

## The Letter Of James

### Author

It is believed by most Bible students that the author who identifies himself in this letter as a servant of Jesus Christ (1:1) is the Lord's brother whom Paul mentions in Galatians 1:19. Throughout the New Testament there is mention of at least five different individuals who carry the name of James. (1) There is James, the son of Alphaeus, who was one of the twelve Christ-called and sent apostles (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15; At 1:13). (2) There is James who was also one of the twelve whose brother was Judas (not Judas Iscariot) (Lk 6:16). (3) There is the James who is mentioned in Mark 15:40 (See Mt 27:56; Jn 19:25). (4) There is James, the son of Zebedee and brother of the apostle John (Mt 10:2; Mk 3:17; Lk 6:14; At 1:13). (5) Finally, there is James the brother of Jesus (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3). It is this James that many believe was the inspired author of this epistle (See Jn 7:5; At 1:14; 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Co 15:7; Gl 2:9).

The apostle James was killed early in the history of the church and before this letter was written (At 12:1,2). James, the brother of Jesus, became a prominent leader in the church in Jerusalem after he overcame his early unbelief during the ministry of Jesus (Jn 7:5; At 15:13; Gl 1:19). Because of the Jewish nature of this letter, it is believed that James, the Lord's brother, wrote this letter to disciples who were of Jewish background.

### Date

It is believed that James who wrote this book was martyred around A.D. 63. Therefore, the book is dated by Bible students anywhere from A.D. 45 to 63. However, the nature of the content of the book concerning the Jewish problem in the church and the statements concerning the coming of the Lord in judgment on national Israel (5:7,8), indicates that the book was probably written in the early or middle 60s. In his exhortations to encourage the faithful brethren, James wrote that they be patient for the coming of the Lord that was at hand (5:8). Since the Lord was coming in judgment on national Israel in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of Matthew 24, then the more probable date of writing would be the early or middle 60s.

### Theme

In contrast to the nature of the rich among the brethren whom James sharply condemns for their hypocritical living, James contrasts the behavior of the rich with the virtues of true Christianity. There were those who had deceived themselves into believing that they could profess a form of Christianity, and yet, relieve themselves of the responsibilities of fellowship that are inherent within the community of God. James exhorts that his readers be doers of the word (1:22). This principle is followed by James' definition of the nature of true Christianity, that is, it reflected in caring for others (1:27).

### Historical Background

After the establishment of the church in Jerusalem, James became a prominent leader of the church in Judea. The Jerusalem church was primarily composed of Jews who were converted from Judaism. Therefore, because of the cultural environment in which the Jerusalem church dwelt, the church was evidently intimidated to maintain a strong Jewish culture (See comments At 21:15-25). The Jews in Judea were becoming more arrogant and militant toward the occupation of the Roman Empire in the 60s, and thus, the church in Judea was in a very precarious cultural environment. The hostility of the Jews toward Rome eventually grew to the point where Rome decided to eliminate the Jewish problem of the Empire. A military campaign was thus launched against the Jews. The military campaign continued until the eventual destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24). Therefore, when studying those New Testament documents that were written during the 60s, we must keep in mind the struggles of Jewish brethren in the Judean area. We must keep in mind that the Judean church struggled in an environment where the tension between Rome and national Israel increased until A.D. 70.

Since most of the members of the Judean church were Jews, their unconverted friends, family and business acquaintances would certainly have exerted great pressure on them to conform to the Jewish mood of the day to rebel against the Roman occupation of Palestine. Since James was a leader of the Judean churches for several years, it would only be natural for him during the last days of national Israel to write a letter to Jewish Christians throughout the Roman Empire. In view of the impending calamity of the destruction of national Israel, his letter is directed to Jewish Christians throughout the Empire in order to focus their attention on the Lord Jesus Christ as opposed to arro-

gant rebellious attitudes of the rich Jews who were oppressing the poor. The letter of Hebrews dealt with the doctrinal apostasy of those Jews who were being intimidated to return to Judaism. James deals with the socioeconomic rich Jews who were intimidating the poor.

### Purpose

The specific problem that seemed to influence the fellowship of the churches to which James wrote, was the separation of the rich and the poor (2:1-13; 5:1-6). The rich Sadducean Jews who were converted brought into the fellowship of the church their economic protectionist attitudes that they maintained in the economic environment of the business world. They shunned the poor in the socioeconomic world in order to protect their riches. When they came into the church, they brought in their secular attitudes toward the poor. They thus molded their beliefs around their arrogant attitudes and unconcern for the poor brethren. James wrote, therefore, in order to sternly rebuke the rich who would eventually pass away as the grass of the field (1:10). On the other hand, the poor, who are rich in faith, will endure the miseries that were soon to come upon the rich (5:1-8).

## Chapter 1

1 ¶ James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are in the Dispersion: Greetings.

2 ¶ My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

3 knowing that the trying of your faith produces patience.

4 But let patience have *its* perfect work so that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of

### Chapter 1

#### GREETINGS

1 **James, a bondservant:** James was actually the half-brother of Jesus since Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit. He identifies himself here as the *doulos* (bondservant) of God and Jesus. He is thus one who has been spiritually born into Christ through obedience to the gospel (Rm 6:3-6). **Twelve tribes:** If James wrote in view of the coming wars of Rome against the Jewish State, then we would assume that he is making a final plea to fellow Jews throughout the Roman Empire. However, many Bible students affirm that he is referring to the spiritual Israel of God, the church (See Mt 19:28). In view of the problem that prevailed in the church concerning the rich and poor, we would conclude that James' principal concern was the problem of partiality that was manifesting itself in the church. Nevertheless, we certainly would not assume that James has completely forgotten his Jewish heritage in his address to those who are scattered abroad. **The Dispersion:** James uses a Jewish word here (*diaspora*) that the Jews used to refer to the Jews who were scattered throughout the nations. At the time of writing, they would be scattered throughout the Roman Empire. This scattering of the Jews resulted from the Assyrian captivity of 721/22 B.C. and the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C. Since the times were perilous in reference to the impending Roman suppression of Jewish insurrection, James writes to warn against arrogant Judaism as opposed to the humble servitude of the Christian life (See comments Mt 24:30). However, we would assume that since this is a letter that is written to Christian Jews, James' primary concern is for these brethren lest they be caught up in the Jewish political fervor of the day. James calls us to recognize the spiritual Israel of God. Those who are of this Israel are those who are sons of Abraham by faith

(Rm 2:28,29; 4:11,12; Gl 3:26-29). It is this Israel that is scattered among the nations (See At 8:1-4).

#### THE TESTING OF FAITH

2 **My brethren:** This address is to fellow Christians who were of the dispersion of Jews throughout the world. **Count it all joy:** Christians rejoice in persecutions because they understand what brings the persecution (Mt 5:11,12; Ph 4:4). Their godly life in Christ brings persecution because Satan will rise up against all that God represents in this world (See comments At 14:22; 2 Tm 3:12; see Hb 2:10; 12:3,10,11; 1 Pt 1:6,7; 4:16). Christians must understand, therefore, that persecution is an occasion for joy (At 5:41). They must understand that the many trials are an occasion for spiritual growth and development of character (1 Pt 1:6). Since God uses Satan's work against him, then persecution manifests that God is going to use Satan's work to accomplish something that is good (Rm 8:28). **3 Produces patience:** One must acknowledge that the proving or testing of one's faith produces a character that is able to endure trials (See Rm 5:3-5; compare Gn 22:1). The trying of the Christian's faith is the opportunity for one's faith to be proved and strengthened. Trials are a test to determine if one's faith is genuine. Therefore, trials bring out the ability of an individual to be able to remain steadfast (See Lk 21:19). **4 Perfect:** This is not a reference to living a sinless life (Rm 3:9,10,23). Our heavenly Father is perfect in the sense that He is complete (Mt 5:48). Jesus was made perfect (complete) because He obediently suffered in order to redeem us from our sins (Hb 2:10; 5:9). We become perfect in Christ because of the continual cleansing of our sins by the blood of Christ (Cl 1:28; see 1 Jn 1:7; Jd 24). Therefore, when one lives the Christian life which is evidenced by persecutions and trials for Christ, then one is made perfect in Christ. **Lacking nothing:** Because of one's

God who gives to all liberally and without reproach. And it will be given to him.

**6** But let him ask in faith without doubting. For he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

**7** For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord.

**8** A double-minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

**9 ¶** Let the brother of humble circumstances rejoice in that he is exalted,

**10** and the rich in his humiliation, because as the flower of the grass, he will pass away.

**11** For the sun rises with a burning heat and withers the grass. And its flower falls and the beauty of its appearance perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in his ways.

**12 ¶** Blessed *is* the man who endures tempta-

obedient walk of faith in Christ, he is deficient in nothing. James uses a racing term here which would indicate that the one who is perfect in Christ does not lag behind in the spiritual race (See comments Hb 12:1-3).

