet one cannot find within this verse any wording that would so limit its interpretation. Certainly common sense tells us that it is those trespasses which involve a certain individual, are those which we should first confess to that individual. Yet we must not restrict "confessing to one another" to just such occasions. The value of confessing our sins to one other is not only helpful in identifying the reason and the source of the sin, but it also brings about emotional healing (sometimes very quickly) to the one releasing the burden. A secondary value to confessing to one another is that others who are presently facing such a problem may find the strength and the faith to avoid similar pitfalls, or if they too have fallen, may find the courage to confess their faults as well.

It must be stated here, however, that it is God who forgives, although much of the sin that man commits here on earth usually ends up hurting others as well. It is of primary importance that we confess our sins to God, seeing that it is He who is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins (I John 1:9)." Yet may we not underestimate the importance of also confessing our trespasses to one another. As James says, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Is this not saying that both the prayer of the sinner and the listener can do much good? A similar yet somewhat obscure passage in I John 5:16 reveals the same teaching. If we don't believe that our prayers can be both physically and spiritually helpful to another, then why do we pray for others? It is both scriptural and useful to pray for others, especially for a brother or sister in Christ who is or has been deceived by sin. Again it is the prayer of faith in God that is the key to our receiving His healing power.

**:17 “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.”**

**:18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”** The example of Elijah of old is the perfect illustration of the effectiveness of a righteous man's prayers. The event referred to is found in I Kings 17-18. In this fascinating story we are introduced to the great prophet Elijah, and we learn of his first recorded works in the Lord's service. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit James even gives us a bit more information than is found in I Kings. The Old Testament account does not mention Elijah *praying* that it would not rain, however it does record him *announcing* that it would not rain (II Kings 17:1). Also in this verse a period of three years is stated to be the duration of the drought, while James mentions that it was altogether 3 and 1/2 years. This does not need to be construed as a contradiction, for in I Kings 17:1 we read that it would not rain for three years, and in 18:1 we find Elijah being told in the third year to go present himself to Ahab, that God would send rain on the earth. From I Kings we can be assured that it was at least a three year' drought, and from James we learn that all told it was 3 and 1/2 years before it finally did rain (also see Luke 4:25). This is only one of many examples where the New Testament writings shed additional light upon Old Testament events and passages.

The most important information we can gather from this verse, however, is that the prayers of a good man can produce enormous results. To think that a simple prayer changed the history of a nation for over three years, and then another just as simple prayer brought it all back is a bold reminder of the power of prayer. In light of this great spiritual history lesson, can we grasp just how important it is for us to pray (in faith) for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are in need both physically and spiritually? It is perhaps the lack of faith in God working through our prayers that brings about a lax attitude toward both confessing our needs to one another, as well as praying for one another.

**:19 “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back”**

**:20 “let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”**

James concludes his powerful practical epistle in a very fitting manner. With a few strokes of his pen, the Holy Spirit guides him to show us the way to lift one another up, even if we've fallen away.

Verse 19 is one of many proof texts that bear witness to the fact that a brother can wander away from the truth, that is, one can fall from grace (also see Galatians 5:4 / I Timothy 1:18-20 / II Timothy 2:16-18 / Hebrews 3:12-15). Even more importantly, this passage also teaches that it is also possible to turn one who has fallen away, back to the truth. Now we know that the concept of "Once in grace, always in grace" is a false teaching. On the other hand, the perhaps unspoken belief of "Once fallen from grace, always fallen from grace" is an equally false teaching. There is hope, both for the straying and the lost. One's belief in such possibilities keeps us active in the "business" of soul winning, and also soul "reclaiming." The stakes are indeed high. To be a part of restoring one who has fallen, is to save a soul from death. If that is not enough to make every effort worthwhile, consider this, how many sins will be forgiven upon his or her

return? What's more, how many sins will this old world be spared by his returning to the fold? This we cannot calculate, but only rejoice in its truth.

Although these two verses can stand alone as basic truths, in keeping with the pattern of this letter they reach back to so much that has been written in the earlier chapters. Using the information contained in this epistle in counseling with a straying brother is the key to its whole purpose. Truth in "theory" does not change lives! Practical Christianity does! To that brother that is falling away, pray *for* him, (or if he agrees), pray *with* him. If patience is lacking, share with him James 5:7-11. If he is being oppressed, begin with James 5:1. Perhaps the erring brother needs taught concerning being a doer and not just a hearer (James 2:14-26), or maybe he simply lacks wisdom (James 1:5).

The combinations are endless. However, the practical, everyday problems of man can be met by the equally inexhaustible wealth of wisdom to be gathered from God's Holy Word. The privilege of taking this closer look at the book written by the hand of James is a vivid reminder of the omniscience of its Author. May God continue to bless you in your meditations upon His Word!

**-Bruce Gleim / Vandalia Church of Christ 05/29/08**

## Chapter 5 Exam

1. The brethren are told to be patient because; A. The rains would come soon. B. The coming of the Lord was drawing nearer. C. They too would become rich in possessions.
2. Job of the Old Testament is an example to us of; A. faith B. perfection  
C. perseverance
3. In this chapter we are told to swear; A. not at all B. only when we tell the truth  
C. only if we do not use God's name
4. List some of the reasons we are told to pray.
5. In this chapter we are told to confess our trespasses to whom?
6. Does this mean that we need not confess our sins to God? Yes No
7. Elijah is given as an example of; A. a hero B. one who could perform miracles  
C. a righteous man who prayed effectively
8. Find the verse that proves that a brother can wander from the truth.
9. Turning one who has fallen away back to the truth will; A. make up for some of your sins B. cover a multitude of sins C. prove that you were right
11. The self-exams over each of these chapters have been; A. helpful B. confusing  
C. pleasing to the eye D. a much needed break