

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES  
(First Message)

Intro: Our next study: the Epistle of James.

- Read it. Read it once a day, if possible. It can be read audibly in 20 minutes. Pray as you read it. Read it for the blessing it can be in your own life. And, by the grace of God, put into practice the things that James teaches you to do -- and not to do!

Why should we read the Word?

Bishop J. C. Ryle who was the Bishop of Liverpool, England, in the latter part of the 19th century, has given the following reasons in his book, Practical Religion:

- 1) Because there is no other book ~~written as the~~ Bible was.
- 2) Because this is the only book that gives us the truth concerning salvation, i.e., man's relationship to God.
- 3) Because no other book contains such important material for us to know.
- 4) Because no book in human history has had a greater influence on men than the Bible.
- 5) Because there is no book that can do more for us.
- 6) Because it is the only book by which the doctrines and practices of men can be tested.
- 7) Because it is the book which the people of God in the past have loved and lived by.
- 8) Because it is the only book which can give us comfort in the last hours of life.

Only by reading and re-reading books of the Bible can we see the purpose of each book, and understand the message of each book.

What is the message of James? Is it an epistle of straw? Is James contradicting Paul? Can Romans and James both stay in the Bible so that we can still claim that the Bible is really one book -- without contradiction?

The answer is, YES, to all of these questions?

What, then, is James doing? He is writing about <sup>5:16; 1:10; 2:14-23, 25</sup> the righteous man -- the man who is what God wants him to be, the man who is maturing and who is wise. James is setting before us a pattern of what every child of God should be by the grace of God. He deals with the basic things which stand in the way of our spiritual growth and progress.

— TO SEE WHAT THESE ARE, I WANT TO BEGIN THIS MORNING BY READING THE ENTIRE EPISTLE. I have never done this publicly before that I can remember. And, to get you thinking, I am going to read it

in the New American Standard Bible. I will be teaching the book from the King James, but I want to read this other very fine version this morning to stimulate our thinking as we see the way it is expressed here.

— (Pray, and then read.)

What are some of the impressions that we get from reading this letter?

#### I. THE TENDERNESS OF JAMES.

Fifteen times in the Epistle James says, "brethren"; three of these are, "my beloved brethren."

Far from being a hard legalist, James manifests the sweetness and gentleness of the Lord Jesus. This is the way to win a hearing for the Word.

#### II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORD OF GOD.

There are parts of the Epistle of James which you will not be able to understand and appreciate if you do not know certain things about the Old Testament. James refers to the Law, to Abraham and Isaac, to Hagar, to the prophets, and to Job. He even quotes from some OT passages.

— But he wants the Word not only to be heard, but he wants the Word to be obeyed. This was apparently the problem then as it is now.

#### III. THE KEY ISSUES.

- A. Afflictions, trials, testings, temptations -- how do we handle them?

The original recipients of this letter were believing Jews -- scattered throughout the Empire. See 1:1. They needed help as to the proper attitude which they should have.

- B. The way in which their trials affected various relationships:

1. To God.
  2. To themselves personally.
  3. To each other.
  4. To the Word of God.
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Concl: This is going to make the book of James very appropriate for us. Our problems are:

- 1) a failure to trust God in our afflictions,
  - 2) an inclination toward the criticism of others,
  - 3) a tendency to substitute knowledge of the Word for obedience to the Word,
- and many others!

Let us be praying that the Lord will use this book to transform our lives and to transform our fellowship so that we may experience the blessing of God in a greater way, and that we may see others brought to know our wonderful Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Cf. John 13:17.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES  
The Theme and Its Development  
(Second Message)

Intro: In studying any book of the Bible we need to do two things first:

- 1) Discover its theme. What is the main thing that the writer has in mind? Why did he write the book?
- 2) How does he proceed and what is his way of dealing with it? Here we are concerned with the outline of thought.

It is only as we get these two things in mind that we can fit the details of the book into their proper places. This is done by reading and re-reading.

- I. THE THEME OF JAMES: The righteous man. Or, the perfect man -- that is, the man who is spiritually maturing and becoming all that God wants him to be.

This is seen in several passages: Jas. 1:4  
Jas. 1:12.  
Jas. 1:18.  
Jas. 1:19.  
Jas. 2:21-25 -- Abraham  
and Rahab.  
Jas. 3:2.  
Jas. 5:16b, which is  
illustrated by Elijah.

The emphasis is behind practically all that is said in the epistle -- that God is working to make us what He wants us to be.

## II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEME.

### A. First, two important particulars.

1. God's method of accomplishing this end is through affliction, trial, and suffering.

It is important that this be known, and so James mentions it at the beginning: Jas. 1:2-4.

Therefore, it is important that we have the right attitude: "Count it all joy . . ."

How many of you have trials? Then, the book of James is for you!

2. By the time we get to chapter 5, James has made a complete circle -- coming back to his starting place. See Jas. 5:7-11.

So -- this means that:

- 1) We must see the purpose of afflictions and trials.
- 2) We must rejoice in them.
- 3) We must be patient in waiting for the results.

James gives us three reasons for rejoicing in our trials:

- 1) Jas. 1:4 -- because of what it is doing to us.
- 2) Jas. 1:12 -- because of the reward that is ahead.
- 3) Jas. 5:11 -- because of the present outcome, i.e., what we can expect in this life.

#### B. The details of the development.

1. The whole message is really stated in chapter 1 -- along with the remedy. In chapters 2-5 James is elaborating upon his subject, giving additional details.

A time of testing will make us conscious of those things in our lives which keep us from being what the Lord intends for us to be. Notice what they are in chapter 1:

- 1) Impatient (vv. 3, 4).
- 2) Foolish -- in need of wisdom (v. 5).
- 3) Weak in faith (vv. 6-8).
- 4) Either dissatisfied, or proud, or both (vv. 9-11).

Note: V. 12 is a word of encouragement which is interjected by James.

- 5) Sinful (vv. 13-15) -- and we have a tendency to blame God.
- 6) Easily deceived (vv. 16-18) -- both as to what does come from the Lord, and what His purpose in salvation really is.
- 7) Anger and a vicious tongue (vv. 19, 20).

Then comes the first of three practical sections in which we see God's remedy for the problems just mentioned: Jas. 1:21-27. (The other two are in Jas. 4:7-17 and Jas. 5:7 to the end.)

Basically James says that there are two things that we need to do:

- 1) Put away sin (Jas. 1:21a).
  - 2) Receive the Word (Jas. 1:21b), and do it (v. 22).
- The chapter closes with James pointing out that the reality of our relationship with the Lord is seen in our words (v. 26) and our lives, or works (v. 27).

2. Then the elaboration of the details (Jas. 2:1-5:12).

He starts out with what evidently was a major pro-

blem among the Jews of the Dispersion:

- a. The sin of being partial, of showing favoritism (Jas. 2:1-13).

This clearly is in disobedience to Lev. 19:18.  
(Note how James makes frequent references to the OT.)

This leads to James second point:

- b. The inconsistency of such behavior -- to claim to have faith, but to fail to demonstrate that faith by deeds that please God. Cf. Jas. 2:14-26).

The demons believe that God is one, but that does not make them the children of God, does it?

Note the proof from two extremes of OT society: Abraham and Rahab.

- c. The difficulties of ch. 2 were evidently prominent among those who were teaching, but they were guilty of talking out of both sides of their mouths -- for blessing and cursing (Jas. 3:1-12).

A man can never be what the Lord wants him to be until his tongue is under control. THIS IS THE KEY TO THE GODLINESS OF THE WHOLE PERSON.

- d. How can you tell a wise man to whom you should be listening, who is what God wants him to be? See Jas. 3:13-18.

V. 13 has to be one of the important verses of the Epistle.

- e. What, then, is the real source of our problems? See Jas. 4:1-6.

It is in the lusts of our own hearts PLUS the fact that we are either not praying or praying for the wrong reasons PLUS too close a relationship with the world.

- f. What is the remedy?

From Jas. 4:7 to 5:12 the emphasis is practical except for the warning of 5:1-6 which is directed against the rich -- a warning which develops out of the last 5 verses of chapter 4.

What is the remedy?

- 1) Humility (Jas. 4:7-10). Note all that is involved in being humble.
- 2) A refusal to criticize (Jas. 4:11, 12) -- because it manifests a lack of love -- and criticism grows out of partiality as described in the first part of chapter 2, and sets aside the Word of God.
- 3) A dependence upon the will of God -- a refusal to presume upon God and His will (Jas. 4:13-17).

The warning for the rich (Jas. 5:1-6).

- 4) Back where James began -- be patient (Jas. 5:7-11). Vv. 10, 11 are among the most encouraging verses of the Epistle.
- 5) Do not use oaths (Jas. 5:12).

g. The conclusion (Jas. 5:13-20).

This differs from the other practical details given in 4:7-5:12 because here James is answering those who would say, "But what do we do about our circumstances while we are waiting on the Lord?"

Note the prominence of prayer and praise and confession -- which in turn leads to a concern for others who are out of the way (vv. 19, 20).

Concl: What would James say is the most important thing for a child of God to be learning? His answer: PATIENCE!

How does the Lord teach us patience? Through trials and afflictions and testings. That is the way we learn to trust to the Lord and to become like the Lord. Therefore, we must not be surprised if our prayers to grow and to be like the Lord cause the Lord to lead us through troubled waters.

(1725-1807)

Many years ago now John Newton put these ideas into the words of a hymn. Listen to them as we close:

"I asked the Lord, that I might grow  
In faith, and love, and every grace;  
**Might more of His salvation know,**  
And seek more earnestly His face.

← "I hoped that in some favoured hour  
At once He'd answer my request,  
And by His love's constraining power  
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

"Instead of this, He made me feel  
 The hidden evils of my heart;  
 And let the angry powers of hell  
 Assault my soul in every part.

"Yea more, with His own hand He seemed  
 Intent to aggravate my woe;  
 Crossed all the fair designs I schemed  
 Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

"'Lord, why is this?' I trembling cried,  
 'Wilt thou pursue Thy worm to death?'  
 'Tis in this way,' the Lord replied,  
 'I answer prayer for grace and faith.

"'These inward trials I employ  
 From self and pride to set thee free;  
 And break thy schemes of earthly joy,  
 That thou may'st seek thy all in me.'"

The study of James can have a transforming effect upon all of our lives. Let us pray that the Lord will open our hearts to know these truths, and let us pray that He will make us what He wants us to be.



GOD'S STRANGE AND WONDERFUL WAYS

James 1:1-4

Intro: Isaiah the prophet is one of the writers of Scripture who tells us two important things about the ways of God:

- 1) "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."
  - 2) "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
- ISA. 55.  
8, 9.

These verses teach us two main things about the ways of God -- and His thoughts:

- 1) They are different from ours. They are strange. They are not what we would choose, and not what we would do.
- 2) Time and experience always prove that God's ways are always better, infinitely better.

This is exactly the way James begins his Epistle. And this is our subject this morning: GOD'S STRANGE AND WONDERFUL WAYS.

I hope that you remember that James comes back to this same subject of trials and testings at the end of the book (although he never loses sight of it), and he mentions:

- 1) "The prophets."
- 2) "Job."

Such references mean that those to whom James was writing were learning what "the prophets" had had to learn, and what "Job" had learned. And this is what every generation of the Lord's people before and after have had to learn. This is what we need to learn.

First, let us make sure that we understand . . .

I. THE MEANING OF THE TEXT.

(Read and explain the grammar of verses 1 through 4.)

Next, let us notice . . .

II. THE WRITER AND THE FIRST READERS.

This takes us down through the first two words of verse 2.

James was not the Apostle James; James was a half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ, mentioned in Matt. 13:55; Gal. 1:19, and other places.

The readers were Hebrew Christians who were living outside of

the land of Israel throughout the Roman Empire. This letter and the letters of Peter make it clear that they were having a very difficult time -- suffering because of their faith in Christ.

But what is of special interest is the way James identifies himself:

A. What he says about himself.

Although he could have claimed his family relationship with our Lord, he does not even give a hint about that. The one thing that he does mention is that he is a bond-slave -- not just "of God," but also "of the Lord Jesus Christ."

He could not be one without being the other.

This is what gives him the right to speak as he does in this Epistle. He is one who is completely given over to the will of God. He is not writing about things that are strange to him, but they are things that have become his life because they are the will "of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."

But notice also . . .

B. What James says about his readers.

He calls them, "My brethren."

And he does this some 15 times in this letter. He wants to be identified with them. He is not above them, but one with them.

This shows his great love for them and his tenderness in writing the things that he is led by the Spirit of God to write.

And then we come to . . .

III. THE THEME OF THE EPISTLE -- in verses 2 through 4.

Summing it all up, James wants them to:

- 1) Rejoice.
- 2) Believe.
- 3) Wait.
- 4) Hope, or expect.

They are to do the first because they KNOW that the last three are what the Lord wants us to do, and because they will bring the blessing of God.