### GOD'S WISDOM

**5 Wisdom:** There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom is the skill or ability to correctly handle knowledge of truth and facts. James says that if one lacks this wisdom he must ask of God. Therefore, God is the source of true wisdom. He generously and freely gives wisdom to those who ask (See Mt 7:7,11; Lk 11:9; Jn 14:13; compare 1 Kg 3:9; Pv 2:3-6). **With-out reproach:** God does not reproach us for asking. He does not become weary of our asking (Jr 29:12; 1 Jn 5:14). **Will be given:** James' statement here affirms that God gives wisdom to those who ask of Him. God answers our prayers in the affirmative, though His answers may not come at the time we want our prayers answered. God's answers may not come in the manner by which we seek our prayers to be answered. Nevertheless, we must be confident that God will answer our prayers (Compare Mk 11:24; 1 Tm 2:8). **6 Ask in faith:** Faith is the foundation upon which all prayer must be made. In this case, it is the condition for which our prayers are answered (Hb 11:6). **He who doubts:** Disciples must pray with the attitude that God will answer their prayers (Mk 11:24). The one who doubts in his prayers also doubts in the rest of his Christian life. He is unstable in the sense that he is not a spiritually responsible person upon whom the church can depend. Since his attitudes and actions are determined by the circumstances which he is in, he is not a person on whom one can depend in times of crisis. **7** The unstable man will not receive anything from the Lord because of his lack of faith. James says that he should not expect anything. In fact, the one who doubts usually does not expect an answer to his requests because he has a faith that doubts. **8 Double-minded man:** The word James uses here literally means a "two-souled" man. It is used only here and in 4:8 in the New Testament. This is the man who has two minds. He is trying to serve the Lord Jesus with one mind and this world with the other (Mt 6:34; see Js 4:4). Because he does not totally commit himself to the Lord, he is undependable in reference to his service to the Lord. His commitment to God is always hindered by his commitment to the world. He can never give himself fully to God simply because he has partially given himself to the world.

### THE INSTABILITY OF RICHES

The context of verses 9-11 affirms that God does not respect persons in reference to their social or eco-

nomie status (At 10:34,35; Rm 2:11). The amount of riches one possesses does not put him in a better relationship with God. In fact, in this context James argues that those who trust in riches are in greater danger of losing their souls than those who are poor. The souls of the rich are in danger because they have exalted themselves in society to the point that they believe the God who created all things would have special regard for them. If one thinks that his great possessions or positions exalt him above his fellow man in relation to God, then his mind is twisted. It is twisted because he thinks that he can possibly exalt himself as a man to in some way have a closer standing with God. **9 Humble circumstances:** This is the financially poor disciple who is considered by the rich to be of a lower class in society. However, in Christ there is no social or economical classification that depends on either race or finances (Gl 3:28,29). Since all men are one man in Christ, the poor can have confidence in the fact that they are equal with all in the church through the blood of Jesus. Because emphasis in Christ is on spiritual wealth, then there is no reason why the poor should be insecure in their relationship with any brother who may be financially wealthy. **10 The rich:** In the eyes of the world, the rich brother would be considered in a high position. However, in Christ he becomes equal with the poor. He is thus humbled in Christ to be considered on an equal basis with all those who are in Christ. For this reason, it is difficult for those who are rich or in high social or political positions to humble themselves at the foot of the cross. **Will pass away:** Since the riches of the rich are temporary and limited to this world, then when the riches pass away, the rich pass away if their trust is in riches (See Ps 37:2; Mt 5:20; Jn 14:2; 1 Co 7:31). James may have been writing these words in view of the destruction of the riches of the rich Jews in the coming destruction of the Jewish state (5:1-8). **11 Burning heat:** Those who trusted in the riches of this world will lose the source of their trust when their riches are taken away (Compare Ez 17:10; Jh 4:8; Is 40:6-8; Ps 103:15,16; see comments Mt 6:28-30). When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman armies in A.D. 70, the rich Sadducean Jews in Judea lost all their riches. When the riches of those who have their security in such pass away, then the rich pass away. **Fade away:** This is from the Greek word that refers to extinguishing or putting out a flame (See 4:14). James' warning here is to the rich, for it is they who will be extinguished with their riches if they do not put their security and trust in the Lord (See comments 1 Tm 6:17-19). Their riches will fade away, but those who will trust in the Lord, and not in their riches, will endure past the terminational of all things of this world. Therefore, trust in that which will permeate the final coming.

tion, for when he is tried, he will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

**13** Let no man say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God." For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither does He tempt any man.

**14** But every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed.

**15** Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin. And sin, when it is full-grown,

brings forth death.

**16 ¶** Do not be deceived my beloved brethren.

**17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation nor shadow of turning.

**18** Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

#### ORIGIN AND CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

**12 The man who endures:** The man who endures the testing of temptation is happy because the outcome of his endurance manifests that he trusts in God, not in the things of this world (See Jn 14:1; compare Jb 5:17; Pv 3:11; Lk 6:22; Hb 10:36; Js 5:11). **Temptation:** Reference here is to the one who overcomes the trials of life (vss 2-4). When he has endured the tests of this life, then he will receive the reward for his faithfulness (See Hb 12:5-8; compare At 14:22; 1 Pt 4:12,13). **Crown of life:** This is the victory crown (*stephanos*). This is the same as Paul's crown of righteousness (2 Tm 4:8; 1 Co 9:25) and Peter's crown of glory (1 Pt 5:4). Though the Christian has eternal life in this life by the grace of God (1 Jn 5:1,2), he will realize the final end of his faith by receiving eternal life in the world to come (Mt 10:22; Mk 10:30). **The Lord has promised:** It is hope of eternal life that keeps the persecuted Christian focused on Christ in order to endure the hardships of life (Ti 1:2; 1 Jn 2:25). **13** James now turns from discussing the outward trials that affect one's character to inward lusts that are manifested when one yields to temptation. **"Tempted by God":** Temptation of man does not originate from God. However, God does allow Satan to go about doing his work to tempt men (1 Pt 5:8). Since there is no darkness in God, then it is impossible for him to tempt man (1 Jn 1:5). Temptation of man to turn away from God would be contrary to the very nature of God. God is good. All that comes from Him is good, and thus, there is no evil that would proceed from God. Since God has allowed the environment of the world to exist to be the proving environment of true free-moral agents, then there must exist the presence of Satan. If men had no opportunity to choose evil, then they would not be true free-moral individuals. Because God allows Satan to offer an opportunity for man to sin, does not mean that God is the source of the temptation. God has simply allowed the best of all possible environments to exist that will prepare characters for eternal dwelling. **14 Every man is tempted:** The origin of sin is manifested when one yields to the temptation to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes and pride of life (1 Jn 2:15,16). Therefore, when one gives himself over to selfish lusts and pride, he is drawn away from what God would have him be. Sin results when uncontrolled lusts and pride come into contact with the temptation to fulfill such. **15 Brings forth death:** Evil desire must first be conceived within the mind of a willing and selfish spirit (Jb 15:35; Ps 7:14; Is 59:4). When one then yields to the temptation, he sins. When the onetime sin becomes a behavioral pattern of life, then the result is separation from God and spiritual death

(Rm 6:23). Sin brings spiritual death because sin separates us from God (Is 59:1,2; see Rm 5:12; 6:20,21; 8:6; Ep 2:1-3).

#### BEGOTTEN BY THE WORD

**16,17 Deceived:** This is the medium of human frailty through which Satan works to lead people into his domination. It is possible for the Christian to be deceived, and thus, fall away from the faith in order to lose his soul (See 1 Co 6:9; 15:33; Gl 6:7; Cl 2:9; Hb 3:12,13). **Every good and ... perfect gift:** The gift that the Father gives is good since He is good. His gifts are perfect in that they are complete and full (Compare 3:15; Jn 3:27,31; 19:11). **Father of lights:** God is not only the originator of the sun, moon and stars from which we perceive light (Gn 1; see Jb 38:24; 2 Co 1:3; Ep 1:7), He is also the originator of the Light that came into the world for the salvation of man (Jn 8:12). **No variation or shadow of turning:** The eternity of God assumes that He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Though the heavenly bodies may change from the positions from which they light the world, we must never assume that God changes (Nm 23:19; Mc 3:6). The fact that He is unchangeable means that He is dependable. What He has said concerning our salvation will not be changed because He is unchangeable. **18 His own will:** It was by His grace that God manifested mercy for the salvation of man (See comments Ep 2:1-10). The cross was the work of God (Jn 1:13; 1 Co 4:15). The preaching of the gospel through which men are called was through the word of inspired men (Mk 16:15,16; 2 Th 2:14). Therefore, we have been born again because of the work of God on our behalf (See Jn 1:11-13; 1 Jn 3:1). **By the word of truth:** The medium through which the message of the gospel went forth into all the world, was the preached word of the apostles and evangelists (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4; see 2 Co 6:7; 1 Th 2:13; 2 Tm 2:15). One is thus born again, not by obedience to the medium through which the gospel is communicated, but to the gospel itself (See comments Rm 6:3-6). However, it is only through the inspired written word of God that we know of the gospel event today whereby we might be obedient to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. **Firstfruits:** This metaphor is taken from the Old Testament where the harvesting of the firstfruits was a time of celebration and thanksgiving for the harvest (Lv 23:16; Dt 26:2; see Ep 1:12,13; Hb 12:23; Rv 14:4). The first cuttings of the harvest were the indication of the greater harvest to come. In this sense, the first converts in the first century were the "firstfruits" of the greater conversion that would come throughout the world and history.

**19 ¶** Therefore, my beloved brethren, let everyone be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.

**20** For the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God.

**21 ¶** Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word that is able to save your souls.

**22 ¶** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

**23** For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror,

**24** for he observes himself and goes his way, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

**25** But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues to abide *in it*, not being a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man will be blessed in his deed.

