

The General Epistle of JAMES

INTRODUCTION

1. Title. Originally, like the other epistles of the NT, this one, being a letter, probably bore no title. One of the earliest manuscripts containing James, the Codex Sinaiticus, has no title at the beginning of the letter, but closes with the subscription, “Epistle of James.” Other early manuscripts bear the simple title in Greek, *Iakōbou Epistolē* (“Epistle of James”). Later manuscripts entitle this a general, or catholic, epistle, in the sense that it is addressed to the church at large rather than to any specific congregation or person.

The epistle of James is referred to by Eusebius as the first of the seven epistles called “catholic,” which means “general,” or “universal” (*Ecclesiastical History* ii. 23). They were so called because they were addressed to the church in general, although this is altogether inappropriate when applied to 2 and 3 John, which are addressed to individuals. In all the early manuscripts the seven epistles from James to Jude were placed together after Acts, preceding the epistles of Paul. The order of the general epistles as they appear in our English Bible is the one usually observed in the principal manuscripts.

2. Authorship. There is insufficient evidence in the epistle of James to warrant any definite conclusion as to the identity of its author. The NT has many references to men by the name of James. This name was very common among the Jews, for it represents the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name Jacob. The frequent use of this name is illustrated in the list of the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:2, 3; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16). One of these apostles was James the son of Zebedee and the brother of John. A second James was the son of Alphaeus. Another Biblical character by the name of James was the father of one of the Twelve, who is identified as Judas “of James,” that is, the son of James, rather than “the brother of James,” as in the KJV (Luke 6:16).

It is reasonable to suppose that the author of the epistle of James is one of the persons by that name already mentioned in the Scripture record, rather than another James, entirely different from any otherwise known. The tone of the introduction in ch. 1:1 implies that the writer speaks as one well known to those whom he addresses, and that he speaks with recognized authority.

Although according to the Gospel narratives all the Twelve were closely associated with the Lord, James, the son of Zebedee, was the more prominent of the two apostles by that name. Only a very few writers have ever attributed the epistle to him. But even this possibility seems ruled out by the early date of his death (A.D. 44), and by the additional fact that ch. 1:1 implies that there was only one James prominent in the church at the time the epistle was written, instead of two or more.

The second apostle named James was the son of Alphaeus. He is clearly identified four times by the use of his father’s name (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). There has been much discussion as to whether this James is identical with “James the less” (Mark 15:40). If so, not only was his father named Alphaeus, but his mother was named Mary and he had a brother Joses (Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:47; 16:1; Luke 24:10). But elsewhere this Mary is called the wife of Cleophas (John 19:25). Although attempts have been made to equate Cleophas (or Clopas, Cleopas, Luke 24:18) with Alphaeus through the Aramaic *Chalpai*, equivalent to Alphaeus, such an identification remains

doubtful. It seems best to conclude that the names, James the son of Alphaeus and James the less, do not describe the same man.

Besides these individuals by the name of James, the Gospel writers refer to another James, the first named and thus presumably the eldest of the four brothers of Jesus (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3). Like James the less, he had a brother named Joses, and their mother (rather, stepmother; see on Matt. 12:46) was named Mary. But it seems highly improbable that the one James is to be identified with the other. A reference to Jesus' mother as "Mary the mother of James and Joses" (Matt. 27:56) highly improbable. Elsewhere, James the brother of Jesus appears for certain only in Gal. 1:19, where Paul states that, on his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion, of all the apostles he saw only Cephas (Peter) and "James the Lord's brother."

Elsewhere in the NT, however, mention is made of a leader of the church called James, whose name is not qualified by any other identification. He first comes to prominence in the Acts after the death of James the son of Zebedee. After that there was evidently only one leader of sufficient prominence to be known as James, without further identification. Subsequent references to this James characterize him as an outstanding figure. When Peter was released from Herod's prison he specified that report of his escape be made to James (Acts 12:17). James presided at the council of the church at Jerusalem and pronounced its decision (Acts 15:13, 19). Paul reported to James concerning his work (Acts 21:18). James gave authority to people to visit churches (Gal. 2:9). This may also be the James to whom Christ made a special postresurrection appearance (1 Cor. 15:7), perhaps to give him special instruction regarding his future responsibilities. Finally, Paul mentions him first as one of the three "pillars" of the early church (Gal. 2:9). All things considered, this James would seem to be the most likely person to have introduced himself to the church at large simply as "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1).

The question remains, then, as to whether this James was the son of Alphaeus or the Lord's brother. In favor of identifying him as the son of Alphaeus is the fact that it seems strange that one James should be mentioned by name among the Twelve (Acts 1:13, 14), only to disappear shortly from the record without notice even of his death, whereas another man of the same name appears prominently (Acts 12:17) without any word of introduction. On the other hand, certain evidences may be advanced for identifying this man with James the Lord's brother. Paul's reference to James, the leader of the church, in Gal. 2, coming as it does soon after his mention of James the Lord's brother in Gal. 1, gives the impression—although it cannot be proved—that the two men are the same. Furthermore, Josephus' story of the death of James, the Lord's brother, implies that he was a leader in the church (Josephus *Antiquities* xx. 9. 1; cf. Vol. V, p. 71). Christian tradition, at least from the 2d century, identifies James, the leader of the church at Jerusalem, with the Lord's brother (Hegesippus, quoted by Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* ii. 23).

Early Christian writers offer a maze of discrepancies, contradictions, and personal conclusions concerning the author of this epistle. Their errors are largely based on an incorrect identification of James "of Alphaeus" with James "of Joses," and the unsupported conclusion that the James of Gal. 1:19 is identical with the James of Gal. 2:9.

Josephus states that the death of James, “the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ,” took place after the death of Festus and before the arrival of his successor Albinus (A.D. 62), and that James was stoned (*Antiquities* xx. 9. 1). Taken at face value, this appears to be a factual record of the death of James “of Joses,” though Eusebius applies this to James “the Just,” leader of the church of Jerusalem (*Ecclesiastical History* ii. 23), and uses another quotation not found in any known text of Josephus.