Immediately we are confronted with the strangeness of God's Word and the impossibility of doing the will of God -- if we only have our own resources to fall back on. This is not way man reacts to trials!

It is not that we rejoice, but we are to consider it nothing but something to rejoice about because we have fallen into trials of different kinds which overwhelm us and which seem to keep coming!

How can a person be expected to rejoice over that -- to make it not part joy and part grief, but ALL JOY?

The answer: It is because of what we KNOW.

Now -- they either had learned it, OR  
they were just now learning it.

To begin with, and as trials continue, there is nothing more important than what we know!

How do we know it?

- from the Word of God.
- from the experience of others.
- from our own past experience.

DO YOU KNOW IT? These things are absolutely and always true!

What should we know?

FIRST -- about our faith.

This is what is tested. But God is not trying to destroy it (although it may seem like that some times). He is seeking to strengthen it -- and trials have a way of bringing out the weak spots in our faith.

What about our faith is tested in trials?

- our faith in the Word of God.
- our faith in the character of God.
- our faith in the purposes of God.

But James wants us to know that, while our faith is being tested, a work is going on! God is using these testings to do something to us . . .

- to make us trust the Lord in spite of our circumstances,
- to make us faithful, patient, enduring,
- to make us content to wait upon God and for His will.

SECOND -- about patience.

Think of all that the Scriptures have to say about waiting

upon God and for God.

And can we not all agree with James when he says in 5:11a,  
"Behold, we count them happy which endure."

Wasn't Abraham thankful that he waited? And Joseph? And  
Moses? And David? And Daniel? They all went through this.

Doesn't it make you sick to see someone quit?

Then what about you -- and what about me? How are we doing  
this morning?

It is always too soon to quit.

You may not even see the end of the trial here, but this is  
only an infinitesimally small part of what is ahead of us.  
Wait -- and see what the Lord will do. Never take matters  
into your own hands!

FINALLY -- about our hope.

Where should I look for the results?

Note verse 4b: " . . . that ye (plural) may be perfect and  
entire, wanting nothing" -- lacking nothing.

You see, this is what we see over and over again in the Word  
of God. God is working on us and in us! He is getting us  
ready for heaven. There is much to be done, and it takes  
time even for Him to do it. It takes place through spiritual  
growth.

Now look at verse 4:

- 1) "Entire" means that every quality of spiritual life is  
present and accounted for. Nothing is missing. (Take  
"the fruit of the Spirit" to illustrate.)
- 2) "Perfect" means that all of these qualities are every-  
thing that they should be -- not now, but God is moving  
us in that direction.

Who is the pattern? Is James? Yes, in a limited way. Is  
Paul? Yes, but you will find things even there that are not  
all that they should be. **THE PATTERN IS THE LORD JESUS  
CHRIST!** "We shall be like Him," says John.

Concl: This is what the Epistle of James is all about! Will  
you learn the first lessons -- and continue to learn  
them? God is saying, "Rejoice, believe, wait, and hope."

And God is waiting, too. See Isa. 30:18, "And therefore will  
the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you . . ."

## GOOD WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

James 1:5-12

2:2, 3:2

Intro: One thing that seems to be prominent in this Epistle of James is the concern that James shows for the men. We see this in his use of ἀνὴρ (1:8, 12, 20, 23) in contrast with his use of ἀνθρώπος (1:7, 19; 2:20, 24; 3:8, 9; 5:17). He may have used this words for variety, but this seems very unlikely. Instead, he wants the men to be sure to get this message. If so, the women will come along with them, but when the man falls by the wayside, it often affects the whole family.

Our passage this morning is vitally related to the verses we had last Sunday -- vv. 2-4. Let us read through our text (vv. 5-12) making sure that we understand the meaning of these verses.

## I. THE READING AND MEANING OF THE TEXT -- James 1:5-12.

Lacking wisdom develops out of "wanting (or, lacking) nothing" in v. 4 -- the same root.

James is telling us to look in three directions:

- 1) First, to God -- in vv. 5-8.
- 2) Second, at ourselves -- in vv. 9-11.
- 3) Third, at one of God's promises concerning the future -- in v. 12.

In the first section we have an emphasis upon four words: wisdom, prayer, God, and faith.

"Wisdom" includes knowledge and understanding so as to be able to see what is going on and to make the right decisions.

## II. THE MESSAGE OF THE TEXT.

## A. The priorities for every time of testing (vv. 5-8).

We are immediately confused, and we see that we need to get wisdom. This should turn us to God and to prayer, but we often look to ourselves or to others first.

Note all that James says about God in v. 5:

- 1) He gives.
- 2) He gives to all men, i.e., all believers -- He is no respecter of persons.
- 3) He gives liberally -- generously and immediately (although not necessarily all at once).
- 4) He gives without scolding us -- either for not coming sooner, or for coming too often.

SOLOMON'S  
PRAYER

But our praying must be in faith. How can it be? Cf. Rom. 10:17; Heb. 12:2.

Note how faith is emphasized in vv. 6-8 -- and this is a further explanation of "the trying of your faith" in v. 3. Faith will always be demonstrated by our confidence in God in prayer.

We can only become what we need to be through the strengthening of our faith -- and this is where our trials play an important part.

Notice James love for illustrations in his reference here to the sea. Illustrate from our time at the coast when the waves were being opposed by the wind. Cf. Isa. 57:20, 21.

B. The two ways we need to look at ourselves.(vv. 9-11).

Among these Jews there seems to have been just two classes of people -- the rich, and the poor. This is brought out again in chapter 2, and then in chapter 5. For these circumstances, James advises the poor to glory in what they are now in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:4-7), but he advises the rich to look at what they are in themselves.

We all need both aspects of this truth.

In vv. 10, 11 James is probably referring to Isa. 40:6-8.

C. The prospect for the future (v. 12).

We ought to be interested in crowns if for no other reasons than God has offered them to us and one day we can cast them in adoring worship at His feet. Cf. Rev. 4:4, 10.

See other crowns mentioned in Scripture:

-- 2 Tim. 4:8.

-- 1 Pet. 5:4.

Rev. 2:10 helps us with Jas. 5:12.

We have life now, but we do not yet have "the crown of life" -- life at its best, life in its fullest glory and greatest joy!

Concl: There are many things of importance for all of us in these verses. The Lord will direct you as to that which is necessary for you just now. But let me close by stressing just one of them: prayer.

THE THEOLOGY OF JAMES

James 1:13-20

Intro: James begins his Epistle by referring immediately to trials -- what our attitude should be, and -- what God is accomplishing through them.

In the verses which follow (vv. 5-12) James indicates that trials can cause problems within our own hearts.

In the passage this morning (vv. 13-20) he teaches us that trials can bring us into sin, and that this can cause trouble in our relationship with God.

Vv. 13-20 of James 1 are really doctrinal, theological, in nature. Here he has some very important things to say about:

- 1) God and sin.
- 2) Man and sin.
- 3) The goodness of God.
- 4) The immutability of God.
- 5) The doctrine of salvation.
- 6) Some basic principles in the life of the believer.

James wants us to know that theology is intensely practical. In fact, before he gets through with us he is going to show beyond any doubt that there is something terribly wrong about what I believe if it does not produce great changes in the way that I live!

The main reason that James brings all of this up at this time is because of the fact that trials can lead to temptation and temptation leads to sin. So -- the problem that he is answering is this: Is God to blame if I sin while I am going through a trial?

The divisions:

- 1) A prohibition (v. 13).
- 2) An explanation (vv. 14, 15).
- 3) A warning (vv. 16-18).
- 4) An exhortation (vv. 19, 20).

I. A PROHIBITION (Jas. 1:13).

James has much to say about the use of the tongue.

So far we can see that he has made two points about our speaking: We need to praise (v. 2), and we need to pray (v. 5).

Now he refers to one thing a child of God should never, never say -- under any circumstances. (Read v. 13a over several times.)

The last part of the verse gives 2 reasons for the first part.

These are always truths which you can depend upon regardless of the circumstances.

Cf. 1 Cor. 10:13.

II. AN EXPLANATION -- concerning temptation and sin (James 1: 14, 15).

James does not ignore the world, nor the Devil (see ch. 4), and they do have part in sin. BUT -- the problem for us is not primarily an external one -- either with God, or the world, or with Satan -- but an internal one, with the lusts that come from our own sinful nature!

Note that James talks about two processes that go on:

- 1) In going from temptation to sin, and
- 2) In going from **lust** (or, the desire) to death.

V. 14 is like fishing or hunting wild game.

V. 15 is expressed in terms of a birth.

Note: " . . . drawn away . . . enticed."

Also in v. 15 note the word "finished" -- which is to be complete in all its parts. Sin does not stay as it originally is; it matures in all of its parts and functions.

And -- you can be sure that it always leads to death. James is talking about sin in a general way -- as it relates to all men.

But the problem is internal!

III. A WARNING (James 1:16-18).

V. 16 looks ahead as well as back. If we can be deceived about the bad things in life, we can also be deceived about the good things in life.

Just as it is true that no sin comes from God, so it is also true that all that is good and holy and righteous does come from him. To be deceived about one is just as harmful spiritually as to be deceived about the other.

It is very clear that James is leading up to salvation (because this is his point from the very first), but it applies generally as well. All good comes from God and only from God. None of it comes from man; sin, yes, but righteousness, no!

And there is a process referred to here (v. 17a) just as



we have a process in v. 14 and again in v. 15.

"Every good gift" emphasizes the act of giving; "every perfect gift," the completed gift.

They are "from above" -- like the new birth in John 3:3, 7. See also James 3:15, 17.

God here is called "the Father of lights" because He has produced all of the light there is in the world -- both physically or naturally and spiritually!

And for our encouragement James focuses for a moment on the immutability of God -- "with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He indicates that there is no possibility that God will ever change, and you will never see even any indication of a change in God.

NOW -- upon these truths we are prepared to understand the doctrine of salvation. And this he brings out very clearly in v. 18.

Are you prepared for this? Will you receive it if James says it? How does this fit into our methods of evangelism today? Is our evangelism man-centered, or God-centered?

V. 18 tells us the what,  
the how,  
 and the why -- of salvation!

On the what -- cf. Eph. 2:8, 9;  
 John 1:12, 13;  
 2 Tim. 2:25.

J. A. Motyer in his book, The Tests of Faith, says:  
 "The ground of the new birth was God's will. The words his own will express exactly the correct emphasis. This was something God Himself decided upon. He did not act under pressure from us or others; He took no-one into His confidence, nor did He seek advice on this point. The new birth was wholly and solely the product of His free, sovereign, uncom~~p~~elled will."

And then he adds in a footnote:

"Even the repentance and faith whereby we enter consciously into the new life in Christ are given and created in us by God."

Cf. Rom. 10:17.

If we get our thinking straight about the roots of our salvation, then we will see more accomplished by the way of fruit!

One more thing . . .

## IV. AN EXHORTATION (Jas. 1:19, 20).

Read these two verses, and then relate them to Ecc. 5:1, 2:  
 "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."

We need to be concerned about working "the righteousness of God."

This means not only that His will is being accomplished, but that we behave ourselves before believers and the world so that God is vindicated in the eyes of all men as to the way in which He saves us, and the way in which He perfects us in that salvation.

Concl: In the Inter-Varsity hymnal you will find this hymn -- we do not know who the writer was, but we do know that he had a grasp of the truth which is rarely seen today. And the fact that this truth is being almost 100% overlooked is evident from the fact that hymn like this are being deleted from our hymnals.

Listen to the words, and then see if you do not think that this writer was in perfect agreement with what James has written in our text this morning:

"I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew  
 He moved my heart to seek Him, seeking me;  
 It was not I that found, O Saviour true;  
 No, I was found of Thee.

"Thou didst reach forth Thy hand and mine enfold;  
 I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea;  
 'Twas not so much that I on Thee took hold,  
 As Thou, dear Lord, on me.

"I find, I walk, I love; but O the whole  
 Of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee!  
 For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul:  
 Always Thou lovedst me."

No Christian in his right mind will take one iota of the credit for his salvation. Let us, then, live this way, and witness this way, and pray this way -- so that God will be given the glory, all of the glory, which He deserves to have!

## A KIND OF FIRSTFRUITS

James 1:18

Intro: On Sunday mornings I am seeking, with the Lord's help, to go through the book of James a little faster than I have gone through books in the past -- without missing any of the message of the book.

But there are things which have to be touched upon lightly in moving through a book in this way.

Tonight I want to go back to one verse in James 1 to look primarily at one expression which has attracted my attention in reading the book over and over again -- an expression in which I trust we will find some enlightenment and some blessing tonight. It is the expression in James 1:18, "a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

Out of all that James writes in this verse, this probably means the least, even to most Christians. The rest of the verse seems quite clear. "Begot" or "begot" (NSRB) might pose a difficulty until we remember or check with some other versions and find out that this means to be born, to bring forth by means of a birth.