**26 ¶** If any man among you seems to be reli-

### PURE RELIGION

In verses 19-27 James identifies the nature of the pure and undefiled religion that is pleasing to God. He defines the godly character of those whose lives would be worthy of the gospel (Ph 1:27). **19** The key to maintaining and growing in the godly life is to control one's mouth and demeanor by which he speaks. **Swift to hear:** The one who is wise and grows in knowledge is the one who listens more than he speaks (Ec 5:1). Wisdom is manifested in how much one listens, not in how much one speaks. **Slow to speak:** Wisdom is manifested when one considers the words he would say before he speaks (See vs 26; 3:1-18; 4:11,12; 5:9; Pv 10:19; 13:3; 14:29; 17:27; 29:20; Ec 5:2). **Slow to wrath:** Wrath is the manifestation of a spirit that is not yet brought under control by a disciplined life (See Pv 14:17; 16:32; Ec 7:9; Ep 4:26). **20** Uncontrolled anger leads to all sorts of sin on the part of the one who does not control his speech. Those who cannot control their speech are not suitable for dwelling in the eternal kingdom of God because they do not have the ability to peacefully dwell with others who may disagree with them (See 2 Co 12:20; Gl 5:20; Cl 3:8; Ep 4:31). **Righteousness of God:** This is the reason why the wrathful man is not a suitable candidate for heaven. His wrath is the manifestation of his pride and conceit which leads him to be disobedient to the will of God (Compare Ps 119:172; At 10:34,35; 1 Jn 2:29; 3:7). It also manifests his inability to cohabit with his fellow man in this life. If one cannot live with his brother in this life, then certainly he cannot eternally live with his brother in heaven.

**21 Lay aside all filthiness:** The Christian should view all sin as filthy. He should abhor the sight of sin lest he be desensitized to sin, and thus, either condone or neglect his duty to openly condemn such (See Hk 1:13; Cl 3:8; 1 Pt 2:1; 2 Pt 2:7). **The implanted word:** The will of God is implanted in the hearts of those who conduct their lives according to God's will. Therefore, the word of God does not indwell us unless we behave what we know (See comments 3 Jn 3). James' command here is that one take the initiative to meekly accept and obey God's instructions to allow the seed of the kingdom to germinate and grow in his life (Lk 8:11; see Cl 3:8,16; 1 Pt 2:1). **Save your souls:** The word of God is able to save only insofar as one obediently conforms to it (vs 18; At 13:26; Rm 1:16; 1 Co 4:15; Ep 1:13; Ti 2:11; 1 Pt 1:22,23). It is not that one meritoriously saves his soul by legally obeying a checklist of laws that has been handed to him for perfect law-keeping. One cannot be saved in such a manner simply because one cannot keep any law perfectly in order to

save himself (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). The truth that James is speaking is manifested in verse 22.

**22 Be doers of the word:** One's relationship with God must pass from an intellectual knowledge of God and His word to a behavioral obedience to the instructions of God. Being a "doer of the word" is the manifestation of one's humble acceptance of God's direction in his life because of the grace of God (Mt 7:21-28; 1 Jn 3:7). In other words, if there is no obedience, then there is no manifestation of gratitude on the part of the one who seeks to be led by God (2 Co 4:15; 1 Jn 4:19). **Deceiving yourselves:** The one who is deceived is the one who has led himself to believe that he can do God's will by constructing his own system of obedience (See Lk 6:46-49; 11:28; 1 Jn 3:18). The lazy Christian has deceived himself into believing that God is pleased with his inactivity in reference to the will of God (2:14-20; 1 Jn 2:4). The one who has constructed a system of religion by determining his own laws has deceived himself into thinking that God is pleased with his self-imposed religiosity (See comments Mk 7:1-9; Cl 2:20-22). Both the lazy Christian and the one who has imposed on himself his own religion deceive themselves into constructing a religion after their own desires. It is imperative, therefore, that we have a knowledge of the word of God in order to determine if we have deceived ourselves into obeying that which is not actually the word of God (Compare comments 2 Th 2:10-12). **23,24** The one who hears the word and does not do it is the man who refuses to correct his sinful condition. He sees his true self through the word of God, but he does not seek to change his life. Because he refuses to change his life and live according to the word of God, he willingly forgets what was revealed concerning his life. **25** In contrast to the forgetful hearer, the willing believer who seeks to be directed in his life by God will seek to follow God's will (See comments Rm 3:31). **Law of liberty:** This is not a contradiction in terms. Law restricts and controls. However, the law of Christ sets one free (See comments Gl 5:1,2; see Gl 6:2; 1 Co 9:21). It sets one free in the sense that principles are given with freedom for implementation. Verse 27 is a principle that widows and orphans are to be cared for by the disciples of Jesus. However, there is freedom as to how the principle is to be carried out. The law of liberty is perfect in the sense that the willing hearer submits to the direction of the principles of God's will. Because he is motivated by gratitude for the grace of God, he seeks to do the will of God (2:12; 2 Co 4:15; see comments Rm 3:13). **Continues:** James' emphasis here is that one must walk in the light (1 Jn 1:7-9). The Christian life is a way of life.

gious, and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is useless.

**27** Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to take care of the orphans and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

## Chapter 2

**1 ¶** My brethren, do not show favoritism and hold the faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

**2** For if there should come into your assembly a man with a gold ring in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in filthy clothes,

**3** and you show respect to the one who wears the fine clothing, and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor, "You stand there, or sit here at my footstool,"

**4** have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

**5 ¶** Listen, my beloved brethren, has not God

It is not a way of life that is legally directed by precepts of law, but by principles of law wherein God has given freedom for obedience. Law restricts one's obedience, whereas grace sets one free to grow beyond the requirements of law. Law confines. Grace compels. Happy is the man who discovers the nature of the law of Christ in responding to the grace of God (Jn 13:17). There are no limits to what grace will lead one to do in carrying out the law of Christ (See comments 1 Co 15:10).

**26 Seems to be religious:** One can create a religion that conforms to his behavioral pattern of life. There were those who believed they could be religious while maintaining an unbridled tongue. A host of other illustrations could be listed. James' point is that religion cannot be determined by the desires of men. True religion must be defined by looking into the word of God, and subsequently, guiding one's life by what he discovers. If men seek to please God, then they do not have the option of inventing their own religion (See comments Mk 7:1-9; Cl 2:20-22). If anyone seeks to please God, then his life must be directed by the word of God. **Useless:** Any religion that is created after either the selfish lusts of man or traditions of the fathers is a worthless religion in reference to being pleasing to God (See comments Mt 7:21,22). **27 Pure and undefiled:** The religion of the one who allows his life to be directed by the word of God is pure and undefiled. The man with a clean and uncontaminated religion is benevolent toward others (Mt 25:34-36). **To visit:** Emphasis here is on caring for the orphans and widows (See Is 1:7,16; Mt 25:36). **Keep oneself:** James places the responsibility of maintaining the pure and undefiled religion on the shoulders of each individual disciples (Rm 12:2; 1 Jn 5:18; Jd 21; see 2 Co 7:1; 1 Tm 5:22; 1 Pt 1:15,16). **Unspotted from the world:** The one who seeks to allow the word of God to direct his life keeps himself from the things of the world (4:4; Rm 12:1,2; 1 Jn 2:15; 5:18).

## Chapter 2

### FAITH AND IMPARTIALITY

**1** James here discusses another topic that affects the fellowship of the church. He calls fellow Christians not to practice partiality in reference to rich and poor disciples. **The faith:** One must not pretend to be a Christian while at the same time manifest a spirit of respecting persons because of financial advantage. The "faith" here would refer to the whole of fundamental teaching in reference to what one would know and be-

have in order to be a Christian (Jd 3,20). Such faith would certainly include belief in Jesus as the Lord of all things. However, specific reference would be to the belief and behavior of one in reference to the revelation of the mystery. **Glorious Lord:** A literal translation of this text would be "Lord Jesus Christ of glory." Jesus was glorified when resurrected from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father (Ep 1:20). At the time of His ascension there was given to Him dominion, glory and kingdom reign over all things (Dn 7:13,14). He is thus the Lord Jesus Christ in glory (At 7:2; 1 Co 2:8). **Respect of persons:** In this context, reference is to showing favoritism to those who are wealthy, and thus, considered by society to be of high social standing. God does not show respect of persons in reference to what one may materially possess (Lv 19:15; Dt 1:17; Mt 22:16; At 10:34,35; Rm 2:11; Ep 6:9; Cl 3:25; Jd 16). Therefore, if anyone would seek to live a godly life, he must emulate in his life the character of God. Christians must not show respect of persons to those who are financially wealthy. **2-4** These verses compose a question that James asked his brethren to answer in reference to how they treated the rich and poor. They were practicing respect of persons, and thus, he asks them to judge themselves concerning their behavior during their assemblies. **Assembly:** The Greek word here is the word for synagogue. We do not have to assume that James is here addressing a Sunday assembly of Christians in the synagogue. He is writing to Jews of the dispersion (1:1). Though disciples sometimes met in the synagogues (see At 18:26), this was not a common meeting place for Christians for Sunday assemblies. Homes were the common meeting place (Rm 16:5; 1 Co 16:9). Where there was a public synagogue, however, we could assume that Christians met there for the regular reading of the Old Testament Scriptures by the rabbi, though it is doubtful that the unbelieving Jews allowed them to meet in the synagogue for Sunday assemblies. **Gold ring:** These ornaments were worn by the rich in order to manifest social position in society. **Fine clothing:** Bright and colorful clothing was also worn by those of high social status. The rings and clothing were indications of one's social standing, and thus, were meant to set one apart from others of lower financial status. **A poor man:** In contrast to the fine clothing and ornaments of those who manifested an air of high social standing, the poor brother came with only that which he could afford. Because his clothes were "filthy", according to the rich, he was judged to be socially of a lower class. **3** James is attacking their culture in these verses,

chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that He has promised to those who love Him?