Eusebius states, further, that the divine books show James, who first received the episcopate of Jerusalem from Christ and the apostles, to be “a brother of Christ” (*ibid.* vii. 19), and gives the Bible as authority. He cites Paul as identifying James “the Just” as James “the brother of the Lord” (*ibid.* ii. 1), again assuming more than his source states. However, in another place Eusebius refers to James as one of the alleged brethren of the Saviour and implies that he was one of the Seventy. He identifies James as “brother of the Lord,” “child of Joseph,” and “the Just” (*ibid.*). He states that James was martyred immediately before the capture of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), and says that Simeon, son of Clopas and said by some to be a cousin of the Saviour, succeeded him to the “throne of the diocese” of Jerusalem (*ibid.* iii. 11). Thus he contradicts Josephus’ date for the death of James. He makes other references to Simeon as son of Clopas, and Jude as brother of Christ according to the flesh (*ibid.* iii. 19, 20, 22, 32). He cites Hegesippus to support his conclusions that Simeon was the son of Clopas, and that Clopas was the uncle of the Lord (*ibid.* iii. 32). He again cites Hegesippus as stating that Simeon was a cousin of James (*ibid.* iv. 22). He quotes the famous account of Hegesippus, of the life and death of James, though from the context this account is easily seen to be garbled and highly exaggerated (*ibid.* ii. 23).

Eusebius quotes Clement as supporting his theory of two men named James, one “the Just,” beaten to death with a fuller’s club, and the other beheaded (*ibid.* ii. 1). The first he identifies as the Lord’s brother, though Clement does not say so. In the same passage he quotes Clement as stating, “Peter and James [of Zebedee] and John after the Ascension of the Saviour did not struggle for glory, because they had previously been given honour by the Saviour, but chose James the Just as bishop of Jerusalem.”

The apocryphal Gospel According to the Hebrews, which states that James the Just had taken an oath not to eat bread from the time the Lord had drunk of the cup until he saw Him risen from the dead, evidently places him among the Twelve at the Lord’s Supper. Then Jesus’ appearance to him is recorded as follows: Jesus “took bread, and blessed it and brake it and gave it to James the Just, and said to him, ‘My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man has risen from the dead.’” Use of the phrase “My brother” is construed to mean that this James was the Lord’s brother. Obviously, none of this non-Biblical material can be of much help in identifying the writer of this epistle.

Perhaps the most serious problem involved in identifying the author of the epistle with the Lord’s brother is the fact that the language and the style of the epistle indicate that its author was a man of some competence in Greek literary composition. Not only is his vocabulary rich, but his style is consciously that of the Greek literary form known as the diatribe—a popular, ethical address. Nothing that is known of the Lord’s brother would indicate that he had the background for such a work—he was the son of a Galilean carpenter, and apparently thoroughly Jewish in culture. However, nothing conclusive can be said on this point, for the arguments involved are based more upon what is not known, than upon what is.

In conclusion, it may be said that the authorship of James remains an unsettled question. Probably the author was one of the three principal men by the name of James mentioned elsewhere in the NT.

3. Historical Setting. A number of geographical allusions in this epistle suggest Palestine as the place of writing. It may be conjectured that the writer lived in a land blessed with oil, wine, and figs, that he was not far from the sea, that there were salt and bitter springs nearby, and that the land was exposed to drought, and rain was a matter of great importance.

There is no certain method of determining the date of the epistle. As noted above, it seems to have been written when there was only one prominent James in the church, and hence after A.D. 44, when James the son of Zebedee was killed. The internal evidence points to an early date. There is no reference to any large group of Gentile Christians, or to any problems concerning Gentiles. The synagogue is still the church, yet Christianity is widespread (see Acts 2:9–11; 4:36; 9:2, 10, 14, 19, 26; 11:19, 20). The general tenor of the epistle is that Christianity is the culmination of all true Judaism.

4. Theme. This epistle is one of practical Christianity, showing what results or works a genuine, living faith will produce in the life of a disciple. Emphasized throughout is the contrast between the manifestations, effects, or results of true religion and those of false religion. This homiletical epistle is filled with beautiful and striking illustrations. The style is simple and direct, with the thoughts in groups clearly marked from one another, rather than arranged in any evident plan. James writes freely out of the fullness of his heart, touching upon subjects as they are suggested to his mind. There are many allusions to the Sermon on the Mount, of which the following is a partial list.

Matt.	James	Matt.	James	Matt.	James
5:3	2:5; 1:9	5:27	2:10, 11	7:1	3:1; 4:11
4	4:9	34	5:12	2	2:13
7, 9	2:13; 1:17	48	1:4	7, 11	1:5, 17
8	4:8	6:15	2:13	8	4:3
9	3:18	19	5:2	12	2:8
11, 12	1:2; 5:10, 11	24	4:4	16	3:12
19	1:19- 25; 2:10, 11	25	4:13-16	21-26	1:22; 2:14; 5:7-9
22	1:20				

In this epistle there are many parallels to the writings of Paul (such as James 1:22; cf. Rom. 2:13), and to the writings of Peter (such as James 4:7; cf. 1 Peter 5:8, 9).

5. Outline.

- I. Salutation, 1:1.
- II. Temptation, 1:2–18.
- A. The need of patience and wisdom, 1:2–8.

- B. Endurance under earthly affliction or under exaltation, 1:9–12.
- C. The source of temptation, 1:13–18.
- III. Evidences of True Religion, 1:19–27.
 - A. Hearing rather than speaking, 1:19–22.
 - B. Doing as well as hearing, 1:23–27.
- IV. Warnings Against Common Dangers in the Early Church, 2:1 to 5:6.
 - A. Against respect of persons, 2:1–13.
 - B. Against a mere profession of faith, 2:14–26.
 - 1. Faith without works is valueless, 2:14–20.
 - 2. Examples of genuine faith that produced works, 2:21–26.
 - C. Against sins of tongue, 3:1–18.
 - 1. Control of the tongue, especially in teaching, 3:1, 2.
 - 2. Illustrations of the proper and improper use of the tongue, 3:3–12.
 - 3. Exhortations to proper conduct, including the use of the tongue, 3:13–18.
 - D. Against contention and strife among brethren, 4:1–17.
 - 1. The source of contention and self-seeking, 4:1–4.
 - 2. Exhortation to submit to God, 4:5–10.
 - 3. Exhortation against evilspeaking, 4:11, 12.
 - 4. Exhortation against presumptuous boasting, 4:13–17.
 - E. Against fraudulent gain and wrong use of riches, 5:1–6.
- V. Concluding Exhortations, 5:7–20.
 - A. Patience needed until Christ's coming, 5:7–11.
 - B. Proper conduct is needed at all times, 5:12, 13.
 - C. Prayer is effectual in helping the sick, 5:14–18.
 - D. Exhortation to work for others' salvation, 5:19, 20.