We all know that we had nothing to do with our physical birth, and James is drawing the same lesson from our spiritual birth. It did not begin with us, but with the will of God. Salvation is a work of God, and that work has been accomplished in the hearts of God's people through "the word of truth," which Paul identifies in Eph. 1:13 as "the gospel of your salvation."

So -- what we learn as we begin to examine this verse is that we need other parts of the Bible to explain this verse.

But we still have not learned what James means by "a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." IT INDICATES THE PURPOSE.

You will remember that the first verse of the Epistle indicates that James was writing to Hebrew Christians. The term, "firstfruits," was well-known to them because it had to do with one of the three important feast days in the spiritual life of the nation of Israel under the Law. We who have been saved from the Gentiles need to go back to the Old Testament to find out what this means so that we can profit from the teaching.

The first time "firstfruits" are mentioned is in Ex. 23:16, 19. Practically the same is found in Ex. 34:22, 26.

Note also Lev. 2:12, 14, and Lev. 23:9-21 (esp. vv. 10, 17, 20, 21). Deut. 26:10, 11 is another important passage. And we cannot overlook Prov. 3:9, 10.

When we come to the NT, in Rom. 16:5 and 1 Cor. 16:15, Paul refers to Epaphroditus and the household of Stephanas as "the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ."

And we have even our Lord referred to as "Christ, the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:23; also v. 20).

Now we are ready to put all of these facts together to see what James was teaching in this expression which is obviously so full of spiritual truth.

It means the following:

*They were fruit  
They were the first of the fruit.*

I. As firstfruits, those early believers belonged to the Lord.

This was the significance of presenting the firstfruits to the Lord. They were giving that part to the Lord.

II. As firstfruits, they were to recognize that more was to come.

This should be a great encouragement to you and to me. If it were not for the term "firstfruits," it might be possible that James was writing only to those Hebrew Christians, but that it has nothing to do with us. But with this expression, this passage immediately takes on meaning for us.

It means that God was just beginning a harvest, and that this was only the first part of it.

For those to whom James was writing this was a guarantee of a future harvest. In fact, Prov. 3:9, 10 would indicate that the presentation of the firstfruits increased the harvest!

III. As firstfruits, James indicates that those who followed would be spiritually just like the firstfruits.

Thus, all that James says about salvation applies to us, and all of the practical instruction applies equally to us. They were to recognize that they were to be examples for those who would be saved later. The godliness of that generation was to be passed on to the next generation, and so on.

The rest of the harvest would also belong to the Lord.

IV. As firstfruits, they themselves were to be the occasion for three things:

A. Worshipping the Lord. See Deut. 26:10. Firstfruits represent work, but the work is not ours. It has not really been done by us; the Lord has done it. So says our text!

B. Rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord. See Deut. 26:11. We can always rejoice in what the Lord has done and is doing. It helps us to remember that the work of God in the hearts of men is dependent upon Him, not us. It is a work He is doing, and not really our work!

C. Resting in the Lord. See Lev. 23:21,  
 "And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be <sup>an</sup> holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations."

The whole tenor of this expression is incline to bring us to a place of resting in the Lord both with respect to our salvation, and in connection with the work of bringing others to Christ.

Concl: Who are the creatures that James refers to at the close of this verse: "the firstfruits of his creatures"? Does this refer to all men?

Obviously not, or you would have a universal salvation.

This has to apply to the those who are of the new creation, His new creatures -- those who are in Christ!

This, too, gives us the right to claim the book of James for ourselves. It is not even limited to future (from that time) Hebrew Christians. It is for all who are in Christ!

And it is not just an option. These are truths which are absolutely binding upon all of us. If we want to glorify God, if we want our lives to be examples to others, if we want to be used of God in bringing others to Christ, we need to live the truth of this great Epistle!

As James 1:18 indicates in the phrase we have been considering, this is the purpose of God's work in us -- that as believers are saved in any place, they might be "a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

This is what Paul had in mind when he wrote 1 Tim. 4:12.

THE WORD OF GOD  
James 1:19-27

Intro: How many of you have been reading James?

— The busy holiday season is upon us. Let us be careful that we are not drawn away from the Word and from prayer. Give them the greatest priority in your life!

What has James been teaching us? Or, better yet, what has the Holy Spirit been teaching us? All of our knowledge and understanding of the Word comes from the Holy Spirit.

We have learned that the Christian life is going to be characterized by trials -- different kinds of trials. And it is.

But we have also seen that God is at work in these trials -- that He has purposes which He is accomplishing through trials which cannot be fulfilled in any other way.

All of these trials are designed for our blessing -- not for our destruction. James 5:10 gives us a very precious hope.

And since they are for our blessing, we begin to learn:

- 
- 1) How impatient we are.
  - 2) How weak our faith is.
  - 3) How ignorant we are.
  - 4) How little we pray.
  - 5) How quickly we will give up.
  - 6) How sinful we are.
  - 7) How quickly we are deceived.
  - 8) How little we know about God.
  - 9) How deficient we are in understanding salvation.

And that verse (v. 18) touches the emphasis that continues through the remainder of chapter 1: We also learn how we have failed to be obedient to the Word of God.

We do not learn all of these things at once, but as the trials continue, these are some of the things that begin to get through to us!

But let us read through these verses to see this emphasis on the Word of God for ourselves. (Read and explain.)

Note first . . .

I. THE REFERENCES TO THE WORD OF GOD.

— We have **four** titles and one illustration.

A. The titles.

1. "The word of truth" (v. 18).
2. "The engrafted word," or, "the implanted word" (v. 21).
3. "The word" (vv. 22, 23).
4. "The perfect law of liberty" (v. 25).

B. The illustration: "a glass," or mirror.

## II. WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH THE WORD?

A. We must hear the Word.

What we are doing this morning is pleasing to the Lord.

After all, the Word is not going to help me unless I know what is in it. And I won't learn it all at once. But I need to be learning and learning and learning -- a life-long relationship with the Word of God!

And I must be "swift to hear" -- anxious to hear, eager to hear. In its context, this has to be the meaning of v. 19.

Why is it important to "hear" the Word?

In this passage -- it is because the Lord wants me to see myself. That is the reason James mentions that the Word is "a glass," a mirror. It is more than a mirror, but it is a mirror. Why do you use a mirror? So you can see yourself -- not someone else.

How many do you have in your house? Count them some time -- and you will quickly see how important they are to you. And notice how often during the day you are looking into one of those mirrors.

Illus: The ~~mirrors~~ we see when we go to a fair or a carnival -- mirrors which distort our figures. What if these were true representations? The same is true of pictures that we have made.

Does v. 24 describe:

- 1) What happens when we have finished reading our Bibles, or
- 2) The way we go home from church?

B. We must receive the Word (v. 21).

This means to welcome it. We fully intend to accept it

The emphasis here seems to be on how a man appears to himself -- "If anyone thinks himself to be . . ." (NASB).

This is the third time that deceit is mentioned in the chapter: vv. 16, 22, 26. Self-deception is one of the greatest dangers in the Christian life! James uses three Greek words but the emphasis is the same.

This is the only time "religious" and "religion" are referred to in a good sense. It points to the outward observance of ceremonies and rituals. But if it is to be true worship it must be accompanied by three things:

A. A controlled tongue (v. 26).

This goes back to "slow to speak" in v. 19, and prepares the way for the passage at the beginning of chapter 3.

Do you have problems here? Beware of the man or woman whose tongue is always going.

B. A concerned heart (v. 27).

James is not talking about one visit. He is talking about a habit. And visiting includes looking after them, providing for them, caring for them. See also 1 Timothy 5.

Have you ever done anything like this?

C. A consecrated life (v. 27).

You can always tell a person who is using the Word as James has described in this chapter because it is going to make him aware of the way the world can make him dirty.

"Unspotted" is used over our Lord in 1 Pet. 1:19. So to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world" is to want to be like the Lord Jesus, to be holy as He is holy.

Concl: James has really given us all a good look into the mirror this morning. And we probably do not like what we have seen.

The crucial thing now is this: Are we going to go away and begin to forget all about it, or are we going to seek the blessing of the Lord so that what we have seen can be changed? May God give us the wisdom to call upon Him for help so that our trials can fulfill His purpose.

Tonight: "A Kind of Firstfruits"-- from v. 18.



even before we "hear" it because we know that it is the Word of God. We fully agree with Mary, the mother of our Lord, when she said, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5). Or like the Psalmist (Psa. 119:97), or like Job (Job 23:12, "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food"), or like Jeremiah (Jer. 15:16).

We welcome it.

But in order to do this two things are necessary, as we see in v. 21:

- 1) "Lay apart . . ." like we would put off a garment. Eph. 4:22, 25.
- 2) "Receive with meekness" -- Trench says: "It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting" (p. 152).

Are you listening to the Word this morning with a heart that is bitter toward God? Then it will not profit you.

Remember Job, and remember Moses -- the meekest man in all the earth.

- C. We need to hear the Word "intently" (v. 25, NASB) -- "But one who looks intently . . ."

This is the way that John looked into the tomb when he outran Peter on that resurrection morning. Cf. John 20:5.

Is this the way you read your Bible -- by syllables, which is what meditation is?

But there is one more thing about our use of the Word:

- D. We continue, we abide with it, we stay with it -- which means that we not only do it, but we continue to listen and to search and to welcome the Word.

The object is always obedience, but our need never comes to an end. We need the Word daily, and we need the same passages over and over again.

No part of the Word can be neglected. To do so is to question the wisdom of God in giving it -- like some people feel about James, and more people feel about Ezekiel.

### III. THE OUTCOME OF IT ALL (vv. 26, 27).

HOLD THE FAITH!

James 2:1

Intro: Does James have anything to say about Christmas?

— A dilemma each year at special seasons: Should we turn aside to speak on these special subjects, or should we continue on with what we have been doing so that visitors in particular can see what the Lord has led us to do in our services?

Perhaps we can do both!

What impresses you every year at this time as you hear the things that are being said about Christmas, and as you read the things that have been written, or are being written?

Two things can be said:

- 1) First, much of it is very fine, and very true. That is the reason it is fine.
- 2) But -- much of it is as far from the truth as it possibly can be!

The important thing is this: Do we know the difference?

— Now immediately when I say, Do we know the difference?, I am suggesting that there is a right and a wrong to it all. This is very foreign to the thinking of most people. We do not think in terms of absolutes any more. Truth has now become a personal matter. If a thing is right to me, it is right -- but, we are told, there is no way (especially in matters of religion) to say that a thing is absolutely right, or absolutely wrong!

Is that right?

When you read the Bible, do you get the idea that it doesn't make much difference what we believe? Is that the way Moses felt? What about David, or Isaiah -- or any other OT writer? Or, go into the NT -- what about Paul, or Peter, or John (or any of the others), do they ever give you the impression that you can make up your own beliefs where God is concerned?

THE UNITED TESTIMONY OF THE WRITERS OF SCRIPTURE IS THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THE WORLD IS WHAT YOU BELIEVE. AND THEY ALSO CLEARLY INDICATE THAT YOU AND I WOULD NOT KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT AND WHAT IS WRONG IF GOD HAD NOT REVEALED THESE THINGS IN THE BIBLE.

— In fact, it is so important that it will determine HOW you live now, and WHERE you will live for all eternity.

Therefore, it is not enough to know that Christmas is the day that we celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ. We must know WHO He is, and WHY He was born.

Speaking very frankly, <sup>much of</sup> the loose talk about brotherhood and love and peace which you hear at Christmas has nothing to do with the teachings that you find when you come to the Word of God.

That is one reason that James writes in James 2:1, My brethren, hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Glory, but not with respect of persons.

We are just concerned with the first part of this very this morning.

When James mentions "the faith" he is talking about the doctrines which are taught in Scripture which a person must believe if he is rightly to consider himself a Christian.

In the latter part of this chapter where James is talking about faith and works, we often are given the impression that James is discounting the importance of what you believe.

But he is not!

He is emphasizing the fact that true faith will produce results that a false faith can never produce!

What should a Christian believe?

Let me give you several answers this morning from the book of James itself, and, in doing so, I think you will see how this relates to this season of the year.

I. A CHRISTIAN IS A PERSON WHO BELIEVES THE BIBLE -- THAT IT IS THE WORD OF GOD.

Have those of you who have read the Epistle of James noticed how many times James either quotes from the OT, or cites the OT, or refers to OT people like Abraham, and Rahab, and the prophets?

Why does he do this?

Because he wants us to know that the Bible is the authority for what we believe. And the Epistle of James along with all of the other books of the NT takes its place with all the books of the OT to give us the ultimate in authority for what we believe.

REMEMBER: No teaching can come into conflict with the Bible and still be true!

II. A CHRISTIAN IS A PERSON WHO BELIEVES WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT JESUS OF NAZARETH.

This is the very heart of all that the Bible teaches.

In the words of James, it is "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ," THE GLORY!

Be careful of the person who just talks about JESUS. People use that Name when they do not believe that He is the LORD Jesus CHRIST!