**6** But you have despised the poor. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into courts?

**7** Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

**8 ¶** If you fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “*You will love your neighbor as yourself,*” you do well.

**9** But if you show favoritism, you commit

sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

**10** For whoever will keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.

**11** For he who said, “*Do not commit adultery,*” also said, “*Do not kill.*” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

**12** So speak and so do as those who will be

which culture was manifested in their synagogue assemblies. In their culture, the fine clothing and gold rings indicated high social standing. They were bringing these attitudes into their relationships with other disciples. By doing such, they were violating a fundamental principle of Christianity. That principle is that all are one man in Christ (Gl 3:26-29). **A good place:** The rich and arrogant were seated in the assembly in a prominent place of honor. The poor were rudely told to sit in a less conspicuous place. Disciples often fall victim to this sinful behavioral practice because of our worldly desires to conform to the norms of society. In our efforts to be socially acceptable in the societies in which we live, we often take on the nature and behavior of societies that exalt the rich and famous. In our efforts to attract the rich and famous, we seek to conform to their life-style. In doing such, the poor are dishonored (1:9,10). In dishonoring the poor, we sin against God. **4 Judges with evil thoughts:** The answer to the question that James asks is that they had become respecters of persons. They had become prejudicial judges with corrupt motives and hearts. Every time someone entered the assembly they made themselves judges of where such a person should be seated according to either economic or social status. By doing such, they became judges with evil thoughts.

#### HONOR OF THE POOR

**5 Chosen the poor:** The poor do not often have the problem of stumbling over their pride when they come to the Lord. Because of their humble position that is often assigned to them in society, they are of a nature that lends itself to submission to the Lord (Jb 34:19; Lk 6:20; Jn 7:48; 1 Co 1:26-30; 1 Pt 5:5,6). On the other hand, the rich are often in positions in society wherein they are emotionally trained to resist to submission to the carpenter from Galilee. It is often difficult for the rich, who are considered to be in high position in society, to consider themselves equal with the poor in the church. **Rich in faith:** Whether rich or poor, this is what is important (Lk 12:21; 1 Tm 6:18; Rv 2:9). Because of their position in society, the poor tend toward faith in God who will eventually deliver them from the miseries of this world. Their trust is not in the things of this world. As a result, their minds are focused on that which is above this world (Cl 3:1-3). **Heirs of the kingdom:** Because the poor have submitted themselves to King Jesus in His present kingdom reign over all things, they will inherit the eternal kingdom that is yet in the future (See Mt 19:29; Lk 12:21; Cl 3:24; Hb 9:15). **Promised:** The poor cherish the promise of the kingdom to

come for they know that in it riches will mean nothing. Riches will not have a part in separating people from one another (See Mk 10:30; Ti 1:2; 1 Jn 2:25). **Love Him:** Love is manifested in this life through obedience to the commandments of God (Jn 14:15; 15:14; 1 Jn 2:4,5; 5:3). **6 Despised the poor:** They had brought disgrace upon the poor brethren by exalting the rich (See Pv 14:21; 1 Co 11:22). **Rich oppress you:** The answer to James' question is affirmative. The rich were oppressing the poor by lording over them. **Into courts:** Reference here could be to the tribunals of the synagogues where the rich Jewish brethren would seek to deprive the poor of that which they could not pay (Compare Is 3:15; Am 4:1; At 9:1; 13:50; 16:19). **7 Blaspheme:** The rich were speaking evil against the name of Jesus (Compare At 11:26; 1 Pt 4:16). The very conduct of their lives was blasphemous against the humble and meek nature of Jesus.

#### LOVE WITHOUT HYPOCRISY

**8 Love your neighbor:** This is the principle upon which human relationships are established (See comments Mt 22:35-40; Gl 5:14,22,23). One does well if he manifests concern for his neighbor as he does for himself (Compare Jn 13:34,35; see Lv 19:18; Mk 12:31; Lk 10:27). Therefore, in reference to members distributing and receiving the necessities of life, this principle would be the foundation upon which relationships are maintained. **9 Respect of persons:** Showing respect of persons works against the principle of loving one's neighbor as himself. The sin is manifested in being partial to one person over another, and yet, claiming to be a disciple of Christ. If one seeks to choose who he will have respect while choosing to ignore another, he is guilty of hypocrisy. The unconditional love by which Jesus said His disciples will be known does not manifest partiality (See comments Jn 13:34,35). Manifesting partiality, therefore, violates the fundamental teaching of Jesus that we unconditionally love one another as He has loved us. **10 Guilty of all:** James' judgment here is against those who claimed to be legally correct with reference to the law, but in truth, had violated the principle of law on the point of manifesting respect of persons. Therefore, the law condemned them because of their unloving partiality. One sin makes a sinner. One sin is sufficient to bring spiritual death as a result of separation from God (Is 59:1,2; see comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; 3:10). If one feels confident in keeping the whole law, and yet shows partiality, the whole law condemns him to be a sinner. **11** The legalistic Jew sought to establish his own system of religiosity. In establishing what

judged by the law of liberty.

**13** For judgment *will be* without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. And mercy rejoices over judgment.

**14 ¶** What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

**15** If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,

**16** and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them those things that are needful to the body, what *does it* profit?

**17** Even so faith by itself, if it does not have

he felt was either right or wrong according to his own desires and interpretation of the law, he actually forsook the commandments of God in order to keep his own established religious traditions (See comments Mk 7:1-9). He assumed that he was legally justified before God according to his own righteousness, where in fact he violated the law of God by showing respect of persons.

**Commit murder:** James is as direct in this matter as John. “*He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him*” (1 Jn 3:14,15). “*But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?*” (1 Jn 3:17). **12** Christians must remain sensitive to the fact that they will give account of themselves before God (2 Co 5:10). All men must speak and work in view of the final judgment (Dn 12:2; Mt 12:36,37; Rm 14:12; Rv 20:11-15). Jesus will be the final judge (At 17:30,31). It will be by His word that the world will be judged (Jn 12:48). **Law of liberty:** The principle of law is to care for the poor, orphans and widows. The principle is in loving one’s neighbor as himself. Therefore, as long as one loves his neighbor, he needs no law to feed his brother who has no job. Though there is no specific commandment to either buy or produce food to feed one’s brother, the law of love is sufficient to move us into action. The law is to love. We are at liberty as to how to carry out the principle of love. We are thus under the commandment to love, though the commandment allows freedom as to how it is to be activated in our lives with reference to our neighbor (See 1:25). **13 Without mercy:** The condition for receiving mercy in judgment is to exercise mercy toward others (Jb 22:6; Mt 5:7; 6:14; 1 Jn 4:17; see comments Mt 18:21-35). In this context, mercy must be shown toward the poor (See Mt 25:41-45; 1 Jn 3:17,18). Those who do not manifest mercy toward their fellow man will receive no mercy from God. **Mercy rejoices:** Law says that one must be condemned because of violation of law. Since all men have violated the law of God, then all men are worthy of death (Rm 6:23). But thanks be to God for His mercy which has resulted from His grace. (See comments Ep 2:4-10). Since God has extended great mercy toward us through His grace, then we should be moved to extend mercy toward others (2 Co 4:15). The unmerciful brother, therefore, does not understand the grace and mercy of God. He will be lost because he did not express gratitude for God’s mercy on him by showing mercy toward others (See comments Mt 18:22-35).

#### MANIFESTATION OF FAITH

In verses 14-26 James corrects a common misunderstanding concerning faith. What he says is closely related to the problem he has just addressed concerning those who have professed allegiance to Christ ac-

ording to their own conditions. However, their behavioral pattern of life was contrary to the benevolent nature of Christ. James’ rebuke against these religionists in the following verses is that they do not have the faith of our Lord Jesus, since the faith of Jesus was and is manifested by actions toward those who are in need (vs 1).

**14 What does it profit:** The answers to the two questions in this verse are in the negative. If one claims to have faith in God, and yet does not manifest such in the behavior of his life, then his faith is of no profit toward salvation. Faith without benevolent actions is self-deception on the part of the one who seeks to please God on his own conditions (See Mt 7:21-26; 15:11; 21:28-32). **15,16** Again, the answer to the question of these two verses is in the negative. John said that one cannot say he loves God if he does not care for his destitute brother (1 Jn 3:10-17; 4:7-16). James says here that one cannot say that he has faith if he does not care for his destitute brother (Compare Mt 25:36; Lk 3:11). “**Depart in peace**”: The emphasis here is that one would wish that his destitute brother quickly depart from his presence in order that the destitute brother not be an interruption in his business. The problem with being rich is that one develops an attitude of defense around himself in order to guard himself from the pleas of others who might be seeking his possessions. When a rich person becomes a Christian, he often brings into the fellowship this defense mentality which he had in the world. It is thus difficult for the rich person to bring down his standard of living by breaking down his materialistic defenses against those who would need his help. In the context of James’ discussions on this matter, there were evidently some rich Sadducean Jews who were converted who brought their attitudes of financial separateness into the church. By manifesting their lack of concern for the destitute brethren, James is attacking the sincerity of their faith. In fact, James says that they do not have the faith of Jesus if they persist in their financial defenses against the poor which they maintained while living in the world. **Needful to the body:** James identifies the destitute brother as the one who is in need of food and clothing. He is not talking about the one who will not work. The brother who can work, but will not work, is not to be fed (See comments 2 Th 3:6-15). The church has no obligation to feed those who refuse to work with their own hands in order to support themselves (See At 20:34,35). The one who will not work in order to provide for himself is selfish because he is not working in order to help others (At 20:35). But such is not the case with the destitute brother of this context. James has not explained the reason for his destitution. The fact is that he is destitute and needs the help of brethren who have the means by which to help him. **17 Works:** The works of this context do not refer specifically to keeping the commandments of God.

works, is dead.