CHAPTER 1

1 *We are to rejoice under the cross, 5 to ask patience of God, 13 and in our trials not to impute our weakness, or sins, unto him, 19 but rather to hearken to the word, to meditate in it, and to do thereafter. 26 Otherwise men may seem, but never be truly religious.*

1. James. That the apostle thus simply refers to himself testifies to the fact that he was well known and felt no need to identify himself further. Today, however, there is considerable uncertainty as to which James of NT times the writer was. For the meaning of the name James see on Mark 3:17. For a discussion of the authorship of this epistle see pp. 497–500.

Servant. Gr. *doulos* (see on Rom. 1:1). In simple dignity James styles himself “servant” rather than “apostle,” a title he no doubt might properly have used. Though James was a respected worker in Christ’s kingdom on earth, he refers to himself as only a “servant.” He presents a worthy example for all charged with responsibility in the church today. There is no greater honor than being a “servant” of God.

Of the Lord. James recognizes that his credentials as “a servant” make him a representative of both the Son and the Father. Although this epistle often alludes to Christ’s teachings, the only other direct reference to Him by name is in ch. 2:1.

The twelve tribes. That is, the twelve tribes of Israel (see Gen. 35:22–26; 49:28; Acts 7:8). The ten tribes of the northern kingdom had gone into captivity in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:6, 23). Only a few of their descendants ever returned to Palestine (cf. on Ezra 6:17; 8:35). However, there is some evidence that in NT times at least some of these tribes

were still recognized. For example, Anna was of the tribe of Aser (Luke 2:36; see on Acts 26:7). Notwithstanding, James may have used the term “twelve tribes” in a collective sense of Jews generally, irrespective of tribal affiliation.

Some hold that James is speaking of the twelve tribes of spiritual Israel (see on Rev. 7:4); others, that his letter is addressed chiefly to Jewish Christians. This commentary favors the latter view. However, whatever view is taken, the spiritual instruction of the epistle remains the same.

James clearly identifies himself and his intended readers as Jews. He refers, for instance, to Abraham as “our father” (ch. 2:21) and to the “assembly [literally, “synagogue”]” (v. 2), the usual Jewish place for religious assembly (see Vol. V, pp. 56, 57). But the writer and the readers to whom the epistle was originally addressed were also Christians, as his repeated references to Jesus Christ as “Lord” make evident (see chs. 1:1, 7, 12; 2:1; 5:7, 11). Thus, in writing to the “twelve tribes” scattered abroad, James is addressing Jewish Christians living here and there throughout the Roman world (cf. 1 Peter 1:1). There is no reason to think that he was writing with unconverted Jews in mind, or that he anticipated that the letter would necessarily be read by some members of all of the twelve tribes of Israel.

It should be remembered that, in general, Hebrew Christians of apostolic times ever considered themselves devout Jews, that they remained loyal, in a sense, to Judaism, and in varying degrees anticipated the eventual fulfillment of all the promises made to Israel by the prophets of old, through Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 1:6). Few of them understood that Israel as a nation had forfeited to the Christian church the mandate of Heaven to be God’s chosen people (see Vol. IV, pp. 35, 36). Mention of the “twelve tribes” would remind these Jewish Christians of their early history as a nation and inspire the hope that, in Christ, they might soon enter upon the rich heritage promised the fathers (see Vol. IV, pp. 26–30). Even Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, uses the term (see Acts 26:7; cf. Matt. 19:28; cf. on Rom. 11:25, 26).

Scattered abroad. Literally, “in the dispersion” (cf. Peter 1:1). The dispersion of the Jews among the other nations is specifically referred to in the time of Esther (Esther 3:8) and at Pentecost (Acts 2:5; Acts 2:5, 9–11; see The Diaspora). For comment on the Jews of the Dispersion see Vol. V, pp. 59, 60. The original purpose of God was for the Jews to be missionaries to the whole world. Even though Israel failed to fulfill this plan as first designed, the effect of the two captivities was to accomplish—in part—God’s original purpose. For further comment on God’s plan for ancient Israel see Vol. IV, pp. 26–30.

Greeting. Gr. *chairō*, “to rejoice.” Compare the use of *chairō* in Luke 1:28; see on Rom. 1:7. The word was used also in parting in the sense of “may joy be with you.” Compare the Hebrew form of greeting (see on Jer. 6:14). This form of greeting does not occur elsewhere in the epistles. Its use in Acts 15:23 is one of the few peculiarities in style that suggest a possible identification of the author of this epistle with the James of the latter part of the book of Acts (see pp. 497–500).

2. My brethren. At the outset the apostle expresses the spirit of fellowship he feels with his readers. This warmth of affection would reveal the constructive nature of his admonitions concerning problems of everyday life. James uses this form of address altogether 15 times, or once every 7 verses on the average, in an apparent effort to stress the bond of brotherhood that bound his heart to theirs in Christian fellowship.

Count. Or, “consider,” “deem,” “think.” It is the privilege and duty of the Christian to take an intelligent attitude toward the tests and trials that beset his pathway. He needs to study and understand God’s permissive relationship to such experiences (see on Job 42:5; Ps. 38:3; 39:9; Matt. 6:13; Rom. 8:28).