Do you believe that He was and is THE LORD? Then you have to believe that He was really born from a virgin mother. The virgin conception and birth of the Lord Jesus Christ is not just a sentimental idea created by some devoted followers; it is an historical fact, in fulfillment of OT prophecy.

Do you believe the reason given in Scripture as to why He was named Jesus? Cf. Matt. 1:21.

Christ means Messiah -- and points to the Lord Jesus Christ as the One about whom all of the OT prophets spoke, <sup>and</sup> for Whom the people of the OT had been looking for hundreds of years.

Do you believe these things?

You cannot deny these and still hold the faith! You cannot deny these truths and still claim to be a Christian!

And then, in the third place, to hold the faith means . . .

### III. A CHRISTIAN IS A PERSON WHO BELIEVES WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT SALVATION.

How would you answer these questions?

- 1) Do you believe that everybody needs to be saved -- that we are all under divine judgment and the penalty of eternal Hell?
- 2) Do you believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners -- through His death and resurrection?
- 3) Do you believe that you are so hopeless and helpless that salvation has to be a work of God -- from start to finish?
- 4) Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Saviour? That there is no other way -- that all who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are doomed forever?

Read James 1:18 and 21. (Comment.)

### IV. A CHRISTIAN IS A PERSON WHO BELIEVES WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN.

This is the great burden that lay heavily upon the heart of

James, causing him to write this Epistle under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Oh, how this truth has been watered down!

And what dreadful damage the watering down of this truth has done to countless numbers of people.

James says, whatever you might believe, it cannot be saving faith unless it is a faith that changes your life.

Do you believe that?

We are not holding to the faith which has been given to us in the Word of God unless we believe this.

Many more things could be added such as the wonderful way in which a Christian believes what the Bible teaches about how God meets the needs of His people.

But let me add just one more:

V. A CHRISTIAN IS A PERSON WHO BELIEVES WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST.

Are your hopes attached to this world, or to heaven?

Are you looking for the Lord Jesus Christ to return?

Cf. James 5:7, 8.

This is our hope in life, and this is our hope in death!  
"This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

You have to believe that if you are to hold the faith!

Concl: Listen to me carefully as I close. I want to make an important statement, and then I want to read another passage of Scripture in closing.

This is the important statement: Thing of the five things we have been thinking about:

- 1) What the Bible teaches about itself.
- 2) What the Bible teaches about the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3) What the Bible teaches about salvation.
- 4) What the Bible teaches about the life of a Christian.
- 5) What the Bible teaches about the coming of the Lord. . .

THERE IS NOT ONE OF THESE DOCTRINE WHICH IS NOT BEING GROSSLY MISREPRESENTED BY TEACHING WHICH YOU CAN HEAR TODAY!

Are you aware of that? Do you know what that can mean?

Sometimes it is outright denial. Sometimes it is through compromise. Sometimes it is done through silence. Even many of those who claim to be the Lord's people today do not look at things from the standpoint of the great doctrines of the faith, the great doctrines of the Word of God.

What shall we do?

John Chancellor said on the NBC Nightly News not too long ago that the United States is a country that has been built on compromise. I have known that for a long time, but I hated to hear it stated in so many words.

The church in America has followed this example. It, too, is being built on compromise.

What shall we do?

Let us take our answer, not from men, not even just from other Christians -- BUT FROM THE INFALLIBLE, UNCHANGING, INERRANT WORD OF GOD!

Listen! I am reading from the NASB in 2 Tim. 4:1-8,

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

May God give us a desire to be faithful, not popular!

THE CASE AGAINST PARTIALITY  
James 2:1-13

Intro: One thing that I trust our study of the book of James will do for us is to make us love James, the writer, the same way we love Paul, and John, and Peter -- and the other writers of Scripture. We have singled out James as a reprobate, and, to listen to some people, you would even think that they are going to be surprised if they see James in heaven!

What does such an attitude reflect about our belief in the inspiration of Scripture? Remember that 2 Tim. 3:16 says, "All scripture . . . ." We need to be extremely careful about relegating any part of the Word of God to a secondary place.

But there is another thing . . . . Have we forgotten that the Apostle Paul speaks very positively about the importance of the Law? And he does this even in a chapter like Rom. 8. See vv. 3, 4. And then look at Rom. 13:8-10.

We know that we are not earning our salvation.

So did James know that.

And we know that we are not to bring animal sacrifices. The book of Hebrews teaches us this. James knew that too.

And we know that we no longer are to keep the Sabbath Day -- which is Saturday. But James knew that too.

A man is a legalist who does what he does so that he can gain some merit with God. There is not a word in James which would even suggest this!

Do you know what James' crime is? He is a man who believed that you ought to be able to identify a Christian by the way that he lives -- and that this comes down to things like the way we use our tongues, and the way we treat people -- as well as to things like adultery and murder! He believed that a true child of God will give absolute priority in his life to the Word of God -- AND THIS KIND OF TEACHING HAS NEVER BEEN POPULAR! It is not popular today.

We come to chapter 2 today -- the first 13 verses.

This passage has the closest possible connection with chapter 1. We see this not only from the content, but also from James' use of "the law of liberty" in 2:12. Compare it with 1:25. Also -- see his reference to the tongue in 1:26, and again in 2:3 and then in 2:12.

There are 4 divisions in these 13 verses:

- 1) The exhortation (v. 1).
- 2) The illustration (vv. 2-4).
- 3) The explanation (vv. 3-11).
- 4) The application (vv. 12, 13).

Partiality is a symptom of a great problem -- the tendency to set aside the full authority of the Word of God.

First of all, let us take the time for . . .

# I. A SURVEY OF THE ENTIRE PASSAGE.

## A. The exhortation (v. 1).

This is one of the most important verses in the Epistle.

James is saying that we must hold to, abide by, be prepared to defend, "the faith" -- a NT term for the sum-total of Biblical teaching.

What it declares about "our Lord Jesus Christ" is the very heart of its teaching. And here James gives us one of the clearest statements for the Deity of our Lord that we have any place in Scripture. He is lit., the Glory! Cf. John 1:14 and Heb. 1:3.

BUT -- James says, we cannot do this is we are going to be partial with people by showing respect for a man's person when the Word of God emphasizes all the way through the grace of God.

## B. The illustration (vv. 2-4).

Now James brings the truth of v. 1 and illustrates it with a problem that they faced every time they assembled. He probably is talking about unbelievers who "come in."

"Partial" in v. 4 is the same word which is translated "doubting" in 1:6 ("wavering" in the KJV). It speaks of a person who is divided in his thought. Here the believer is divided between what he knows is right and by what he feels inclined to do.

## C. The explanation (vv. 3-11).

The solution to the any problem that faces us as the people of God is to go back to God Himself. How can we possibly reject those whom God has chosen? This is the emphasis in v. 5.

In vv. 6, 7 -- even from the standpoint of experience, can we not see that there is more of a threat from the



rich than from the poor?

But what is more important is the Word -- and this is the emphasis in vv. 8-11.

Our lives are to be regulated by what the Word says, and not by what people are! And the whole of the Law is summed up in two commandments:

- 1) One is in v. 8.
- 2) The other was referred to in v. 5b.

The one in v. 8 is taken from Lev. 19:18; the one in v. 5, from Deut. 6:5.

Paul says what James says. See Rom. 13:8-10, and our Lord is the chief authority. See Matt. 22:37, 39. So James is on very good ground!

BUT -- if we do what God does not do and does not approve by showing "respect of persons," then we are guilty of breaking "the whole law" even though we might not be guilty of the grosser sins.

Our tendency is to select what we like and to reject what we do not like -- and this has always been man's problem. Cf. the Pharisees in John 8, and then note the words of our Lord in John 8:7.

"For he that said" in v. 11 refers to God, not to Moses. Cf. Ex. 20:1 -- "And God spake all these words, saying."

#### D. The application (vv. 12, 13).

Both our speech and our actions are to be in accord with the Word of God. God's dealings with us now and in the future are based upon His Word.

The way to be victorious over judgment is by the exercise of "mercy," and this is always prompted by love. See of God in Eph. 2:4.

Now -- from all of this, what can we say are . . .

## II. THE MAIN POINTS OF EMPHASIS IN THE PASSAGE.

There are four that I would like to mention.

- A. From v. 1 -- The importance of our adherence to the Word of God.

It is a Word which comes from, exalts, and belongs to "our Lord Jesus Christ," the Glory!

To do this, we must know it. To know it we must read it, we must hear it.

It is both positive and negative -- accepting and doing all that the Word teaches; rejecting and refusing to do all that is contrary to the that Word.

- B. The importance of seeing the will of God in the work of God. This is in v. 5.

God does not choose us because of our faith, or  
because we are heirs, or  
because we love Him,  
but He chooses us in order that these things may be true of us!

It all starts with Him, and it is not based at all on any good thing that He sees in us. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:27 ff.

This applied just as much to those who were already in the fold as it did to those who were just coming in.

Cf. Jas. 1:18. Remember also John 15:16.

God does not work according to human likes and dislikes, but according to His own sovereign will. And we have to learn this, and abide by this.

- C. The importance of every part of the Word of God -- in all of its details. This is seen in vv. 8-11.

Is one commandment more important than another? Is one more binding than another? Does one bring more guilt than another? Can we select and choose what we want?

It is very likely that this is where the blessing is being held back in our lives. We stand for the Bible as the Word of God, and we believe that salvation is a work of God by grace, but we treat the commandments of Scripture as though we were shopping in a super market!

- D. The importance of realizing that there still is such a doctrine as the judgment of God. And this is true even in this age of grace. See vv. 12, 13.

The judgment is often present, but it is also and always future. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:10. Also 1 Cor. 11:30, 31.

Concl: James is a prober, isn't he? Perhaps this is really the reason why he is not very popular among the people of God. He cannot be charged with false teaching, but, oh, how important it is that we listen to what he is saying -- and then respond positively to it.

WHAT IS SAVING FAITH?

James 2:14-26

Intro: Going through this Epistle we need to keep in mind that it is written to people who were going through affliction, trials, suffering.

This, in turn, brings certain things to the attention of the people:

- 1) The fact that the Lord is doing something in them (1:2-4).
- 2) The needs that they have -- especially for wisdom (1:5).
- 3) The need to pray (1:6-8).
- 4) The relationship between God and sin (1:13-15).
- 5) And then -- many, many aspects of salvation (1:16 ff.):
  - a) That it begins with God (1:18).
  - b) That it is to make us completely different (1:18).
  - c) That God works through His Word -- both in saving us and also in making the many changes in us that need to be made (1:21-25). This means that sin must be put away.
  - d) That these changes will become evident in two ways:
    - (1) In our speech (1:26).
    - (2) In our behavior (1:27).

And then as we come to chapter 2 we see some of the major points of emphasis (and these also are related to salvation):

- e) That our understanding of the Gospel will be seen in the way we treat people (2:1-13). There must not be any special treatment of people for what they are.
- f) That faith must be accompanied by works, by certain evidences, in order to be true, saving faith! This is our text for the morning (2:14-26).

And this is the point that has made so many turn away from this Epistle with the feeling that James is a heretic!

And yet -- James is not a heretic! He is not giving us teaching that is opposed to the teaching of Paul, or of John! These verses may be more needed today than at any other period in the history of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Have you noticed how James uses questions?

There are 7 in our text -- and they all need to be answered by everyone who reads this Epistle!

- 1) There are 2 in v. 14.
- 2) Vv. 15, 16 give us the 3rd question.
- 3) #4 is in v. 20.
- 4) #5 is in v. 21.
- 5) #6 is in v. 22.
- 6) #7 is in v. 25.

There was this superficiality in Israel which we see also was a major problem in the early Church -- just as it is today!

How does James approach it?

First we have . . .

I. A STARTLING QUESTION AND ITS ANSWER (James 2:14-17).

A. The question (v. 14).

There are actually 2 questions, but the second clarifies the first.

How would you answer this?

The wording in the Greek anticipates a NO to the second question!

B. The illustration (vv. 15, 16).

How would you answer this?

Note: Both in v. 14, and then in vv. 15, 16, we have an emphasis upon what is said in contrast with what is done.

C. The answer (to the second question of v. 14).

Faith without words, without evidence, is not true faith.

Digression: Before we go on to the rest of the passage, let us ask, Is this really contrary to what Paul taught? Is this contrary to what John taught? Cf. Rom. 4:1-5.

For Paul, cf. Eph. 2:8, 9 -- but then see v. 10.

For John, cf. 1 John 1:6;  
2:3-5;  
2:29;  
3:9, 10;  
3:14; etc.

Nowhere does James indicate that we work up to salvation. But he insists (and so do Paul and John) that works follow salvation and give proof of the reality of our faith, or the faith that is claimed is not saving faith!

Back to our text! As you might expect, there is . . .

II. AN OBJECTION -- WHICH JAMES ANSWERS (Jas. 2:18-26).

A. The objection (v. 18a).

There is a problem in interpreting v. 18 because of the lack of punctuation in the Greek. How many people are involved? Who is saying what?