**18 ¶** But someone may say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

**19** You believe that there is one God. You do well. The demons also believe and tremble.

**20** But are you willing to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

**21** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

**22** You see that faith was working with his works, and by works was faith made perfect.

**23** And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “*Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness.*” And he was called the friend of God.

**24** You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only.

**25 ¶** Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way?

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

### Chapter 3

**1 ¶** My brethren, let not many of you become

Reference is to good deeds toward one's fellow man. Such deeds are the manifestation of one's faith. Therefore, one's faith must be manifested by his benevolent actions toward others.

**18 My faith by my works:** True love of God cannot be seen without obedience to the commandments of God (1 Jn 5:3). True faith in God can be seen with benevolent actions toward one's fellow man (See 3:13; Gl 6:10; Cl 1:6; 1 Th 1:3; Hb 6:10). **19 Demons also believe:** There was a greater response from the demons than these brethren who claimed to have faith, but manifested no benevolence toward their destitute brethren. At least the demons trembled because of their belief. Those who do not tremble in their belief in reference to the awesomeness of God have no better faith than the demons (See Mk 1:34; Lk 8:28; see comments Lk 8:26-28). **20 Faith without works is dead:** The supposed Christian who has convinced himself that he can live the Christian life without being benevolent toward destitute brethren, is vainly living in the uselessness of his own selfish religiosity. His religion is impure and defiled (1:27). **21** James uses the life of two people, Abraham and Rahab, in order to illustrate that true faith responds both to the will of God and the needs of one's brother in Christ. **Abraham ... justified ... offered:** Abraham was not performing a meritorious work of law when he sought to offer Isaac (Gn 22:9-18; see comments Rm 4:1-25). Because of his faith, he was responding to the will of God. The fact that he would obey God without question was evidence of his obedient faith. Those who respond to the will of God because of faith and love are not seeking to meritoriously justify themselves before God (1 Jn 5:3). Abraham was justified because his single response in seeking to obey God to offer Isaac manifested the obedient nature of his life (Compare Mt 12:37; At 13:39). The manifestation of Abraham's justified relationship with God was manifested because of the obedient life of faith which he lived. He was not justified by the legal performance of one commandment. His obedience in offering Isaac was the manifestation of the nature of his obedient life (Compare Hb 11:8-10 with Gn 12:1-3; 15:6). **22 Faith made perfect:** Faith is made complete only when it is coupled with a life of good works and obedience to God's will (See Jn 6:29; Hb 5:8,9; 11:17; compare Jn 8:31,32). **23** Both Paul (Rm 4:1-3) and James are saying the same

thing. Of Abraham, Moses said, “*And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness*” (Gn 15:6). This statement was made of Abraham before he was commanded to offer Isaac (Gn 22:9-18). Abraham was not justified because of the single act to obey God in offering Isaac. He was justified by his life of obedient faith (Rm 4:3). The manifestation of his faith was in his obedience to God as James here explains. His obedient faith thus manifested his justification before God. One's obedient faith, therefore, is not a meritorious system of one's efforts to earn the grace of God. Obedient faith is in response to the grace of God (See comments Rm 3:31; compare 1 Co 15:10). Therefore, if one does not obediently respond to God, then he has manifested that the word of God has no effect on his heart. **Accredited:** This word refers to being acknowledged, reckoned or credited. One is credited to be justified because of his obedient response to the will of God. **Friend of God:** Because of his obedient relationship with God, Abraham manifested his friendship with God (Compare 2 Ch 20:7; Is 41:8; Jn 15:14). **24 Not by faith only:** A confession of faith with one's mouth is not good enough (vs 18,19). Faith must be manifested by the demeanor of one's life. The faith James defines is not one that is spoken with words, but in deed (1 Jn 3:18). **25 Rahab:** The answer to James' question of this verse is that Rahab acted on the basis of her faith. She was justified by obedient faith, not because of this single act of receiving the messengers of God, but because of the faith which she had in God before the coming of the messengers (See Ja 2:1-24). The single act of her work in reference to the messengers was the manifestation of her faith in God, and thus, her justification by faith (Hb 11:31). **26** At the point of death, the spirit of man leaves the body. Death is defined as a separation of body and spirit. Dead faith is defined by a separation of faith and works. The absence of works, therefore, is an indication of a dead faith. One cannot claim to have an active faith if he does not respond to God's will in his life (See comments Mt 7:21,22).

### Chapter 3

#### CONTROL OF THE TONGUE

**1 Teachers ... judgment:** Teachers were those who were accepted by the Jews to be the religious lead-

teachers, knowing that we will receive the stricter judgment.

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

**3** Indeed, we put bits in the horses' mouths so that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body.

**4** Behold also the ships, though they are so great and are driven by fierce winds, yet they are turned about with a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.

**5** Even so, the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by a small fire!

**6** And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. So is the tongue among our members, that it defiles the whole body and sets on fire

the course of nature. And it is set on fire by hell.

**7** For every kind of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.

**8** But no one can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

**9** With it we bless *our* God and Father. And with it we curse men, who have been made after the likeness of God.

**10** Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

**11** Does a fountain send forth at the same place *both* sweet and bitter *water*?

**12** Can the fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can a salt water *spring* produce fresh *water*.

**13 ¶** Who *is* a wise and understanding man

ers (Compare Mt 23:8; Rm 2:21; 1 Tm 1:7). Teachers led by what they taught. Every member of the church must have a knowledge of the truth in order to impart the gospel to others (Hb 5:12-14). However, those who would lead the church by their teaching carry the responsibility of being accountable for their leadership through what they say and do (See Mk 12:40; Lk 20:47). In this context, there were evidently some who wanted to be teachers, but were false teachers not only in what they said but also because of the loveless nature of their lives in reference to their brethren. **2** **Bridle the whole body:** No man is without sin (Rm 3:9,10,23). James states that if one is able to control the use of the tongue, then he would be able to control all his actions. However, all men sin by the use of their tongue, and thus, no one is able to live without sin. James' point is that no one can live without controlling the tongue. The tongue is the hardest member of the body to control and last thing that is to be brought under control in one's life. **3-5** James uses three illustrations to show the great power of the tongue even though it is a small member of the body. Its power is manifested in the ability of men to form words that greatly affect the hearts of others (Ps 120:2,3; Pv 12:18; 15:2; 16:27). **Horses' mouths:** Men can control and guide a large animal as a horse with a small bit in the horse's mouth. **Ships:** Large ships are controlled by a very small rudder. **Small fire:** No matter how small a fire might be, it has the potential of becoming uncontrollable, and thus destroying a large forest.

**6** **Fire:** The misuse of words can start small divisions in the church which will grow into an environment of great hostility (Ps 120:2,3; Pv 16:27; compare Lk 16:8; 18:6). **World of iniquity:** An uncontrollable tongue produces an environment of unrighteousness. Most sins are propagated through the misuse of the tongue. An unrighteous tongue is evidence of an unconverted life. **Defiles the whole body:** The fellowship among brethren can be destroyed by a careless word (See Mt 12:36;

15:11,18; Mk 7:23). **Course of nature:** Unholy words that come from the mouths of unrighteous men have destroyed many societies of the world. Men with selfish ambitions who exercise dictatorial control over their fellow man have destroyed the lives of others. Men with the desire to gain riches of the world have led many to deceive and manipulate governments and businesses into corrupt practices. **Set on fire by hell:** The Greek word here for hell is *gehenna*. Since *gehenna* is the final destination of Satan and his angels (Mt 25:41), James identifies the source from which a wicked tongue originates. A wicked tongue works on behalf of Satan who would lead masses of people into *gehenna*. **7** God instituted that man have dominion over the created world of animals (Gn 1:28). Though man has exercised his dominion over the animal kingdom, he has not been able to exercise control over his own tongue. **8** **Deadly poison:** One may be able to control his tongue for years, and yet, one uncontrollable word has the potential of damaging relationships that will never be the same again. Because there is always the potential that a harsh or unkind word can be spoken, James identifies the tongue as a restless and unstable part of man that can be poisonous to the church and society (Ps 140:3; Ec 10:11; Rm 1:29; 3:13; 2 Pt 2:14). **9** One cannot propose to be giving praise to God while at the same time cursing those who are made after the image of God. **Likeness:** This is the image of God after which all men are spiritually made (Gn 1:26; 5:1; 9:6; 1 Co 11:7). **10** Praises to God and curses of men should not come forth from the same mouth. But such do, and thus, Christians often manifest their hypocrisy through blessings and cursings out of the same mouth. They seek to worship God while at the same time harboring animosity against their brothers (See comments Mt 5:23-26). **11,12** Springs do not bring forth fresh and bitter water. Fig trees do not bear olives and grapevines do not yield figs. A Christian does not speak blessings and cursings. As it is unnatural for trees and vines to bear that which is not common to

among you? Let him show by good behavior his works in meekness of wisdom.