All joy. That is, pure, unmixed joy. To the mature Christian the trials and tests of life need bring no burden of disappointment or discouragement. All this the Christian endures in faith and hope, “as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:27). Christian joy and courage are based, not on external circumstances—which may often be most forbidding—but on faith in God’s overruling providence and an intelligent understanding of His dealings with men. Human philosophies of life, religious or secular, may prepare men to meet trouble philosophically, with a calm and patient spirit, but Christianity teaches men how to be joyful under such circumstances through an intelligent understanding of the causes of suffering and through faith in God.

When ye fall. That the Christian may expect “temptations” periodically is evident from the word “when,” or more literally, “whenever.” The word “fall” does not necessarily reflect spiritual declension. To “fall into . . . temptations” simply means to encounter them (cf. Luke 10:30; Acts 27:41). Such situations are usually unsought, unexpected, and unwelcome. Furthermore, the “temptations” to which James here refers apparently constitute major obstacles that could easily overwhelm one whose mind is not “stayed” on God (see on Isa. 26:3, 4).

Divers. Or, “various.” Manifold are the “temptations” to which mankind—especially the Christian—is subject.

Temptations. Gr. *peirasmoi*, “tests,” “trials,” “afflictions,” “troubles,” “enticements [to sin]” (see on Matt. 6:13; cf. on Matt. 4:1). The word *peirasmoi* includes far more than the word “temptations” conveys to the modern English reader. It includes such afflictions as sickness, persecution, poverty, and calamity. Trials, whether expressly designed by Satan to tempt a man to sin, or only to annoy and harass him, are always a test of Christian experience.

Too often even the most earnest Christians fail to understand and ministry of suffering and temptation in the formation of character, and as a result not only fail to profit from these experiences as they might but make their own way harder and lose the fellowship with God that might otherwise be theirs. There is no experience in life, however bitter or disappointing, that may not, in the providence of God and by the grace of Christ, contribute to Christian growth, bring us closer to God, and enrich our understanding of His love for us. Paul is the classic NT example of how a Christian can turn every defeat into victory (see on 2 Cor. 2:14; 4:8–11; 12:7–10). For a more complete analysis of the Christian attitude toward trials and suffering in general see on Ps. 38:3.

Knowing. Verse 3 states the basis for the rejoicing noted in v. 2. James reminds his readers that personal joy amid life’s afflictions can be experienced only by those who face them with a sound, stabilizing Christian philosophy.

Trying. Gr. *dokimion*, “proving,” “testing.” This word refers not only to the testing of a Christian’s faith but more precisely to that attribute of faith that makes it victorious over the problems of life. The papyri (see Vol. V, pp. 104, 105) use this word in connection with gold to describe “standard gold,” that is, gold that measures up to the test

and is found genuine. The phrase, “the trying of your faith,” may thus describe faith that comes up to the test.

Faith. Gr. *pistis*, “faith,” “conviction,” “belief,” “trust.” James speaks of victorious faith that has successfully faced the varied problems of life, or “divers temptations.” Each conflict with “temptation” strengthens the faith of a victorious Christian. As a veteran of earthly warfare who has learned to face habitual danger confidently is more trustworthy than a raw recruit, so the victorious Christian is better prepared for the trials he must meet than the Christian whose faith is untried.

This faith is the unswerving conviction that Jesus Christ has a satisfying plan of life for every man and that for every trial He provides a solution. The man of faith believes that no person or circumstance can thwart the plan that God has for the happiness of His children.

Patience. Gr. *hupomonē*, “steadfastness,” “endurance,” “constancy,” “patience” (see on Rom. 5:3). This enduring power is the result of faith that has been tried and found triumphant. Too often the English word “patience” suggests mere passive submission. However, *hupomonē* emphasizes the active staying power that makes men triumphant over their “divers temptations” (see Luke 8:15; Rom. 2:7; Heb. 10:36; Rev. 14:12). This character asset is needed by all who face dreary adversities, whether of a personal nature or such as often confront them when they seek to advance the cause of God. By faith we believe that God is working with us, and this conviction develops a hardy steadfastness that will not submit to defeat.

4. Have. The acquiring of patient endurance is actually the process of developing a Christlike character. To achieve the choice result of active endurance, which itself is a product of a cheerful faith, we must not limit, or weaken, our enduring power by murmuring, complaining, or rebelling. See Isa. 26:3.

Perfect work. Or, “completed work,” “full effect” (RSV; see on Matt. 5:48). The meaning may best be expressed thus: “Let patient endurance continue until it has completed its task.” Compare John 17:4, where Jesus speaks of carrying forward His appointed task until He had “finished the work.”

Perfect and entire. Not a single desirable character trait is to be lacking; each is to be developed to perfection. These two words together suggest the fullest possible attainment of the Christlike life. Patient endurance will help us fulfill this task of reproducing the character of Christ, which is the “work” God has given us to do.

Wanting nothing. That is, lacking nothing.

5. If any of you. Probably, on the basis of his own Christian experience, James realizes that his fellow believers have not yet reached the desired goal of Christian maturity described in v. 4. He now explains how any man may find the power and understanding that will make him a victorious Christian amid the problems of life.

Lack. Gr. *leipō*, “to fall short.” Compare the use of the word in Luke 18:22.

Wisdom. Gr. *sophia*, “broad and full intelligence” (see on Luke 2:52; 1 Cor. 1:17). This includes more than even true knowledge, because knowledge alone does not guarantee right action or even right conclusions. Wisdom helps us to place a proper value on everything that competes for our attention, and ensures the proper use of knowledge as we seek for right action.

Let him ask. Wisdom is to be constantly sought in order to meet successfully each new test of faith and endurance, as noted in vs. 3, 4. Many problems of life are baffling to one who cannot meet them from the Christian viewpoint. To see life as God wants us to, we need daily to make certain that our eyes have been anointed with the ointment of heavenly wisdom. See on Matt. 7:11; Luke 18:1–18.

God, that giveth. The OT often refers to that wisdom which God alone can give a man (see Prov. 2:6). Through His Holy Word He speaks encouragement to us amid dreary and difficult trials, and it is because of the heavenly viewpoint which this wisdom brings that we are able to “count it all joy” when life’s problems press heavily on us.