The idea seems to be that an objector comes along and says to the person who is reading this letter, You have faith; but James says that he has works. Let him say it. You are OK as long as you can say that you have faith.

To this James responds, "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."

So the latter part of the verse (18) gives us first part of . . .

B. James' answer to the objection (vv. 18b-26).

1. James' personal conviction (v. 18b).

How important it is for us to believe what we teach!

2. The faith of demons (v. 19).

They agree with Deut. 6:4.

As to what demons believe, see also Matt. 8:29;  
Mark 1:24; 5:7;  
Luke 4:34.

But there are no saved demons -- and there never will be any! Instead, such beliefs leave them horrified, shuddering, struck with the most extreme kind of fear! But they have no peace!

So this does not help the man who simply claims that he believes the truth.

3. The faith of Abraham (vv. 20-24).

V. 20 is a question designed to make the reader consider just how open he is to being taught -- because the greatest evidence comes from the Word itself. Here we have a lesson in evangelism because James is writing to a "vain man," not "foolish" as in the NASB, but a man who is empty BECAUSE his faith is an empty profession. It lacks evidence.

The proof that Abraham really believed God is seen in what he was willing to do with Isaac (in Gen. 22). Cf. the Spirit's interpretation of this in Heb. 11: 17-19.

V. 22 makes it clear that faith comes first -- but it has to be followed, to be confirmed, by works.

This is true in the life of Abraham -- uniting the doctrine of salvation in the OT with the doctrine of salvation in the NT.

James quotes in v. 23 from Gen. 15:6 -- which he would surely have avoided if he had been teaching salvation by works. Gen. 15:6 is quoted also in Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6.

Consequently, Abraham is called in Scripture, "the Friend of God." Cf. 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8.

See also our Lord's words in John 15:14.

And so we have the conclusion in v. 24.

#### 4. The faith of Rahab (vv. 25, 26).

Rahab is chosen, we would suppose, because she is at the point of greatest possible contrast with Abraham:

- 1) A woman.
- 2) An immoral woman.
- 3) A Gentile.
- 4) A pagan.

BUT -- like Abraham, she was to take her place in the line leading to Christ. She was an ancestress of our Lord Jesus Christ.

However, she and Abraham were both saved the same way ("by faith"), and yet the proof was seen in the evidence given in their works.

Cf. Joshua 2 for the account as to which came first, Rahab's faith, or her works. See esp. v. 11. Also Heb. 11:31.

Concl: Are you pacifying yourself that you believe the right doctrines, or that at some time you made a profession of faith? And yet as you look at your life you know that there has not been much of a change in your life! Perhaps no change at all! It is in your talk, but not your walk -- not in your life.

James was written for professing Christians. Perhaps that is the reason it has been hated by the professing Church. It exposes one of our greatest problems -- those who profess, but who do not possess salvation. It is not enough to join a church; we must be joined to Christ. May God enable each of us to know where we stand in our relationship with Him and with Christ!

Intro: The most important thing that you and I can take out of 1976 and into 1977 is the knowledge of our salvation -- and with knowledge I include assurance.

It is the most important because it determines one thing of pre-eminent importance: our eternal destiny.

Two things can be said about this in the light of what we find in the Scriptures:

- 1) It is possible for us to be absolutely right, OR
- 2) It is possible for us to be absolutely wrong.

There is no middle ground.

And yet, in spite of this, this seems to be the one area where people are more inclined to say that sincerity is the main thing -- not being right!

And the situation is made even worse when some try to give us the impression that the Bible itself teaches several different ways of salvation.

The truth is that it teaches only ONE way -- and we need to know what that ONE way is. Just to listen to what men have to say will lead inevitably to eternal disaster. Cf. Prov. 14:12. We need to know God's way.

Actually we can say that there are three possibilities:

- 1) Salvation can be a work which God does entirely for us.
- 2) Salvation can be a kind of a joint effort -- God does part, and we do the rest.
- 3) Salvation is the reward which God gives for a work which we do; in which case it would be a work of man.

Which is right?

How do we determine the right way?

I make no apologies when I say this: There is only one solution to the question. The answer is to be found in the Bible, the Word of God. God gave us His Word so that there would be no doubt, no confusion, on this most important of all subjects.

But, someone will say, the Bible isn't clear. There are people who teach all three of these ways of salvation, and they all go to the Bible for their authority.

Let me ask you a question . . . If you believe this, do you believe it because you have made a personal investiga-

tion yourself, or is this a conclusion you have reached from what others have told you?

Can you afford to be anything but right -- since the consequences are eternal? No one is going to take your penalty if they have caused you to come to the wrong conclusion. You will suffer that yourself!

Let us see if we can get the whole story clearly in mind.

To do so we need to read 5 verses from the pen of the Apostle Paul: Rom. 4:1-5.

(Read.)

Paul makes it very clear that salvation is:

- 1) Not by human works.
- 2) Not partly by human works and partly by God,  
BUT
- 3) All of God! Not even believing is classified as a work. Faith, or believing, means that God does the work -- and it is all, ALL on the basis of GRACE -- completely undeserved in any way!

Now let us turn to James 2, beginning with v. 19. Here James seems to be saying just the opposite of Paul -- that faith is not the important thing, but that our works are important.

(Read vv. 19-26.)

It is important that we be able to reconcile these passages because:

- 1) Not only does the doctrine of salvation find involvement here, but
- 2) Our respect for ALL of Scripture as the Word of God is also involved.

If the Bible is all the Word of God, then there cannot be any contradictions!

Let us begin on the basis that both Romans and James are the Word of God.

We certainly would feel from the fact that salvation is presented throughout Scripture as a work of God to be received by faith, that our problem is with James and not with Paul!

What, then, is James seeking to teach us?

Let us follow his thought carefully. Much depends upon our being able to understand him.



- I. First and foremost, the latter part of James 2 indicates that salvation is the same in the NT that it was in the OT.

Before you say, "Yes, that's the problem because he wants to put all of us under the Law," note this carefully because many true Christians do not understand this today.

At this point we are assuming that James agrees with Paul.

But whatever is the answer, James teaches only ONE kind of salvation in both the OT and the NT. Otherwise it would be foolish to refer to Abraham and to Rahab.

- II. Secondly, the references to Abraham and Rahab teach the oneness of salvation in other ways:

- A. That the same is necessary for women, as for men.
- B. That the same is necessary for Gentiles, as for Jews.
- C. That the same is necessary for the immoral, as for the moral (although we do not know the whole story on Abraham).

At least their lives seem to have been different.

James preached only ONE salvation for all, regardless of their distinctions.

- III. Now thirdly (and here we come to the heart of things): James is teaching very clearly that faith is important!

He is not talking about faith OR works, but faith AND works.

This is clear from 2:1, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23 (a passage which James would surely have ignored if he did not believe in the importance of faith -- Gen. 15:6), 24, 26.

But notice a fourth thing:

- IV. James is also teaching us that works are important.

He hits us with this in v. 14 -- and then in vv. 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26.

But so were works important to Paul. Cf. Phil. 2:12,

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

And see Tit. 3:8,

"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

And, besides, remember Eph. 2:10 -- plus many, many more.

But our Lord also believed in works, even for Himself. When John the Baptist sent to Him asking, "Art thou he that should come . . . ?", the Lord answered,

"Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

These were His works.

See also John 5:36,

"But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."

And then in John 10:37, 38,

"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him."

So we have a strong argument for works in Scripture.

But, before we jump to any conclusions, let us note this 5th point:

V. James teaches us that works FOLLOW faith, and yet he keeps them distinct.

This is the case in both of the examples which he cites.

A. The case of Abraham.

The faith is mentioned in Gen. 15:6, and preceded Gen. 22 by years. However, Abraham was right with God from Gen. 15:6 on!

B. The case of Rahab.

When was she saved -- when she received the spies?

NO! Listen to her own testimony to the spies as it is record in Joshua 2:9-11,

"And she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our heart did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you; for the Lord, your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath."

They could have believed as much as 40 years before! The point is that they believed first, and then worked, and that they would have been right with God and prepared to meet Him if they had died before the spies ever God to Jericho!

What can we say about works then, except for the fact that they followed faith and that Abraham and Rahab were saved by faith alone.

Here it is: point #6!

VI. The point that James is making throughout his Epistle: WORKS ARE AN INDISPENSABLE EVIDENCE OF FAITH.

A person who is saved by faith will show it by their lives -- their works.

And if there are no works, there is no true faith. See the example in v. 19 where James speaks of the demons. Contrast Rom. 5:1 with its "peace with God."

Concl: Thomas Manton, who lived back in the \_\_\_\_\_ and whose commentary on James is still being printed, has stated it this way:

"Works are not a ground of confidence, but an evidence; not the foundations of faith, but the encouragements of assurance. Comfort may be increased by the sight of good works, but it is not built upon them; they are seeds of hope, not props of confidence; sweet evidences of election, not causes; happy presages (prediction) and beginnings of glory; in short, they can manifest an interest, but not merit it" (p. 239).

Why did James write this? For two reasons:

(Over)

- 1) Either to assure us,  
OR
- 2) To awaken us to our need.

Salvation is by faith and by faith alone -- in a crucified and risen Savior. His work completely satisfied God -- and still satisfies Him. It is the only work that ever has or ever will!

BUT -- be sure that James is right. If the faith that you say you have has not produced a change in your life, you can be sure that it is not faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. True faith in Christ cannot and will not leave you as you were before. The changes never lead up to salvation, but they always follow it!

The next time we get back to James (in two weeks) we will see where you can first begin to see the changes take place. Read it in chapter 3.

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## A CHRISTIAN AND HIS TONGUE

James 3:1-12

Intro: Express thanks to the congregation for all of the cards, gifts, which we received during the holidays. Also, on behalf of the Staff. The notes have been especially encouraging.

Our card is being printed with the picture that we promised, and should be in the mail in a week or so.

*Since  
all the  
verses* Please turn to James 3. (Read and explain the first twelve verses.)

V. 1 should read, Many (of you) should not be teachers, and the reason is given in the latter part of the verse.

V. 2 -- not, "we offend all, but, we all offend, or stumble, i.e., sin.

"Word" focuses attention on the theme of this section: the tongue!

Vv. 3, 4 -- illustrations. Both emphasize how something large is controlled by something small. In v. 5a the application is made to the tongue.

V. 5b -- The tongue has not proven to be beneficial, however, like the bit and the rudder. It is a fire. And it only takes a small fire to set a large forest aflame.

V. 6 is a very important verse, but also very difficult. "The course of nature" means the existence which follows our birth.

V. 7: Man was given dominion originally over all of creation. Some evidence of that still remains by man being able to subdue to some extent all forms of lower life. E.g., Sea World, Marine Land, Circuses, etc.

V. 8 -- a frank and true statement about the tongue -- a hopeless problem for man.

"Unruly" = restless. Deadly poison is illustrated by Rom. 3:13, 14,

"Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."

Vv. 9-12 bring out the fact that we are still not what we should be when our mouths can be used in two entirely different ways.

We do not have the solution in these 12 verses -- just the problem stated. The solution comes in the verses which follow, even on into chapters 4 and 5.

But let us consider the message of the passage. There are seven

ral important things here which we need to understand.

## I. THE CONNECTION WITH CHAPTER 2.

James has been writing about the relationship between FAITH and WORKS. He has shown us that WORKS must follow true FAITH. The evidence of our FAITH will be seen in our lives.

Here in chapter 3 James is teaching us that . . .

- A. The first place that you will see this evidence is in the way a person uses his tongue.

This is evident even in the two examples that James has used: Abraham and Rahab.

Have you ever noticed how much the Bible has to say about our speech? We have already had a great deal in James.

Note some of the statements we had in Ephesians: 4:25, 29-31; 5:4, 19, etc.

But there is another connection here with chapter 2:

- B. James is saying that they had too many teachers!

He is not talking about teachers of the right kind, but those who were taking the place of teachers who had no right to teach. They did not know enough. They had not been called of God, nor gifted by God. They were spreading confusion.

Even in Ephesians Paul wrote, "Let no man deceive you with vain words" (Eph. 5:6).

We find the same is true today. The Gospel is watered down. The world is being followed. We have teachers who are encouraging this. They have been present in every generation. They do not abide by the Word of God. So-called unity is more important than doctrinal purity.

God is going to deal in special judgment with all who have taught the Word, and teachers should never forget this!

But let us go on to notice . . .

## II. FOUR VERY SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS WHICH JAMES MAKES.

James seems to have a special gift for stating the truth in simple, brief statements. Cf. 1:2-4.

## A. The first statement: v. 2.

Do you agree with the first part of this verse? You have to if you have any insight at all!

But notice especially the second part of the verse where we have the first of these 4 statements which I want you to see:

"If any man offend not in word . . ."

Where but in the Bible would you find such an illuminating statement?

There can be no real spiritual life as long as the tongue is out of control. Cf. Psalms 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth . . ."

The two illustrations show that this is not the only case where the key is a very little thing!