**14** But if you have bitter envy and strife in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

**15** This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.

**16** For where envy and strife exist, there is confusion and every evil work.

**17** But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality

and without hypocrisy.

**18** And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

## Chapter 4

**1 ¶** From where *come* wars and fights among you? Do they not come from your pleasures that war in your members?

**2** You lust and have not. You kill and desire to have and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

**3** You ask and do not receive, because you

their fruit, so it is unnatural for a Christian to hypocritically speak good of God and evil of his brother in Christ (See Mt 12:33-35; compare Mt 7:15-20). James' conclusion is that a mouth that brings forth blessings and cursings is evidence of an unregenerate heart.

### TRUE WISDOM FROM GOD

**13** James continues to discuss the subject of teachers which he introduced in verse 1. Here he portrays the wisdom of good teachers who manifest godly conduct in their lives. The first qualification of a good teacher (leader) is that he manifest in his life that which he teaches. He must show good conduct in a humble attitude (Mt 5:5; 11:29; 1 Pt 3:15). **14** In contrast to the meek and humble life that would portray the character of a godly teacher, the hypocrisy of the ungodly person is manifested in the divisive life that he lives contrary to the teachings he proposes. **Envy and strife:** When one uses the church as an opportunity to carry out selfish ambitions, he will harbor envy against those with whom he competes for recognition (Rm 13:13; 1 Co 3:1-3). Among the disciples leaders lead by being slaves to the needs of others (See comments Mk 10:35-45; 1 Co 16:15,16). **Lie against:** The divisive conduct of those whose hearts were ungodly stood as a witness that there was no truth in their hearts. One does not have the truth unless he brings his life into conformity with the truth (See 3 Jn 3). **15 Does not descend from above:** The wisdom that is associated with selfish ambition and divisive attitudes does not originate from God (See 1 Co 14:33). **Earthly:** Divisive attitudes and actions originate from this world (Ph 3:19). **Sensual:** They are the attitudes of those who have a depraved spirit. **Demonic:** Such attitudes are after the nature of Satan and his demons. **16 Every evil work:** The evidence of selfish ambition, jealousy and envy is strife and division. The Holy Spirit here identifies such to be evil. When selfish ambition, jealousy and envy exist among disciples, there will be confusion and vile practices carried out by those who harbor such evil attitudes in their hearts (See 1 Co 3:3; Gl 5:20). **17** In contrast to the wisdom that is carnal and earthly, the wisdom that originates from God will manifest itself in the lives of those who are submissive to the word of God (1 Co 2:6,7). **Pure:** It is wisdom that is manifested in the hearts of those who do not assume that others work because of evil motives (1:17; Ps 19:8; 1 Co 13:6,7). **Peaceable:** Those who manifest in their lives the wisdom from above work to maintain peace among brethren (Nm 6:24-26; Mt 5:9; Jn

14:27; Cl 3:15; 2 Th 3:16). **Gentle:** The peaceable person works with a gentle spirit in order to calm the atmosphere for discussion and not argument (Ph 4:5; 2 Tm 2:24). **Reasonable:** Godly wisdom does not seek to enforce one's opinion on another. Therefore, such a person is easy to be approached. **Full of mercy:** Those who have characters of peace and gentleness, show mercy toward others (2:13). They are not judgmental of others. **Full of ... good fruits:** The person with godly wisdom is known for doing good to others (2:14-26; Gl 6:10). **Without partiality:** The one who manifests godly wisdom does not make decisions on the basis of showing respect of persons (2:1-13; At 10:34,35). **Without hypocrisy:** The pure in heart are sincere. They do not allow blessings and cursings to proceed out of their mouth (Rm 12:9; 2 Co 6:6; 1 Pt 1:22). **18** The reward of peacemakers is the fruit of righteousness. Peacemakers sow the character that James mentions in verse 17, and thus, they reap the goodness of others (Pv 11:18). *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God"* (Mt 5:9; see comments Gl 5:22,23).

## Chapter 4

### THE SIN OF MATERIALISM

**1 Wars and fights:** The "wars and fights" that were going on among the disciples manifested the carnality of those who were involved in such (See 1 Co 3:1-3; Rm 7:23; Gl 4:17-20; compare Gl 5:17; 1 Pt 2:11). As James turns to portray the carnal hearts of the materialists, he is stern by using words that clearly identify the selfish hearts of those who manifest wisdom that is earthly, sensual and demonic (Compare 2 Co 7:5; 2 Tm 2:23; Ti 3:9). **2 You lust ... you kill and desire... you fight and war:** This is not a pretty picture of the state of relationship between some disciples. Those who engage themselves in disputes need to read these words of what the Holy Spirit thinks of such senseless strife between disciples (See comments Ti 3:9-11). Those who propagate and promote such strife will certainly pay a heavy price for disturbing the flock of God. In the context there, James portrays divisive attitudes that centered around selfish ambition and materialism. The primary conflict here is a spiritual warfare that is going on with the materially minded individual whose desire for riches is seeking to choke out the seed of the kingdom (Lk 8:14; see Rm 7:23; 1 Pt 2:11). The materialist's lust for riches was manifesting itself in carnal competition of one member against another. **Kill:** This is hatred that

ask with wrong motives so that you may consume *it* upon your pleasures.

**4** You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

**5** Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The spirit that dwells in us envies intensely?”

**6** ¶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He

says, “*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*”

**7** ¶ Therefore, submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

**8** Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners. And purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded.

**9** Be distressed and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.

was motivated by indifference toward the poor (1 Jn 3:15; see Mt 5:21,22). Because of his riches, the materialist spends his money on activities and possessions which he personally enjoys. The activities and possessions are consumed upon his own lust, and thus, he develops a selfish attitude. He develops an attitude where he thinks that others are seeking to possess his possessions. He thus constructs a mental fence around his life in order to keep others out. He deceives himself into believing that he has a right to his pleasures and possessions which he consumes upon his own lusts. He shuts out the poor of the world, and thus, it is difficult for him to dwell in a peaceful relationship with poorer disciples. His riches have changed his personality from focusing on the needs of others to focusing on satisfying his own pleasures (See comments Mt 19:16-30). **3 Consume it on your pleasures:** This is the problem. This is the obstacle that blocks the prayers of the materialist (See Jb 27:8,9; Ps 18:41; 66:18). He asks for riches which he can consume upon his own lusts. We would assume, therefore, that the riches the materialist has did not come to him as the result of God’s blessing. One deceptive means of Satan is to steal the seed of the kingdom out of the hearts of men by bringing them riches. Rich brethren who consume upon their own lusts without regard for the poor cannot give credit to God for their riches. God answers those prayers that are expressed to Him with unselfish motives (See 5:16; Ps 34:15; 145:18; Mk 11:24; Lk 18:14; Jn 14:13; 1 Jn 4:14,15; 5:14; see comments 3 Jn 2). **4 Adulteresses:** The materialist is an adulterer in that he has wedded himself as a member of the body of Christ to that which is of this world. He has broken the covenant he made with Christ in order to give himself to the world (Ps 73:27; Is 54:5; Ez 16:32). **Friendship with the world is enmity with God:** If one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in his heart (1 Jn 2:15). Those who love activities and possessions of this world do not love the Father (See Mt 6:24; Jn 15:19; Rm 8:7; Gl 1:4,10; Cl 3:1-4). One cannot love God with the love with which God seeks to be loved, and at the same time, engage himself in the pleasures of this world (See 1 Tm 6:16). **5 The spirit:** Though some translators capitalize the word “spirit” in this text, the reference here is probably to the human spirit since it is not the nature of the Holy Spirit to yearn with jealousy. What James is saying is that God did not create our spirit after His image in order to lust after that which is of this world (Ec 12:7; Nm 16:22; Zc 12:1). It is unnatural for one to live a spiritually adulterous life. God created us to seek Him, not this world (Gn 1:26). Therefore, the spirit that lusts after the things of this world in order to ignore God has de-

generated to allow Satan to control his desires (Gn 6:5; see Ex 20:5; 34:14).

**6 More grace:** God’s grace is extended toward those who have humbly submitted to Him (See Rm 5:20).

**Resists the proud:** Those who are arrogant will not submit their lives to the will of God (Pv 3:34; see Jb 22:29; Ps 138:6; Mt 23:12; Lk 18:9-14). They resist submission, and thus, God resists giving His grace to them in order that they might be saved.

#### CALL FOR REPENTANCE

The following is James’ call for repentance on the part of those who have loved this world. They must turn from their materialism and seek God. They must change their lives to be worthy of the gospel of Christ (Ph 1:27). **7** Since God will not save the proud, James’ plea is that the first step in repentance must be to submit to the will of God (1 Pt 5:5,6). **Resist the devil:** Since James states this as an imperative command, then there is within man the power to resist the temptations of the devil (See Ep 4:27; 6:10-18; 1 Pt 5:8). God has never given Satan the power to voluntarily subject people to his will. If one desires to seek God, then Satan has no power to subjectively keep one away from God. **He will flee:** Our power to resist Satan is exemplified in the fact that we can make him flee. Since God will not allow the individual Christian to be tempted beyond that which he is able to endure, then we must assume that we have the power to make the devil flee from us (1 Co 10:12,13; see Mt 4:8). Since we have this power, then we will all stand before God in judgment and be held directly accountable for our deeds (2 Co 5:10). Our power to resist Satan makes us responsible for our own actions. **8 Draw near:** James’ imperative command places the responsibility for our actions on our shoulders. The individual must take the initiative to keep himself in the love of God (Compare Ps 119:117; 2 Ch 15:2; Zc 1:3; Mt 3:7; Hb 7:19; see Jd 21). **Cleanse your hands:** Those who have made their hands dirty by becoming a friend of the world, must repent. Those who have allowed their lives to be directed by the world in order to create religious behavior according to their love of the world, must repent (See Jb 17:9; Is 1:15-17; 1 Tm 2:8). **Purify your hearts:** This is the problem with the materialist. His heart is seeking the things of this world. He must become pure with the wisdom from above in order to be given the grace by which he can be saved (3:17; see 1 Jn 3:3; 1 Pt 1:22). **9 Lament and weep:** One will not come to repentance if he does not recognize his sinful condition (See comments Mt 5:3-12; see Lk 7:27-50; 18:13). One must recognize his spiritual poverty in order to seek the riches of God’s grace. One must realize

**10** Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

**11 ¶** Do not speak evil one of another, brethren. He who speaks evil of *his* brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge.