Our God is as much a “giving” God as He is a “righteous” God or a “loving” God. In fact, Ps. 145:17–19 suggests that because the Lord is righteous, He is always ready to “fulfil the desire of them that fear him.” It is God’s nature to give (see on John 3:16), and we can ascribe to Him no greater honor than humbly to seek His gifts of wisdom and strength from day to day.

Liberally. Or, “graciously,” “sincerely.” It is God’s joy to give. When a man seeks wisdom, God answers the request unhesitatingly and without reluctance. There is neither stinted giving nor partiality.

Upbraideth not. Or, “does not reproach [or, “embarrass”].” God does not censure us for our many failures, nor does He continually remind us of the many favors already given to us. James is seeking to emphasize the contrast between the manner in which God bestows His bounties and the way men often humiliate or insult the recipients of their favors. This fact should encourage boldness in making our petitions known to God. We are to come to Him as children seeking the love and help of a solicitous Father (see Heb. 4:16; Matt. 7:11).

Shall be given him. The requisite here set forth for receiving wisdom from God is a sincere request for it. For man’s best interest God does not grant every request, but if we sincerely seek wisdom, it will be granted us. There are several ways in which God can supply wisdom to men. He may increase our understanding of His Word, so that we clearly discern His will for us. He may impress our hearts by His Holy Spirit as to what course of action would be best for us to take (see Isa. 30:21). He may speak to us through friends, or by shaping events and circumstances in such a way as to reveal His will. However, God has given us intelligent minds, and He is honored when we make use of them in solving the problems of life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It would not be wise of the Holy Spirit. It would be wise for Him to do for us what He has intended that we should do for ourselves, subject to His guidance. In order that we may learn to exercise maturity of judgment and understanding (see Phil. 1:9), He would have us form the habit of making right decisions on the basis of the broad principles of His revealed will as set forth in Scripture. Then He can the more readily impress His will upon our minds and protect us from the subtle devices of Satan. If, after we have consulted every available source of heavenly wisdom, we make our request, and patiently and trustfully keep our hearts open to Him, we will recognize His answer (see Matt. 7:7).

6. In faith. That is, faith that God will answer the request. Prayer without trusting faith is useless. When we ask for wisdom we are to have confident faith that we will receive it (see v. 5). Not only must we go to the true source of blessing, we must go with the right attitude. We must draw near to our Father, confident in His ability and willingness to help, resting in the certainty of His promises, and pleading our need, not

our worthiness. “Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good” (Ed 253).

Nothing wavering. Or, “nothing doubting.” The man who asks “in faith” will not hesitate, as if uncertain whether God will hear and answer his request. Genuine faith trusts God, and the believer will rest in the assurance that his needs will be quickly supplied as God alone sees best. However, if a man possesses inward doubt as to whether God will hear his petition, the answer to his prayer is seriously hampered. God seeks man’s cooperation in making the answer possible, and cooperation would be lacking in some degree if there was mental uncertainty. Genuine faith rises above the test of time or circumstance, making our allegiance to God steadfast and fixed in purpose. (COL 147). This state of mental division and uncertainty is described in v. 8 as double-mindedness.

He that wavereth. Or, “one who doubts.” James is not here speaking of intellectual doubts, but of spiritual instability. The doubter may be uncertain, not only as to whether or not God will answer his request, but also as to whether God will require more self-sacrifice on his part than he is willing to make. He has mental reservations, and thinks primarily of the cost to self. He does not with his whole soul desire the grace that his lips ask for.

Like a wave. When the mind is filled with uncertainty or doubt, the soul is as restless and agitated as the ocean. On the other hand, one who is convinced of God’s readiness to care for his needs and who unreservedly commits his plan of life to the will of God rises above his trials and afflictions. Compare Isa. 57:20.

Driven with the wind. The billow has no will of its own, but is wholly subject to the force of the wind. It rises and falls as the wind tosses it this way or that. The wind here represents the circumstances that may influence the Christian to doubt.

Tossed. Or, “blown here and there,” a graphic picture of the sea moved by the wind.

7. Not that man. The expression “that man” is emphatic and slightly contemptuous. It represents the man whose allegiance wavers, who is not sure of the things he himself needs or of God’s sufficiency for meeting them. Such a person may pray, but having no genuine faith he is not in a fit frame of mind to receive an answer (see on John 4:48). God must delay answers to our requests until we are ready to exercise unquestioning faith.

Think that he shall receive. James informs the one who wavers not to expect an answer. Indecision is sufficient in itself to defeat God’s gracious purpose for the one who wavers, for if God sees best to deny his request, the forthcoming disappointment would only strengthen his tendency to doubt.

Any thing of the Lord. This refers to specific favors, for all men receive those temporal blessings that God daily bestows. See on Matt. 5:45. The special blessings, which would be available to him if he asked in faith, are denied to him because of wavering trust. However, we must not infer that God delays His answers until we have earned the right to have our prayers answered. No man *deserves* favors from God. Our only plea is our need and our only hope is in His mercy, which leads Him to give to “all men liberally” (v. 5).

But God does not give gifts indiscriminately. He cannot comply with requests that would further pride and selfishness and hinder the development of character. We must realize our own utter helplessness and our need of unswerving trust in the promises of God. Strength of character is the result of modifying our desires and aspirations to conform to the wisdom and will of God, not of attempting to bend His will to meet ours.

8. Double minded. Gr. *dipsuchos*, literally, “two souled.” This word describes the waverer of v. 6. His mind is divided between the call of earthly pleasures and the call of unswerving loyalty to God. In *Pilgrim’s Progress*, John Bunyan characterized this kind of person as Mr. Facing-both-ways. The “double minded” man possesses two “souls,” or two loyalties. Compare the Hebrew expression, “of double heart” (see 1 Chron. 12:33). No doubt James cherished in his mind the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, “No man can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24). The “double minded” man halts between belief and unbelief, whereas the man with singleness of purpose does not hesitate at all.

This verse is actually part of the previous verse, and the two verses could be translated thus: “Let not that man [the waverer] think that a double-minded man, being unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord.”