But -- so we will see more deeply into our need, we have . .

## B. The second statement: vv. 5b, 6.

There is more involved in the tongue than you and I would ever know if it were not for what we learn about it in the Word of God.

Note:

- 1) The tongue is a destructive fire.
- 2) It is "a world of iniquity" -- meaning that every sin is to be found there.
- 3) "It defileth the whole body" so that there is not a part of us that is not affected by our tongues.
- 4) It "setteth on fire the course of nature," meaning that it plagues us from birth to death -- all through our lives.
- 5) And finally, "it is set on fire of hell," Gehenna, where the fire does not die. This means that Satan does everything that he can do to keep us under this terrible, destructive fire!

That is a verse which all of us need to go over and over until the Spirit of God really impresses upon us what He has led James to write! We cannot get it in just a few minutes.

Now -- in view of this, we should not be surprised to come to . . .

## C. The third statement: v. 8.

For us this is a hopeless problem! We may be able to

tame lower creatures, but we cannot tame ourselves!

Do you really believe that? If so, then you will quit depending upon yourself for the solution. And that the answer has to come from God will be more evident from the latter part of the chapter.

Taming our tongues is too great for us regardless of our:

- 1) Nationality.
- 2) Background.
- 3) Training.
- 4) Education.
- 5) Personal determination.

James is talking to the people of God, but this applies to every person.

What about the 4th statement? It comes as a rebuke for those of us who know the Lord.

D. The fourth statement: v. 10b.

This is proof of the 3rd statement. Begin reading with v. 9 and continue through v. 12.

James says that these things go on, but they "ought not so to be"!

On v. 9b, cf. Gen. 9:6.

Concl: What can we say about the criticism which has plagued every generation from the beginning of time even to our own?

- 1) That it is displeasing to God.
- 2) That man is still unable to control himself.
- 3) That we are not as spiritual as we might like to think we are.
- 4) That we are busying ourselves with other people's needs, when it is obvious that we have our hands full with our own.

Paul, in Rom. 14:13 gives us a fitting conclusion for what James has been teaching us in this chapter:

"Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more; but judge this rather: that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."

And John says,

"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him" (1 John 2:10).



THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE  
James 3:13-18

Intro: If we were to describe the spiritual lives of the people to whom James writes this Epistle on the basis of what we have read thus far, we would have to say that:

- there was much testing, but little enduring, and practically no rejoicing;
- there was some praying, but little faith;
- there was much preaching of the Word, but little practicing;
- there was much profession, but a lack of proof that they possessed eternal life;
- there was a lot of criticism and division, but little peace and blessing!

In other words, James is not dealing with things that could happen; he is dealing with things that were going on at that time.

From chapter 3 we learn that the problem was twofold:

- 1) There was a lot of the wrong kind of wisdom that was being passed around.
- 2) There was a tragic lack of the right kind of wisdom -- the wisdom which he describes in v. 17 of our text as "from above."

This is obviously an important point to James since he touched on this at the very beginning of his letter. See vv. 5 ff.

"Wisdom" is not just what a person knows (although it includes that), but it is what a person is and the way a person lives.

If our knowledge and understanding are wrong, then everything will be wrong.

This is why Solomon's prayer was such a delight to God -- because it was a recognition of Solomon's greatest need. See 1 Kings 3:9. Read v. 7b, and then note v. 10. If it please God then, it will certainly please God now. In fact, this is one prayer that God promises to answer. See James 1:5.

Note also Isa. 55, which, from the standpoint of practical living, has to be one of the most important chapters in the Bible.

The point that James is making is that we need to be wise, but we are not wise. True wisdom can only come from one place:

"from above," that is, from GOD!

But let us look at our text. We have three divisions. Note what they are:

- 1) The mark of a truly wise man (v. 13).
- 2) The wrong kind of wisdom (vv. 14-16).
- 3) The characteristics of "the wisdom that is from above" (vv. 17, 18).

— In order to understand this passage we are forced to give our attention to learning the meaning of the words which James uses here -- as much or more than in any passage that we have had up to this point.

#### I. THE MARK OF A TRULY WISE MAN (Jas. 3:13).

James seems to go back here to the idea he expressed in v. 1 -- having to do with teachers.

Tongues were really in use. A lot of advice was being given. Slander and criticism were everywhere. But now James is ready to ask and to answer the question:

If you want help, what kind of a person are you going to go to? What is the mark of a truly wise man?

Let us make sure that we understand the full impact of James' question -- and then his answer.

##### A. The question.

— In the Greek translation of the Old Testament these two words, "wise and endured with knowledge," are used to describe what the Lord said about the men who were going to help Moses with the leadership of the nation of Israel. See Deut. 1:13, 15; 4:6

##### B. The answer.

It is not the person who is doing all of the talking, or giving all of the advice. It is not necessarily the person who has had all of the training, who has all of the degrees, BUT IT IS THE PERSON WHOSE LIFE IS AN ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT GOD WANTS ALL OF US TO BE.

In other words, James is saying, "Go to the person who is the kind of a person you would like to be."

Having settled this, James proceeds to tell us that there is . .

#### II. THE WRONG KIND OF WISDOM (Jas. 3:14-16).

— There are really only two possibilities. They make take on different forms, but there are just two.

The way to tell whether you have the right one or the wrong

one is basically this: Is it according to the Word of God, or not? See "the truth" in v. 14 which speaks of the Word!

James is not talking about something that could happen; he is describing a situation that was going on!

Having the Word, you can then understand whether you are on the right track or the wrong track by the results.

(Explain the meaning of the words in vv. 14-16.)

The wisdom which James describes here can never be effective in accomplishing the will of God in the work of God.

How can we then know what is right -- the right wisdom? James tells us in vv. 17, 18. He gives us . . .

### III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF "THE WISDOM THAT IS FROM ABOVE" (Jas. 3:17, 18).

Review Jas. 1:5-8. It comes from God -- the only place that you can get it! And it comes in answer to prayer. The man who is really wise will be a man of prayer. It does not all come at once, but God gives it to us as it is needed -- but we need to pray!

(Explain each characteristic. Note that there are 8.)

V. 18, on the other hand (Gk), teaches us that righteousness comes through peaceful means. See 1:19, 20.

Cf. Eph. 4:1-3.

Concl: To use one of the Apostle Paul's questions, "What shall we than say to these things?" What is your response? What is mine? Does this throw any light for us on the needs that we face? What is the answer? Is it criticism and division -- making sure that everybody knows all that you think is wrong, or is it prayerfully seeking God's wisdom and blessing so that there can be spiritual growth,  
greater blessing,  
increased fruitfulness?

There will always be problems. The important thing is how we handle them -- man's way with man's wisdom, or God's way with the wisdom that He alone gives. The only right and fruitful way is God's way. It behooves each one of us to make sure that we are living according to the wisdom of God which always concentrates on what a man is,  
then on what he does,  
and finally on what he says!

VICTIMS OR VICTORS

James 4:1-10

Intro: The Epistle of James describes a church that is at war  
-- not with sin,  
-- not with the world,  
-- not with the Devil,

BUT WITH ITSELF!

This is a tragic situation, and yet it is amazing to see how much of the history of the church has been characterized by this very thing!

James has been telling us some of the reasons for the warfare in the church and among the people of God. Let me cite three:

- 1) Because, although we are hearing the Word, we are not obeying it. This is what we have in chapter 1.
- 2) The latter part of chapter 2 gives us a second reason -- the possibility that there are unsaved people who have identified themselves with the church. They claim to have faith, but they have nothing to back up their claims! We probably have not faced the fact that this is one of the greatest problems of the 20th century church!
- 3) The third is this -- in chapter 3: We simply do not understand the nature of our problem. James takes it from a very little thing (the way we use our tongues -- in chapter 3) to major warfare in chapter 4.

He describes what we need at the end of chapter 3 (vv. 13-18), and then he goes on to tell us how to get it in chapter 4 (esp. in vv. 6-10).

We are now getting to the heart of the Epistle. James has been showing us our need; he now proceeds to teach us how that need is going to be met.

Again he resorts to questions -- basically 2.

The first is in v. 1a -- which he answers with a question in v. 1b.

The second is in v. 4. And he elaborates on it with the question in v. 5.

But the two main questions are in v. 1a and in v. 4.

In vv. 6-10 James tells us how this problem has to be handled -- and the only way in which it can be handled.

And note this as we begin: James is basically telling us that the problem as far as each of us is concerned is centered in us  
-- not in other people,  
-- not in our heredity,  
-- not in our circumstances, our environment!

I. THE FIRST QUESTION (Jas. 4:1-3): Why do we fight?

The question in v. 1 takes us to the greatest potential of trouble between two people: "wars and fightings."

In the last part of v. 1 we have another question which is our answer: the trouble lies in us, in our old nature.

In v. 2 we see how the problems start on a personal level and continue until a major war is in process.

The pathetis situation: It still does not get us what we want. But we still go on fighting nevertheless.

Where is the failure?

It is right where James says it is:

- 1) Either we are not praying at all, or
- 2) We are praying with the wrong (actually, with evil) desires.

*manon!*  
1) Do not  
ask anything  
until you  
pray.  
2) Don't  
ask  
anything

Whenever you find troubles between believers you can always know that either prayerlessness or the wrong kind of prayer is at the root of the problem!

How much are you praying — and what kind of praying are you doing?

*that  
you  
can't pray  
about and  
for.*

## II. THE SECOND QUESTION (Jas. 4:4, 5): Do you not know . . . ?

Note the strong language.

Living in a day that is characterized by compromise (even in the church) it is hard for us to understand the sharp lines that James draws here -- and which are drawn throughout the Word of God.

The Bible makes it crystal-clear that you cannot serve two masters! There can be no riding on the fence. You are either living on one side, or the other!

And so we have the second of our enemies:

- 1) The first is within us: the flesh (vv. 1-3).
- 2) The second is around us: the world (vv. 4, 5).

And they work so closely together that it is sometimes hard to distinguish between the two.

This close relationship between the flesh and the world is brought out in v. 5 by James' reference, not to a particular verse, but to the digest of all that the OT teaches about man -- not a very complimentary statement.

Do you believe this? Have you learned this?

Cf. Psa. 14:1-3 -- quoted in Romans 3:10-12.

How important it is to be "easy to be intreated" (3:17)!

But James does not leave us there. We have the very heart of our need met in the instruction that he gives us in vv. 6-10.

### III. THE ANSWER TO OUR NEED (Jas. 4:6-10).

Anyone who wants to charge James with salvation by works, or a man-centered approach to spiritual needs, had better look long and hard at v. 6!

#### A. The basic principle (v. 6).

And James has Scripture to prove it: Prov. 3:34 (LXX).

We start with God and with His grace. ALL OTHER WAYS ARE DOOMED TO FAILURE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING!

This is where prayer and faith enter in. "Grace" (the strength, the blessings, all that we need) "He giveth" in answer to prayer.

BUT -- prayer, to be true prayer, must result from what James tells us in vv. 7-10.

#### B. The things we need to do -- by the grace of God (vv. 7-10). They can be done no other way.

Here we have 6 commands, and 3 promises -- plus a reference to our third enemy: "the devil."

##### 1. The commands:

- a. Submission to God (v. 7a). This has to come first. A lack of submission to God is the reason for most of our troubles.
- b. "Resist the devil." And Peter tells us how. See 1 Pet. 5:9, "Whom resist steadfast in the faith."
- c. Fellowship with God (v. 8a). We are starting to learn how much we need Him.
- d. Confession (v. 8b). It is in fellowship with God that we realize how sinful we are. Cf. Isa. 6:5.

Note that "hands" are outward; "heart" is inward.

Cf. Psa. 24:4, "Who shall ascend into . . ."

e. Contrition (v. 9).

Have you ever wept over your sins?

David said, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psa. 51:17). To be contrite is to have your heart crushed with a sense of guilt and regret!

This is what John Monsell to write those words: "My sins, my sins, my Saviour! They take such hold on me, I am not able to look up, save only Christ to Thee."

David said in Psa. 40:12,

"For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me."

Have your sins ever taken hold of you? Has your heart ever failed you when you have looked at your sins?

People say this is too introspective. My answer: It is Scriptural!

"Heaviness" = shame.

f. Humility (v. 10). This is a recognition of what we really are in the sight of God -- worthless, completely undeserving of His mercy and His grace.

But note:

2. The promises:

- a. Concerning the devil: "and he will flee from you" (v. 7b).
- b. Concerning God: "and he will draw night to you" (v. 8a).
- c. Concerning God again: "and he shall lift you up" (v. 10b) -- up with encouragement, up with victory, up with blessing, up with fruitfulness.

Concl: "Be ye doers" by His grace. Instead of victims, we can be VICTORS! Cf. John 13:17, "If ye know . . ."

This is God's way. There is no other!

SOME TRAITS OF HUMILITY

James 4:11-17

Intro: In the latter part of chapter 3 James defines true wisdom -- "the wisdom that is from above" (3:17).