**12** There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

**13 ¶** Come now you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and make profit."

**14** You do not know what *will happen* to-

orrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

**15** Instead, you *ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

**16** But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

**17 ¶** Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

## Chapter 5

**1 ¶** Come now *you* rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you.

**2** Your riches are corrupted and your gar-

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his inability to save himself in order to understand that he needs the grace of God (See comments Rm 3:20; 5:1,2). **10 *Humble yourself:*** It is our responsibility to take the initiative to deal with our pride. We cannot exalt ourselves before God on the basis of our works. Man's pride detours him from submitting to the will of God (Jb 22:29; Lk 14:11; 18:14; 1 Pt 5:5,6). In order to be lifted up by God we must come to God with a humble heart (Mt 23:12).

### DO NOT JUDGE

**11 *Judges his brother:*** The person who speaks against his brother is actually making himself the judge of his brother (Mt 7:1-5; Rm 14:4). The evil speaking of slander is a hideous sin on the part of one who wishes to destroy the reputation of another (5:9; 2 Co 12:20; Ep 4:31; 1 Pt 2:1-3; 3 Jn 10). Their speaking evil was meant to bring judgment upon their brother. ***Judges the law:*** The law of liberty allowed freedom in order to carry out principles of the law (1:25; 2:8,12). If one judges as evil that which was in the area of freedom, and thus opinion, then one is judging the law to be insufficient. Those who judge their brothers in the areas of freedom of the law, are making laws by which men are to be judged. They are binding where God has not bound, and thus, they are judging the law to be insufficient and unable to furnish the man of God unto every good work (2 Tm 3:16,17; compare Mt 16:18,19). **12 *One lawgiver:*** The one who would seek to be a judge with respect to his own laws that he has established where God has not established law, must remember that there is the Judge of all things before whom he must stand (Rm 14:4). It is this Lawgiver who will judge all men according to His law, not the religious laws and traditions of men (Jn 5:37; 12:48; At 17:30,31; Mt 25:31-46). ***Who are you:*** One has the right to judge according to the law that is given by Christ (See comments Gl 6:1). However, if one's motives are evil, then he has no right to judge. The one who would seek to judge out of evil motives or judge in areas of freedom, has placed himself in competition with Jesus who is our only judge.

### DEPEND ON GOD

**13,14 *What is your life:*** Men often live like they will live forever (Pv 27:1). However, life is short in comparison to eternity (1:10,11; Jb 7:7; Ps 102:3; Mt 6:30; 1

Pt 1:24). Many who have died in our ancestry only two or three generations in the past are forgotten even by great grandchildren. In this context, James attacks those, who in their zeal to consume this world upon themselves, are ignoring their responsibility to serve God.

**15 *If the Lord wills:*** James' use of the word "if" assumes that one may not know what transpires in his life. Therefore, he should walk according to the direction of the word of God in his pursuit to maintain sustenance for life (See At 18:21; 21:14; 1 Co 4:19; 16:7; Hb 6:3). In every aspect of one's life he should prayerfully petition God to work on his behalf (See Cl 3:17). **16 *Your arrogance:*** These materialists were self-confident because of their financial power. Because they boasted in the power of their wealth, their boasting was evil (1 Co 5:6). They were haughty with vainglory (1 Jn 2:16). They should have been, as Paul, boasting in Christ (2 Co 7:4; 10:17; 2 Th 1:4; Hb 3:6). **17 *Knows to do good:*** The law of liberty establishes the principles by which one must conduct his life. It is a principle to take care of the orphans and widows (1:27). However, there are no prescriptive laws as to how one must carry out the principle of law. Nevertheless, it is good to take care of widows and orphans. One must determine for himself how he will carry out the good of taking care of widows and orphans. If he does nothing, then he sins. Most Christians sin because of their lack of initiative to do that which they know should be done (See Mt 23:23; 25:42,43; Lk 12:47,48; Jn 9:41; 13:17; 15:22; Gl 6:10; 2 Pt 2:21).

## Chapter 5

### UNGODLY LIFE-STYLE OF THE RICH

**1 *You rich:*** Because of the sickness of materialism which destroys the benevolence of the church toward the poor, orphans and widows, James here pronounces a stern condemnation of those disciples who have brought their worldly thinking into the church. He called them to repentance in 4:7-10. However, if they persist in their arrogance, what is in store for them is here explained in detail. ***Miseries that are coming:*** James uses the present participle of the verb here in order to express the meaning that these miseries were in the process of coming. In view of the "coming of the Lord" in verses 7,8, and the fact that James is writing in

ments are moth-eaten.

**3** Your gold and silver are corroded. And their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped treasure together for the last days.

**4** Behold, the wages of the laborers who have mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out *against you*. And the cries of those who have harvested have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

**5** You have lived in pleasure on the earth and

lived a self-indulgent life. You have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

**6** You have condemned *and* killed the just. He does not resist you.

**7** ¶ Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth. And he has long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain.

**8** You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

the early or mid 60s, the miseries that would affect them would be the coming destruction of the Jewish State (See comments Mt 24; see Pv 11:28; Lk 6:24). These rich Jews would lose their possessions, and possibly their lives, since they continued to thrive in the Jewish financial economics of the day. All such things were coming to a close by God's judgment which He was bringing down on national Israel in A.D. 70. **2,3** The material things in which these rich Jewish brethren trusted were rotten, moth-eaten and tarnished (Jr 17:11; Mt 6:19; Jb 13:28; Rm 2:5). Because these rich had suppressed the poor in order to acquire their riches, their riches were tarnished with the stain of evil materialism.

**Witness against you:** Pure gold and silver does not tarnish. Only an alloy would do such, and thus, the tarnished gold and silver was evidence that these rich had cheated those with whom they dealt in gold and silver. The tarnishing was a witness to their dishonest and fraudulent characters. **Eat your flesh:** This figure of speech indicates that their fraudulent activities would be the basis upon which they were being judged unrighteous. **In the last days:** They were in the last days of the nation of Israel (See comments Mt 22:7; 24; At 2:16,17). Their treasures that they had accumulated would be destroyed in the next few years from the time of the writing of this epistle. All that they had worked to accumulate would be taken from them. **4 Wages of the laborers:** The rich had not paid the laborers for their work of harvesting their crops. The rich were treating their laborers as slaves by not paying them their salaries (See Lv 19:13; Dt 24:15; Jb 24:10; Jr 22:13; Am 6:1; Ml 3:5). **Lord of Sabaoth:** The word "Sabaoth" in Hebrew referred to the armies of nations or hosts of heavenly armies (Rm 9:29). Jesus is now the Lord of the heavenly host of angelic armies. He will come with all the heavenly hosts to bring judgment on the wicked (2 Th 1:7-9). He will punish the ungodly for their ungodly deeds (Jd 14,15; compare Ex 2:23; Dt 24:15; Jb 31:38). **5 Lived in pleasure:** The rich Jews had lived a luxurious life on the earth. They had lived off their fraudulent gains and in disregard for the poor (See Jb 21:13; Am 6:1). **Day of slaughter:** The day of slaughter was coming in A.D. 70 wherein the destruction of the Jewish State would end with the destruction of Jerusalem, the center of commerce for the Jews. Therefore, the sins of the wealthy would eventually be judged in the destruction of Jerusalem. **6 The just:** Jesus was the "righteous One." He was the innocent Lamb of God whom the Jews murdered at Calvary (At 3:14; 7:52; 22:14; see 1 Jn 2:1). However, the oppression of the poor was continually carried out in the lives of the rich.

In this they were considered murderers (2:11; 1 Jn 3:13-17). **Does not resist you:** As Jesus who kept silent when He was led to crucifixion, so the innocent poor brethren kept their silence as they were unjustly used by the rich. The poor brethren were in a cultural situation wherein any resistance would have been futile since the courts were on the side of or controlled by the rich (2:6). The poor had no recourse, and thus, James writes this stern condemnation of those in society or the church who would gain their riches on the backs of the poor. These harsh revelations from God through the Holy Spirit inform us that any government officials or businessmen who gain and maintain power and prosperity at the expense of impoverishing people, will be dealt with harshly by God. In this context, God was bringing judgment upon the ungodly rich Jews within the lifetime of James' readers (See comments Jd 14,15). God will eventually bring judgment upon all those who have oppressed the poor when Jesus is revealed from heaven with His host of angelic armies (2 Th 1:7-9).