Unstable. Gr. *akatastatos*, “inconstant,” “fickle,” “unsteady.” The noun form of *akatastatos* is commonly used in the sense of “disorder,” “confusion,” “disturbance,” “unsettledness,” and is coupled with “wars” as opposed to “peace” (see Luke 21:9; 1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 6:5; 12:20).

In all his ways. While the instability mentioned in v. 6 refers specifically to the matter of prayer, the apostle takes this opportunity to stress the fact that such a man is unsettled in other phases of his life. All his “ways,” or habits, actions, and thoughts will reflect his dual purpose in life, and his religious experience will never prove satisfactory, either to himself or to God. Commotion within the mind and confusion in all the affairs of life are the natural consequence of a wavering trust in God. We need wisdom to discern the way to live from day to day, for to alternate between trusting oneself and trusting God is sheer folly for any man. Singleness of purpose is essential to the spiritual success of the Christian.

9. Brother. Turning from the consideration of trials in general, James now discusses two particular trials, namely, those of poverty and wealth. In introducing this delicate subject James repeats (v. 2) the affectionate term “brother,” in order to emphasize the common bond of fellowship that binds both rich and poor in Christian fellowship. Neither wealth nor poverty should be permitted to mar this relationship among Christians.

Of low degree. Gr. *tapeinos*, “in humble circumstances,” and thus, of lowly rank or employment, in a condition of dependence or of poverty. This phrase is in contrast with “the rich” in v. 10. This condition of economic difficulty is a trial many are called upon to face. Perhaps many a church member of the time of James found himself despised and oppressed because of his lack of worldly goods, even though the acceptance of the Christian faith may have been responsible, at least in part, for his present economic difficulties. These circumstances were a trial in the sense that they tested his “faith” in God and his allegiance to God. “The brother of low degree” is ever tempted to be jealous and resentful toward his “rich” brother, and the “rich” brother to think himself superior to the “brother of low degree” and to take advantage of him.

Rejoice. Literally, “glory,” “boast.” James here gives a practical application of the general advice set forth in v. 2. With the “wisdom” (v. 5) that God gives us we can view life in proper perspective. We can see the things of time in the light of eternity. “Wisdom” places the proper value on earthly possessions and points out that man’s moral nature is more important than his possessions. Therefore, the progress a man makes spiritually is vastly more important than the progress he makes economically. The

“glorying” consists in the realization that despite the lack of earthly possessions, God compensates the humble Christian far beyond the joys that the fleeting possessions of earth give.

In that he is exalted. Or, “in his high estate.” The poorer brother’s exaltation must consist in the present spiritual blessings he receives and also in the promised joys to be realized in eternity, which more than make up for his economic hardships on earth. James attempts to contrast the exceeding riches of the mercies of God with the transitory nature of earthly possessions (see 1 John 2:16, 17). There is more security in a mature Christian experience than in all the wealth of the world. Those who have learned to look at the problems of life from God’s point of view, who have acquired the “wisdom” of which James speaks (v. 5), rise above whatever trials may come to them.

10. *The rich.* That is, “the rich [brother],” in contrast with the poor “brother” of v. 9. James now encourages the wealthy Christian to rejoice in the particular trials that confront him. The Bible never implies that in and of itself the possession of wealth is a sin, or that a rich man cannot be a genuine follower of God (see on Matt. 19:23). There are many instances of good Christians’ being rich in worldly possessions, though not so many, to be sure, as of those who are poor in this world’s goods. However, the Scriptures do clearly point out that riches constitute a unique danger to a successful Christian experience (see on Matt. 6:19–21; Luke 12:13–22).

In that he is made low. Or, “in his humiliation.” Some commentators consider this phrase a strict parallel to “in his high estate” (v. 9). Thus, the poor man is to rejoice in his Christian privileges, both present and future, and the rich man is to rejoice in his Christian humility and the world’s reproach rather than in his material possessions. In other words, the rich man is to rejoice in the fact that though he is now despised as a member of a persecuted sect, he will one day be exalted as a member of the eternal kingdom of God. James is emphasizing in vs. 9 and 10 the fact that regardless of material circumstances the Christian brother, whether rich or poor, will find his most rewarding cause for rejoicing in the privileges of the Christian faith.

Others think that James is speaking of the usual loss of wealth that accompanied a rich man’s espousal of Christianity in the 1st century. The converted rich man found many opportunities for using his wealth. The plight of others in the church, who lost their employment because of their faith, gave him an opportunity to share his possessions. The missionary advance of the apostles, which was phenomenal even when compared with that of modern times, required financial support, and the rich church members rallied to this challenge. There were doubtless many who came boldly forward and used their wealth to benefit their brethren (cf. AA 105). Consequently, the rich Christian saw his material possessions dwindling. But he could rejoice in the privilege of giving of his means for the advancement of the cause of Christ even though it meant the loss of temporal security and a more humble standard of living. This sense of stewardship on the part of early Christians with respect to the funds entrusted to them by God is a worthy example for those in the church today who are blessed with material abundance.

Flower of the grass. James uses an OT illustration (see Isa. 40:6) to emphasize the transitory nature of human life. Compare Isa. 51:12, which declares that the “son of man” “shall be made as grass.”

He shall pass away. The rich man is reminded that he must eventually die. At that time all the material possessions he has labored so hard to amass will pass to another. The

rich Christian sees this situation in its proper perspective and rejoices in the opportunity to disburse his riches before he dies (see on v. 10), even though in so doing he may experience economic hardship and personal reproach.

Riches are attractive, but, like the flower, they are also fragile and transitory, and the man who trusts only in his riches will one day perish along with them, without securing the greatest of all riches, eternal life. Thus the brother who possess riches needs to reflect on passages of Scripture that warn against placing trust in riches, which may easily vanish (see on Matt. 6:19; Luke 12:16–21). The Christian must fix his eye of faith upon the wealth of Christian privileges in this life and upon the riches of eternity (see on Matt. 19:29).

11. No sooner risen. James amplifies his parable of the flower (v. 10), which enjoys only a brief existence before it perishes (cf. Matt. 13:6, 21).