By "wisdom" he is speaking of a way of life -- God's way for us to live -- first mentioned in 1:5 ff.

In the first part of chapter 4 we learn that there are three enemies to that way of life:

- 1) The flesh -- in us.
- 2) The world -- around us.
- 3) The devil.

And then he proceeds to tell us what we need: HUMILITY. See vv. 6-10. Humility could be described as illustrated in a man who see rightly related to God in his daily life. See vv. 7a, 8a, 10a.

James is writing here about the greatest need that we have -- the need to recognize that we are nothing, but that God is the One we need, the One we must please.

In our living, in all of our problems, we must begin with God. We must be concerned with . . .

- His will,
- His grace,
- His glory!

This is evident in many of the verses that we have been learning. Cf. 1 Chron. 16:10, 11, "Glory ye in his holy name . . ."

Psa. 37:4, 5, "Delight thyself also . . ."

Isa. 6:5, "Then said I, Woe is me . . ."

Rom. 6:13, "Neither yield ye your members . . ."

Rom. 12:1, "I beseech you, therefore . . ."

1 Cor. 6:19, 20, "What? Know ye not . . ."

1 Sam. 12:24, "Only fear the Lord . . ."

And all of this is not something that we can do, and then forget. We do not leave the need for humility like we leave v. 10 and go on this morning to v. 11. No, as long as we live we continue to be in need of humility -- to make and to keep things right with God, our heavenly Father.

BUT THEN . . . consistent with the emphasis that James has been making from the beginning . . . we need to know that one of the ways you can identify a humble man is by the way he talks:

- 1) First, about others -- vv. 11, 13.
- 2) And then, about himself -- vv. 14-16.

And then James follows this with one of his definitions of SIN (v. 17).



## I. OUR TALK ABOUT OTHERS (James 4:11, 12).

A question: How safe is the character and how safe is the reputation of other people with you when they are not present?

Note the context.

James is telling us here that when you give yourself to the Lord one danger you are going to have to avoid is the tendency to condemn others because you will begin to see how little even the people of God actually are living for the Lord!

But one of the traits of a truly humble man is that he is not going to be taking other people apart, running them down in his talk with others, condemning them.

James points the way, and then he tells us why. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren."

That commandment of God has never been changed.

Why does James give such a commandment?

Note the rest of the verse, and also v. 12.

Basically there is one reason: To condemn my brother is to speak evil of the Law and to judge the Law.

And so this makes me a judge of the Law, not a doer of the Law -- and in chapter 1 James has taught us that we are to be doers of the Word, and not just hearers -- i.e., those who know it, but do not allow their lives to be changed by it!

Why is such condemnation speaking evil of the Law?

- 1) Because the Law commands me to love my brother. Cf. 2:8.
- 2) Because the Law commands our obedience, not our opinions.
- 3) Because my failure to keep the Word of God means that I am really saying that the Word of God is not right -- but I am.

And so James makes a positive statement in v. 12, and then he asks one of those devastating questions of his. The NASB:

"There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?"

And so when we condemn each other we are doing two things which we ought not do:

- 1) We are setting ourselves against the Word -- saying that it is wrong.
- 2) We are setting ourselves in God's place -- making ourselves the judges of others -- acting as though we are omniscient!

The question: "Who art thou . . . ?"

Paul asks this same question in Rom. 14:4,

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be held up; for God is able to make him stand."

Will you ask yourself that question?

But let us go on to vv. 13-16 because when a child of God is truly humble before God it can be seen in another way:

## II. OUR TALK ABOUT OURSELVES (James 4:13-16).

Note how man is inclined to think of himself as absolutely sovereign over all of his affairs. YOU CAN DETECT IT IN THE WAY HE TALKS -- and this applies also to those of us who are Christians.

In v. 13 James points out how we will tell each other:

- 1) When we are going some place.
- 2) Where we are going.
- 3) How long we will be there.
- 4) What we are going to do.
- 5) How much we are going to make.

In other words, here again we are acting as though we are God -- in complete control of everything!

But what do we really know?

Instead of knowing what will take place for the next year, we do not even know what will take place tomorrow, the next day.

And why do we not know about tomorrow?

Because we cannot even be sure that we are going to be here!

"What is your life? It is even a vapor,"  
a mist, a smoke -- like something that appears, and then quickly disappears.

We all know that this is true, but we do not think like this, and we do not talk like this, and so we do not live like this.

What should we say? See v. 14.

Here is some wonderful truth! James is teaching us that the Lord not only is interested in your tomorrows and in the next year, but that HE has willed what you and I are to be doing tomorrow, and the next day, and so on throughout our lives.

Do you believe this? Is this the way you live?

Cf. Prov. 16:9,

"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps."

Or Prov. 20:24,

"Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?"

Or Psa. 37:23,

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way."

Do you remember how Paul writes in Romans about his trip to Rome? He was praying that

"if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you" (Rom. 1:10).

And three verses later he tells them that many times before he had planned on coming, but that he had been hindered!

God has planned what you are going to do,

where you are going to go,

how long you will be there,

what you will accomplish, and all the rest!

In v. 16 he indicates not only that they were ignoring the will of God, but that they were actually bragging about what they were going to do -- talk which James brands as "evil"!

Why is it evil?

- 1) Because it is talk centered in man, not in the Lord.
- 2) Because it shows pride, not humility.
- 3) Because (and this is inherent in the word) such an attitude influences others to do the same.

James says: "Who are you?

"What is your life?"

What are your answers?

But all of this leads to . . .

### III. A CONCLUSION (James 4:17).

This all leads us to see a definition of sin which we may be overlooking. (Read it.)

Sin is twofold:

- 1) It is doing what we should not do.
- 2) It is also failing to do what we ought to do.

Much, perhaps most, of our sinning is in this second category.

Test it by James 4 -- beginning especially with v. 6. There is probably nothing here that is new to you. You have known these things, as I have. Our problem is a failure to do them. AND JAMES SAYS THAT SUCH FAILURE IS NOTHING LESS THAN "SIN."

Will you accept it this way? If you will, then you will be determined by the grace of God to change the way you have been living. And that is when the blessing will come.

Concl: This whole passage teaches us that we need to be concerned with:

- 1) God as a Person, sovereign over our lives -- calling for humility.
- 2) His Word.
- 3) His will.

Illus: Francis Schaeffer's comments at the close of his message last Monday night. He was not after our applause, but after our obedience to Jesus Christ as our Lord!

You can see it. You have heard it. Are you going to do about it

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or God  
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A SOLEMN WARNING  
James 5:1-6

Intro: (Read the text.)

A strange passage to find here. But James gives no indication in his introduction to this Epistle that he is limiting himself to believers. Note:

- 1) He does not address himself to the saints, or to a church, but "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad."
- 2) He does not give the usual greeting for believers: grace and peace to you.

So this does leave room for a passage addressed to those who are not believers.

Therefore, we can say that this is a warning to rich men who did not know the Lord.

But it is strange for another reason: There is no appeal for these rich men to be saved.

It would certainly seem that they could have been saved, but it is interesting that James does not approach them with that in mind primarily. Instead, he wants them to get the full force of their condemnation and of the prospects before them because of the life that they have been living.

This is the reason that some prefer to call this passage A DENUNCIATION rather than A WARNING.

How different are the ways of God from those often employed by the church! James obviously believed in denouncing sin and in bringing men to God through the repentance of sins.

But we must not give the impression that it is a sin to be rich. The Bible speaks of many rich people who were good and righteous, such as: Abraham,  
David,  
Solomon,  
Joseph of Arimathaea,  
and Philemon,

to name a few. Riches and rich men can be used, and have been used, and are being used to the glory of God!

However, for the man who has this as his chief object in life, for the man who lives to amass money, there are grave dangers. And these dangers have eternal consequences, as our text shows.

A moment's thought should cause us to realize that you do not have to be a rich man to be caught in this trap. Illustration: Dr. Francis Schaeffer's characterization of our generation as

one seeking personal peace and affluency. By the former he does not mean what the Bible means when it speaks of personal peace, but simply a desire to be left alone -- not to be troubled or disturbed by anything, even though others might be having troubles, and even though my desire for personal peace might adversely affect even my children and grandchildren. By affluency he means a life of prosperity, a life made up of things and more things, a life which is judged good according to the abundance of things which a man possesses -- even though our Lord contradicted such an idea in Luke 12:15.

Who in this congregation has not been affected by these two things -- personal peace and affluence?

Therefore, while this is a passage primarily for the rich, and while it is a passage for rich men who do not know the Lord, yet, because of the conditions under which we live, this is a passage of major importance for all Americans today -- those who know the Savior as well as those who do not know Him!

Let us look at our text. What does it tell us?

Basically two things:

- 1) The doom (or judgment) of the rich.
- 2) The doings of the rich -- where we see how their sins multiply.

Speaking very generally -- the doom is seen in vv. 1-3; the doings, in vv. 4-6. But actually you have both the doom and the doings running through the whole passage.

## I. THE DOOM (OR JUDGMENT) OF THE RICH.

Notice especially vv. 1, 3, and 5b.

Three things need to be said:

- 1) It still remains the greatest reason to be saved that you will go to hell for all eternity if you are not.
- 2) Salvation and peace with God cannot be purchased with money. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Isa. 55:1. In fact, money has a way of disappearing even before we die.
- 3) If our hearts are set on money, then the way we are living will only add to the judgment that we will face when we stand before God.

And so we have the reason for the one thing that James tells the rich men to do. See v. 1. They are not to be envied; they are to be pitied!

## II. THE DOINGS (OR SINS) OF THE RICH.

In just a few statements James gives us a vivid picture of the sins which characterize a man or a society which has its heart set on riches -- on affluence.

James points us in four directions:

- A. Toward the rich man himself: v. 3b: "Ye have heaped treasure together . . ."

This is greed. The more we have, the more we want. And the more we have the more we fear that we are going to lose what we have. It is a vicious circle.

Therefore, it is not surprising to see what James mentions second:

- B. Toward others: v. 4 -- those who work for him are the victims of dishonesty and fraud. The rich man himself is a thief!

The statement means not just that the rich man is holding back, but he never intends to give his workers what they have earned.

- C. Toward life: v. 5.

James uses two words to intensify what he is saying here. They are Greek synonyms, but they both convey different ideas:

- 1) "Lived is pleasure" is illustrated by the story of the prodigal son who "wasted his substance ~~with~~ riotous living" (Luke 15:13).
- 2) "And (has) been wanton," or has become wanton. This is like the rich man our Lord spoke of who "was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day" (Luke 16:19).

Taken together they speak of a dissolute, prodigal, immoral life -- characterized by waste!

What a paradox! The man who is afraid that others are going to take his money from him throws it away himself!

But there is one other thing which is the most significant:

- D. Toward God: v. 6.

This could apply to the OT prophets,  
 or to John the Baptist,  
 or to Stephen,  
 or to many (perhaps all) of the apostles,  
but it applies the most to our Lord Jesus Christ!

We have Peter's scathing words of denunciation in Acts 3:14, 15,

"But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Price of life . . ."

Why is it hard for a rich man to be saved? Because his riches have blinded his eyes to what his true need is -- a need which money cannot meet!

How important it is for all of us to ponder carefully these words! We probably have been affected by our society far more than we ever realize.

But there is one other important truth in this passage which we must look at before we close our Bibles. It is:

### III. THE DECLARATION CONCERNING GOD in the latter part of v. 4.

Man always goes wrong when he forgets God, or because of his ignorance of God.

Who is He?

He is "the Lord of sabaoth" -- a transliteration from the Hebrew of the OT name for God: "the Lord of hosts."

It is used first in 1 Sam. 1:3, 11. Elkanah "went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh." And Hannah, his wife, prayed,

"O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head."

Matthew Henry (VI, 995) says that this was the name "often used in the Old Testament, when the people of God were defenceless and wanted protection, and when their enemies were numerous and powerful."

It speaks of the sovereignty of the Lord, His omnipotence, over all men, all nations, all angels, all demons and Satan, all circumstances, all calamities and disasters -- everything!

And he hears things we do not think He can hear -- like Abel's blood, and the groaning of the children of Israel in Egyptian bondage!

Two times in Psalm 24 David asks the question, "Who is this



King of glory?" And his two answers help us to define what is meant by "the Lord of hosts":

- 1) In v. 8, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."
- 2) In v. 10, "The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."

Concl: Martin Luther made use of this name in the second verse of his great hymn, A Mighty Fortress Is Our God:

"Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
The Man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is He!  
Lord Sabaoth His name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle."

May I do something which James does not do -- as I close? May I appeal to any of you who are without Christ to receive Him as your Savior -- you who are held in the grip of the desire for affluence, for money, for things, while every day you are moving closer and closer to hell itself?

The Word of God teaches us that "the love of money," not the money itself, but the love of it, "is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10a). And we can see this in our passage this morning.

Our money cannot keep us out of hell. On the other hand, we can be guaranteed of heaven without spending a penny! If the Lord does not deal with us in His mercy and grace, then He will deal with us in judgment.