#### THE COMING OF THE LORD

In order to understand this context of James' message to the faithful, we must understand that God is bringing judgment upon national Israel within only a few years from the time of the writing of these words. Jesus' prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem is coming to fulfillment (See comments Mt 24; see Mk 13; Lk 21). The fulfillment of the prophecy will be the loss of the riches of the Sadducean Jews. **7 The coming of the Lord:** James encourages the faithful to be patient. The immediate audience was to be patient for the coming of the Lord in their lifetime. James is not discussing something that would happen over two thousand years later in a century far removed from the hardships of the immediate readers. He was talking about something that was "at hand." The faithful must be patient for this coming judgment of the Lord as the farmer waits for the October-November rains (early) and April-May rains (later). **8 The coming of the Lord is near:** The phrase "coming of the Lord" is judgment language that is taken from the Old Testament (See comments Mt 24). The Lord came many times in judgment on people in the times of the Old Testament. He is here coming again in judgment on national Israel in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy that is recorded in Matthew 24. James says that in reference to the lifetime of his immediate readers, the coming is at hand. Since he is writing in the early part of or mid 60s, then the coming of the Lord in judgment on national Israel was only a few years away (See Ph 4:5; 1 Pt 4:7). It was truly at hand. Reference here

**9 ¶** Do not complain one against another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the judge stands at the door.

**10** As an example of suffering and patience, my brethren, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

**11** Behold, we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's work, that the Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

**12 ¶** But above all things, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath. But let your yes be yes and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

**13 ¶** Is anyone among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.

**14** Is anyone sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

**15** And the prayer of faith will restore the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

**16** Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much.

**17** Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.

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would not be to the final coming of Jesus because the Holy Spirit would not deceive James into writing a message that would lead people to believe that Jesus was coming in His final coming in their lifetime.

**9 Do not complain:** In view of the coming relief that would happen from Jewish persecution and oppression by the rich, James encouraged the faithful of his readers to not murmur against one another (4:11). The reason they should not murmur against one another is that they be not condemned for their grumbling. **At the door:** The emphasis of this statement indicates that something immediate is about to happen. Jesus is the judge and He is about to bring judgment on national Israel (See Mt 24:33; Mk 13:29). **10 An example of suffering:** The prophets endured the persecutions of their fellow countrymen in order to bear witness to the truth of God (See Mt 5:12). They remained faithful to their calling regardless of the persecution they had to endure. **11 Count them blessed:** They considered the prophets blessed because they remained faithful in the midst of great persecution and death. Today, we count the first recipients of James' epistle blessed because they endured. We must therefore remain faithful in the midst of persecution in order that generations after us count us faithful, and thus, gain encouragement because of our stand for the gospel. **The patience of Job:** Job endured one disaster after another over a period of time. Nevertheless, he remained faithful by trusting in God to preserve him (See Jb 1:21; 2:10; 13:15). **The outcome of the Lord:** The Greek text here literally reads "the end of [the] Lord." The end result of one's trust in the Lord is that the Lord will deliver. The final purpose for the righteous is their deliverance. Their deliverance also means the condemnation of the wicked (Compare Jb 42:10). Therefore, the Christian can better endure the hardships of this life by understanding that God will eventually deliver him from all hardships of this world (See Nm 14:18; Ps 94:12; Rm 8:28). **12** In view of the imminent coming of the Lord in judgment on national Israel, faithful brethren must guard their integrity as Christians. **Do not swear:** Emphasis here is that they not make oaths as a promissory statement to fulfill a commitment. Making casual oaths was common in normal Jewish conversation in order to establish integrity or credibility. James is saying that the

integrity and credibility of the Christian should be established by the behavior of his life, not by casual statements continually made in conversation (Mt 5:33-37). The statements of Christians should be considered true and correct without the necessity of making oaths in order to reinforce what they say.

#### CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

**13 Let him pray:** This was not a request made by James to stimulate wishful thinking. The truth is that God answers prayer. If the Holy Spirit here instructs prayer, then certainly He can carry out the answer to the prayers of those who seek deliverance from suffering. Therefore, in times of suffering the first thing Christians need to do is pray for deliverance (2 Ch 33:12; Ps 34:4; 50:14,15; Mt 7:7). **Let him sing:** The natural response of a cheerful heart is to sing (See 1 Co 14:15; Rm 15:9; Ep 5:19; Cl 3:16). God expects joyous melody to come forth from the heart through the vocal cords of those who want to give Him praise for His work in their lives.

**14 Call for the elders:** The natural desire of those who are physically sick is to seek healing. James here instructs that the shepherds (elders) of the church be called in order to pray over the one who is sick (See 1 Tm 3:1-7; Ti 1:5-9). The anointing of oil in such cases was only symbolic of their addressing the physical needs of the one over whom they prayed (1 Co 12:9; see Mk 6:13; 16:18). **Prayer of faith:** The prayer of faith is the condition upon which the sick would be raised up. If it is the Lord's will (1 Jn 5:14), the individual would be healed. If there were any sins involved in the sickness of the individual, then God would forgive sin upon the basis of a repentant heart (1 Jn 1:7-9). **16 Confess:** This most often neglected command of the Holy Spirit is a practice in Christian fellowship that brings healing. Only when brethren are willing to confess their wrongs to one another will there be true relationships among those God seeks to bring together in Christ (Nm 11:2; compare Mt 5:23,24; 6:12-15). The purpose for the confession of trespasses to one another is for the purpose of individuals coming together in prayer for one another. If there is no confession of our trespasses against one another, then there will be no prayer for one another. The relationships which God intended should be among the disciples cannot exist in an environment where brethren

And he prayed earnestly that it might not rain. And it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

**18** And he prayed again and the heavens gave rain and the earth produced its fruit.

**19 ¶** Brethren, if any of you stray from the

truth, and one brings him back,

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

are too proud or distant that they cannot confess their sins to one another. **The effective prayer of a righteous man:** Fervent prayer is the result of a righteous person. Righteous people pray fervently (See Jn 9:31; Cl 4:12; 1 Jn 2:29; 3:7,22; 5:14,15). **Avails much:** All prayer requests may not be answered by God. However, prayer is answered on the basis of righteous living. We must assume, therefore, that God answers our prayers in the affirmative, though they may not be answered when we want them answered or in the manner we request that they be answered. The fact that God does answer prayer is evidence that He works in our lives. We may not understand the manner by which He works, but we can be assured by these statements of James that He does work (See Rm 8:28). **17 Elijah ... prayed earnestly:** Elijah was no different than any man. Though he was a prophet, he was an ordinary man with faith in God as any righteous Christian. Elijah did not just make a casual request to God that it not rain (1 Kg 17:1 - 18:45). The Greek verb "prayed" is aorist in tense. The emphasis is that he made one fervent prayer. The result of that one fervent prayer was that God stopped the rain for three and a half years. **18 Prayed again:** The verb here is also aorist tense. In other words, a second prayer was made three and a half years after the first prayer in reference to the rain in order that God allow it to rain again. One prayer stopped the rain. Three and a half years later, a second prayer started the rain again. The power of prayer is not in the number of prayers that are made for a particular request. The

power of prayer is based on the righteous living of the individual who makes the prayer in faith (See comments Cl 4:12). The righteous demeanor of our lives, therefore, is the foundation upon which prayers are answered because God works on behalf of His obedient children.

#### RESTORATION TO TRUTH

**19 If any of you stray from the truth:** It is possible for a Christian to stray from the flock, and thus fall from the grace of God (Gl 5:3,4; Hb 6:4-6; 2 Pt 2:20-22). Therefore, Christians must make their calling and election sure by remaining close to Jesus and to one another in the truth (See 2 Pt 1:10,11). **One brings him back:** Christians have a responsibility toward one another to aid one another to remain faithful (See comments Gl 6:1; see Mt 18:15; 1 Tm 4:16). **20 Save a soul from death:** When Peter denied the Lord at the time of the trials of Jesus, he fell away. However, he repented and returned to the Lord. As the brother here who has fallen away is converted again to the truth, Peter was also converted to the right way after his fall (Lk 22:32). The brother who is converted back to the truth has been delivered from his state of being lost. **Multitude of sins:** Sins are cleansed upon the condition that the sinning brother repents and returns to the truth (Ps 32:1,2; Rm 4:6-8; 1 Jn 1:7-9; compare Rm 11:14; 1 Pt 4:8). One can receive forgiveness of any sin for which he repents. However, if one persists in any sin as a way of life, there is no forgiveness (See comments Hb 10:26,27).

## The First Letter Of Peter

# 1 Peter

#### Author

The inspired writer of the letter is Peter, the apostle. Peter's original name in Hebrew was Simeon (Jn 21:15-17; At 15:14; 2 Pt 1:1). His father's name was Jonah (Mt 16:17) and his brother's name was Andrew (Jn 1:35-42). He was married (Mt 8:14,15; Mk 1:30) and his wife went with him on his missionary journeys (1 Co 9:5). Since he was designated an elder in the church in his latter years, he also had children according to the qualifications of elders (5:1,13; Ti 1:6). Peter was born in Bethsaida (Jn 1:44). However, he was living in Capernaum in Galilee at the time he was called into apostleship (Mk 1:21ff). He was in a fishing business with James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Jn 1:40ff). When Peter was called to be an apostle, Jesus changed his name from Simeon to Cephas, which name means "rock" (Jn 1:42; Mt 16:17).

#### Date

In 1:7 Peter speaks of the fiery trials that would come upon his readers. In 4:7 he says that the end of all things is at hand. If his reference to the fiery trials of persecution of the church was that which Nero carried out in the middle 60s, then the date of writing would be around A.D. 65. If the end