The grace of the fashion of it. Or, “the beauty of its appearance,” literally, “the beauty of its face.” Beauty disappears when the flower fades and dies. When the rich man is compared to a flower, his “grace,” or “beauty,” consists of the external surroundings which his wealth can purchase and which the poor are not able to afford. These might include a beautiful house, fancy furniture, expensive clothing, ornaments of precious stones or metals, or anything else that adds to the striking display of his appearance. These all fade in times of economic crisis or in the face of death, even as the beauty of the flower is of brief duration.

So also shall the rich man. James enforces Christ’s warning concerning earthly treasures, which “moth and rust doth corrupt” and which “thieves break through and steal” (see on Matt. 6:19–21). He reminds the “rich” Christian that earthly treasures may be lost before death, but that even should he retain them they will then be completely useless to him. The rich Christian’s only sure basis for rejoicing is in the security he finds in fellowship with Jesus Christ, for this is his only possession that does not fade away.

12. Blessed. Gr. *makarios* (see on Matt. 5:3). James frequently alludes to the teachings of Jesus (see p. 500), in this instance perhaps to the Sermon on the Mount. Here he seems to be expanding the confident tone of vs. 2, 9, 10. The man who faces the problems of life may, at times, regard himself as unfortunate and may be so regarded by others. However, the apostle desires to correct this viewpoint with a new perspective that envisions the results of faithful endurance as well as a clear view of how trials begin (see v. 14).

Endureth. Gr. *hupomenō*, “to endure steadfastly” (see on v. 3).

Temptation. Gr. *peirasmos*, “trial” (see on v. 2), implying anything that tries or tests faith or character. *Peirasmos* includes afflictions such as sickness, poverty, or calamity, as well as direct enticements to sin. This verse emphasizes the blessing that resides in steadfast endurance, which keeps a man unscathed by his trials.

Is tried. Literally, “becomes approved [*dokimos*, see on v. 3]. The tempted Christian not only has been tried but has been victorious during trial. The faithful Christian may be compared with the true gold that remains after the dross has been burned away (cf. Job 23:10).

Crown of life. That is, the crown which is life, or which consists of life. See on Rev. 2:10. The reward for faithful endurance amid present problems will be life eternal. This

gift of eternal life (see Rom. 6:23) is the crown of all gifts. While it is true that eternal life begins when a man allows the Holy Spirit to control him, this “crown of life” will actually be bestowed upon all the redeemed at the same time, at the second advent of Christ (see on John 3:16; 11:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 John 5:11, 12).

Lord. Textual evidence (cf. p. 10) favors the omission of this word, although it is clear from the context that the Lord is the One who promises. Our Lord personally promises the gift of eternal life to all who choose to accept God’s plan of redemption (see on John 3:16).

Them that love him. The requirement for eternal life is clearly revealed to man. Faith in God (see Rom. 3:28; 4:5, 13) and love for Him are two closely related ways of describing man’s sincere response to God’s offer of salvation. We cannot love God unless we are willing to trust Him fully and believe that His way of life is best for us.

13. Let no man say. The idea that the gods were responsible for man’s temptations and ensuing sins was especially prevalent among the Greeks of James’s day and apparently, in some degree, permeated the thinking of Christians also. It was this type of accusation that our first parents made against God following their sin (Gen. 3:12, 13). Adam blamed God for creating Eve as his wife and Eve, in turn, blamed Him for placing the serpent in the Garden of Eden. James’s caution is timely in every age, lest a man indirectly, and possibly unwittingly, charge his Maker with causing the enticements to sin that he faces daily.

Tempted. Gr. *peirazō*, “to try,” “to test,” here used in a bad sense of inducement to evil (see on vs. 2, 3). James makes clear that the sufferings, trials, and problems that every Christian faces should never be understood as permitted by God for the purpose of enticing men to sin. God will permit men to face trials, but never with the intent that any man should fail. God’s purpose is like that of the refiner, who casts his ore into the crucible with the hope that a purer metal will be the result—not with the intention of piling up dross. Satan, however, tempts with the intention of causing defeat and never of strengthening a man’s character (see on Matt. 4:1). “Suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy” (DA 471).

Cannot be tempted. Gr. *apeirastos*, “untemptable,” “untempted.” James shows that it is inconceivable that God would tempt men to sin. He cannot be tempted with the desire to tempt men to do evil. Though God grants to every man the power of free choice, He must not be charged with the evil deeds this freedom makes it possible for man to commit. James categorically absolves God from being the source of any man’s enticements to sin.

14. Every man is tempted. If God is not the source of temptation the inevitable natural question arises, “Who, or what, is the source?” The apostle emphasizes that the source of sin is not outside a man, but within him.

When he is drawn away. Or, “when he is being lured.” A man’s own “lust” draws him away, or entices him.

“Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

—ALEXANDER POPE, *Essay on Man*, Epistle II, line 217

Lust. Gr. *epithumia*, “desire,” “craving,” “longing” (see on Mark 4:19). The source of all temptation is man’s own “craving” for that which is evil. Each person has his own particular cravings, which arise from his own temperament and experiences. However, the fact that there is this evil lust within does not deny the existence and activity of an external tempter who seeks to take advantage of our weak tendencies (cf. John 14:30; see on Matt. 4:1–3). Satan and his evil hosts are the real agents of temptation (see Eph. 6:12; 1 Thess. 3:5). While they may tempt man to sin, their temptations would have no force were there not in man a desire to respond to the inducement. “No man can be forced to transgress. His own consent must be first gained; the soul must purpose the sinful act, before passion can dominate over reason, or iniquity triumph over conscience” (MYP 67). The nature of temptation, thus defined, removes any thought that God decrees man’s temptations or that Satan is actually responsible for man’s moral lapses. Man falls before temptation because of a desire to satisfy a particular craving that is contrary to the will of God.

Enticed. Gr. *deleazō*, “to entice by bait,” “to lure.” As a fish is enticed to its doom by the bait that is on the hook, so men are enticed to fall into sin by the bait of the deceitfulness and flattery of sin. The force and power of sin could not prevail were it not for sin’s cunning and guile. This fact is evident as one reviews the sad history of sinning men and women, beginning with Eve and Adam and extending to our own time (see on Gen. 3:1–6).