And for those of us who know the Lord . . .

Have we become sidetracked by the world's influence in our lives? Do we need to get our eyes back on the Lord of hosts? Are we using what we have to glorify Him, to help meet the needs of others, recognizing that all that we have has come from Him?

There is something in this passage for all of us -- whether saved or unsaved. May the Lord open our hearts so that we may hear what He is saying to us.

## GOOD WORDS FOR HARD TIMES

James 5:7-12

Intro: In vv. 1-6 of ch. 5 we have a warning to rich men who do not know the Lord; in vv. 7-12 we have instructions for those who do know the Lord.

Behind all that James writes is the fact that the people to whom he writes are suffering affliction, persecution. This is why they were "scattered" (1:1). James began with patience, and now he comes back to it again -- using another word in addition to the one he uses in chapter 1.

In the 6 verses before us James is really telling all of us what we should do when there is trouble. We see here what we need -- and it is all very important regardless of the nature of the trouble.

Let us examine the passage very carefully.

### I. THE EMPHASIS ON "THE LORD" AS LORD.

Until we get to 4:10 the Lord is only mentioned as the Lord 5x in the Epistle -- 3x in ch. 1; 2x in ch. 2; not once in ch. 3.

From 4:10 to 5:15 we have "the Lord" 10x!

Note 4:10, 15; 5:4, 7, 8, 10, 11 (2x), 14, 15.

James starts the Epistle by mentioned "the Lord Jesus Christ" and then concludes with this emphasis.

What is the message he is seeking to convey to us? Two things:

- 1) We need to get our eyes on the Lord. Much of our difficulty in testing times is due to the fact that we forget this.
- 2) We need to remember that He is "the Lord" -- absolutely sovereign, greater than any problem, and greater than all of the people and all of the circumstances involved in the problems.

### II. THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS RETURN.

We see this three times: vv. 7a, 8b, 9b ("the judge standeth before the door").

What does this indicate?

That we are so taken up with the present that we forget the future, so involved with earth that we forget heaven, so con-

cerned about working things out that we forget that we are going to be taken out!

And there are some lessons here:

- 1) Troubles are designed to make us long for the day when there will be no more troubles.
- 2) The coming of the Lord will bring us to the point where we will be able to see the reason for all of our trials.
- 3) In some cases (though not in all), the solution will be in the coming of the Lord.

This is not just an escape -- and do not let people rob you of the blessings that are here by trying to get you to think that you just want "out." Make this your "blessed hope," and keep it that way! The Lord Jesus Christ is coming, and His coming is closer at this minute than it ever has been before!

### III. THE OBEDIENCE WHICH IS NECESSARY.

There are three things here which go together -- in vv. 7-9.

#### A. "Be patient" (vv. 7a, 8a).

This is a different word from that which James used in ch. 1. That really had to do more with circumstances and things (and James does use that word here in ch. 5 also). But what we have here had to do with people! And the context shows that it is patience with respect to the Lord Himself!

One thing that trials can do is to turn us against the Lord -- and this often happens.

In v. 7 James gives us one of the reasons for the testing and why we have delays in seeing the answers we need -- because it takes time for the fruit to grow and to mature. Note the illustration about "the husbandman" who is literally one who works in the earth. What a description of "the Lord"! Cf. John 15:1. He is working!

The second thing to do:

#### B. "Stablish (or, establish) your hearts." See v. 8.

This has to do with US! This means that there is an inner work of spiritual growth that needs to be going on -- and this is the second reason that James gives us for the delay (though it is certainly related to the one mentioned in v. 7).

Romans begins and ends on this note: cf. 1:11 and 16:25.

We are established through the Word and through prayer  
and through faith and through love.

The time of waiting is to be a time of personal growth!

The third thing:

C. "Grudge not" (v. 9). This means that we are not to murmur -- and here the emphasis is against each other.

Thus, trials can cause trouble:

- 1) Between God and us.
- 2) In our own hearts.
- 3) In our relationships with each other.

And this again has to do with our tongues.

Why should we not murmur? Because the Lord is going to bring us into judgment if we do -- which is another aspect of suffering!

Note how James speaks of the Lord here: "the judge standeth before the door." He is closer than you think, and He knows more about you than you realize.

How careful we need to be about these things.

#### IV. THE SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATIONS (vv. 10, 11).

Do you realize how much you need the Word of God? And here we have the OT emphasized again.

What a lack there will be in our lives if we do not know the Word so that it can be our strength and hope in our times of need!

A. "The prophets."

Do you know them? Do you know what they experienced? Do you know how they reacted? Do you know what the Lord did to meet their needs?

"The prophets" were especially chosen men who were called of God to speak the Word of God. Instead of being a reason for honor, it became a reason, the reason, why they were persecuted -- sometimes unto death!

Cf. Matt. 23:37; Acts 7:52.

Did they give up? Did they recant? When you read their stories, for whom do you feel sorry -- "the prophets," or those who persecuted them?

James answers this last question for us: "Behold (the second time in our text when James indicates that this is something which we cannot miss), we count them happy (like the Beatitudes) which endure."

Cf. Matt. 5:11, 12,

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

The second illustration:

B. Job (v. 11b).

Here "the Lord" is mentioned 2x. Why? Because James does not want us to think of the greatness of Job; he wants us to think of the greatness of Job's LORD!

Have you read the book of Job? Do you know "the outcome of the Lord's dealings" with him? Do you know what Job went through?

What was the outcome? "The Lord is very pitiful (full of pity and compassion, very kind), and of tender mercy" -- as in Luke 6:36.

You see, if we think about Job, we might feel that it is all beyond us, but when we think about the Lord we know that He can meet our needs too.

Finally,

V. JAMES' SPECIAL CONCERN (v. 12).

Notice that this also has to do with the tongue. And what a strange thing to write to believers about: SWEARING -- violating the third commandment.

Thomas Manton gives some real insight into this passage when he writes:

"Certainly there is no sin that doth more weary the patience of God, because there is no sin that doth more banish the fear of God out of our hearts. . . . All sin is against God, but this is formally and directly against God" (pp. 439, 435).

But here is a strange thing! V. 12 is one verse where James does not mention the Lord. Instead, he mentions substitutes for the names of the Lord -- here, His works.

The Shorter Catechism of The Westminster Confession of Faith asks and answers two questions about the third commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Ex. 20:7). Listen to them:

First: "What is required in the third commandment?" The third commandment requireth the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works." And then: What is forbidden in the third commandment? The third commandment forbiddeth all profaning or abusing of any thing whereby God maketh himself known."

Do you ever use the Lord's Name in profanity? Do you?

Do you ever say, "For heaven's sake," or "My goodness," or "Gee," or "Golly," or "Gosh," or "Darn," or any of the other things that you hear people say every day that have to do either with the names of God, or His attributes, or His works, or slang expressions which we use as substitutes?

James is not forbidding us to take an oath in court, but he is warning us, solemnly warning us, that a profaning of anything that has to do with God is certain to bring judgment.

And yet now you hear it more and more on radio, on television and you see it in our newspapers and in magazines and in books -- even in Christian magazines and books!

If you think this is being picky, then read again the first four words of v. 12, "But above all things"!

Concl: What would James think if the he were able to hear the way we have degraded the character of God today to make Him a buddy, a man just like we are, One we address in the most common terms?

I can tell you what he would say. He would say, "BEWARD lest ye fall into condemnation, or judgment!"

Oh, may the Lord give us such a sense of His Deity, of His Majesty and Power, of His infinite Wisdom, that our times of trial would be times of humbling ourselves before Him that we might learn and grow and profit spiritually for His glory!

Take this passage to heart, child of God, and you will never regret that you have!

A LESSON IN PRAYER  
James 5:12-20

Intro: James concludes as he began:

- 1) With trials.
- 2) With patience.
- 3) With prayer.

Here at the end, all of these things are emphasized again -- with a special emphasis on prayer. See vv. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 -- where prayer is mentioned in each verse!

Furthermore we can say -- v. 12 (and the verses which immediately precede it) leads up to prayer; vv. 19, 20 show one of the major results of prayer.

I. CONTROLLING OUR TALK (James 5:12, 13).

Notice that James deals with this subject negatively first, and then positively.

A. The negative side: swearing forbidden (v. 12a).

(See notes on preceding message.)

The third commandment.

The Westminster Confession's explanation of this.

The American's way of getting around this: euphemisms, a way of saying an offensive thing in a less offensive way while still saying the same thing. Another word is slang.

Illustrations: Golly and gosh -- which your dictionary defines as euphemisms for GOD.

Gee is a euphemism for JESUS.

Heck is a euphemism for HELL.

Damn is a euphemism for damn -- and note the subject that is always implied in this for God is the only one who can damn.

Think of the way we use the word, holy, when the Bible teaches us that "holy and reverend is his name" (Psa. 111:9b) -- speaking of the Lord. And yet we talk about a holy cow, or holy smoke!

Think also of the way we use the works of God and the attributes of God in, Good heavens, or My goodness, or Goodness, gracious!

James rules out swearing altogether -- and he is simply repeating what our Lord said. See Matt. 5:33-37. The careless, meaningless, profane use of God's Name or any-

thing that has to do with God (His attributes or His works) is absolutely forbidden by God Himself!

But how can you keep from it? Note:

B. The positive side (vv. 12b, 13).

When do we usually have this trouble?

- when we are surprised, or frustrated.
- when we are pleased.
- or simply when we want to convince people that we mean what we say.

James is not prohibiting the use of oaths in court.

Note his three preventatives in vv. 12b, 13:

- make your talk as simple and brief as you can.
- if you are in trouble, do not swear, BUT PRAY!
- if you are happy, do not swear, BUT SING YOUR PRAISE TO GOD!

## II. CALLING UPON GOD (James 5:14, 15).

These two verses have probably attracted more attention and discussion than anything else in this Epistle of James.

Concerning the problem of healing, there are two things to keep in mind:

- 1) This was written in the Apostolic Age when miraculous were characteristic of God's dealings with people. Today they are not -- although God still can heal and still does heal.
- 2) The context seems to indicate that James is speaking about a particular kind of illness -- illness that is brought on by God as a judgment against sin. See the word, "condemnation," in v. 12 (the last word).  
Cf. John 5:14; 8:11. But this is not the only reason for sickness. See John 9:2, 3.  
Consider in this connection, 1 John 5:16.

Here healing is guaranteed. We must say that, on the basis of what we have in the Word, and because of that which is confirmed in experience, such conditions do not continue today as far as this method of securing healing is concerned.

But James does want us to pray in such cases.

## III. CONFESSION OUR SINS (James 5:16-18).

This confirms that James is speaking about sickness that is due to sin. The removal of the sin through confession and forgiveness leads to healing.



It is interesting that the word for "healed" here is used in Matt. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:24; Heb. 12:13 for the healing of the soul. But the emphasis here seems to be on physical healing.

V. 16b in the NIV: "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

This seems to be the best translation of the Greek. It is not an emphasis on the kind of prayer, but on the kind of a person who is doing the praying: "a righteous man". He is the man whose life measures up with the Word of God!

And the example which James gives of a man of prayer is ELIJAH. Cf. 1 Kings 17, 18. He was a man "subject to like passions as we are," "He prayed earnestly," or, intently. This is "the prayer of faith" mentioned in v. 15.

And God answered Elijah's prayer -- both in bringing on the judgment, and in removing it!

Note how righteousness and prayer are brought together, relating prayer and the Word, in the following verses:

- 1) Prov. 15:8, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight."
- 2) Prov. 15:29, "The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous."
- 3) Psa. 66:18, "If I regard iniquity . . ."
- 4) Jas. 4:3, "Ye ask, and receive not . . ."
- 5) Job asks about the hypocrite, "Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?" (Job 27:9). The answer implied is, NO!
- 6) John 15:7, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide . . ."
- 7) 1 John 3:22, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because . . ."

Trouble is designed to bring our sins before us so that they can be removed and we can become effective and powerful in our praying.

And all of this leads to James' final point:

#### IV. CONVERTING THE SINNER (James 5:19, 20).

What a terrific way to emphasize the place of evangelism!

Is James talking about backsliding believers ("if any of you") OR is he talking about winning people to Christ?

If the former, then death would have to mean physical death -- which would not be completely out of the picture as far as the context is concerned. But the latter seems to fit the situation better -- in which case death (v. 20) would

speak of eternal death.

Note the grace of God on which James closes: "and shall hide (like the OT atonement -- God forgiving and forgetting) a multitude of sins."

Concl: And so as we finish, let us ask ourselves the question, If James were here this morning to add a word to what we have seen in his Epistle, how would he summarize it?

It would be this: What we need today is people, the Lord's people, who will live for the Lord -- loving Him, trusting Him, waiting for Him, praying to Him, glorifying Him, obeying His Word! This is the greatest need in our day -- the greatest need in every generation. It is when saints live for the Lord that sinners turn to the Lord!