15. Then. That is, the next step.

Lust. Literally, “the lust,” here, evil lust (cf. v. 14) which finds sin appealing. “Lust,” or “desire,” of themselves need not be identical with “sin.” There are natural and legitimate desires that God placed in man at creation, such as the desire for food, for physical comfort, for parenthood, and for social acceptance. However, when man seeks to satisfy even these basic wants in ways contrary to God’s plan, he flirts with sin and allows himself to be enticed into sinful acts. See on Matt. 4:1–4.

Conceived. If nourished and cherished, unbridled desire eventually gives birth to sinful acts.

Bringeth forth. Gr. *tiktō*, “to give birth,” “to produce.”

Sin. Here is the proof that when evil desire (“lust”) is allowed to control the mind the end result can only be sin.

Finished. Or, “completed,” “come to maturity.” Before it is fully developed, sin may, because of its deceitful nature, easily be mistaken for something good. But when it is “finished,” or “full grown,” its destructive results become obvious.

Death. Sin destroys friendships, family circles, promising futures, and self-respect. No matter how subtle the camouflage, sin’s inevitable result is deterioration and death (see on Rom. 6:23), both spiritual and physical. The “death” here referred to is not simply the first death, which comes to all (see on Rom. 5:12; cf. 1 Cor. 15:22), but the second death, annihilation (see on Rev. 20:6). God is not the author of death, but of life. Hence He is not the author of sin, which brings forth death. Death, in whatever form it exists, is to be traced to sin, and sin naturally and inevitably produces it.

16. Do not err. Or, “be not led astray,” “do not be deceived.” Satan’s studied purpose is to blind the eyes of man in regard to God’s part in the history of sin. Most of this world’s philosophies and religions are built on false concepts by which Satan seeks to

distort the character of God. James would not have Christians believe that God is responsible for sin and the evils that sin produces. The following two verses suggest additional reasons on this point, lest some still be inclined to think of God as being, in some way, responsible for temptation.

My beloved brethren. See on v. 2.

17. Every. God is the only source of moral and physical benefits, whether given to Christians or to non-Christians.

Good. The contrast between this word, which describes God's dealings with men, and the "temptations" and "lusts" in vs. 14, 15, is obvious. God does not give to men gifts that will harm them (see on Matt. 7:11).

Gift. Gr. *dosis*, literally, "the act of giving." Every impulse to give is from God. It is God's nature to give (see v. 5), and it is in response to His Spirit and example that men share their possessions with one another.

Perfect. Every element of evil is excluded.

Gift. Gr. *dōrēma*, "present," "benefaction," "gift." The word occurs in the NT only here and in Rom. 5:16.

From above. That is, from God (see on John 3:3, 31). God works through men, and as far as their thinking is true they reveal a portion of the fuller truth that God is anxious for man to comprehend (cf. Ed 14).

Cometh. This is James's final argument against the fallacy that God, either directly or indirectly, is the source of temptation. The "perfect" goodness of God is man's assurance that He does not send the problems of life that arise from without or the temptations that come from within.

Father. Here in the sense of "Creator" (see Mal. 2:10; Heb. 12:9; Job 38:28).

Lights. In view of the context, it seems that the heavenly bodies are here indicated (see Ps. 8:3; Amos 5:8). So far as our earth is concerned, the most prominent of these is the sun, an indispensable source of blessing to our world. However, the splendor of heavenly bodies is only a faint illustration of the nature of God, who dwells "in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16). "Light" is frequently equated with "life" to describe in feeble terms of human understanding the surpassing splendor of God (see on Matt. 5:14; John 1:4, 9).

No variableness. Physical sources of light vary in intensity. Even the sun appears to change from sunrise to sunset and from season to season. But with God there is no change of mood or purpose. He is ever the immutable God, forever anxious to save lost men in a lost world, through every possible means. This is in happy contrast with the fickleness and alternating moods attributed to heathen gods.

Shadow of turning. Not only is there no variableness in God, there is not even the very least plausible excuse for men to charge Him with fickleness.

18. Will. Or, "studied purpose," "deliberate decision." What God "wills" for us is in contrast with the will of man, which often submits to human "lusts" (see on vs. 14, 15).

Begat. Gr. *tiktō* (see on v. 15). Instead of being the ultimate cause of our sins, God is the author of all the holiness that has ever developed in the hearts of men. As earthly sons resemble their fathers, so will born-again Christians grow up to reflect the character of their heavenly Father. A true Christian is as different a person from what he was before conversion as if he were physically formed again and born anew.

Word of truth. That is, the gospel of salvation (see on Eph. 1:13). Paul expresses it more plainly: “In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15; see also 1 Peter 1:23, 25). Conversion is the product of a full commitment to the principles of the Scriptures. The process of growing up, following the new birth, depends upon how much of the Word of God man practices in his life.

Firstfruits. The offering of the “firstfruits” was a symbol of the consecration of the whole harvest (see on Ex. 23:19). While the first fruits were, presumably, the best of their kind and the first to reach maturity they were also a pledge of the harvest to follow. Christ is “the firstfruits of them that slept,” a pledge of the resurrection to come (see 1 Cor. 15:20, 23). This expression is common in the NT (see also Rom. 8:23; 16:5; Rev. 14:4). While applying the term to the believers the apostle carefully qualifies it with the expression, “a kind of,” or “a sort of.” God’s will for men is that they should become like Him, and the duty of the church is to nurture the newly begotten Christian until he approaches “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13).

19. Wherefore. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “know ye” or “ye know.” With either reading this verse presents the conclusion that since God is the source of good and tempts no man, and since He has begotten each Christian and conferred on him the honor of being a kind of first fruits, the Christian ought to put into practice those principles of the gospel that he has learned.

Beloved brethren. See on v. 2.

Swift to hear. Though church members have already been born again by the Word (see v. 18), this does not excuse them from continuing to listen to the “word.” Rather, they should hear it with more attention and earnestness, even as the Lord said, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Luke 8:8; 14:35; etc.). Paul urges church members continually to increase “in the knowledge of God” (see on Col. 1:10; see 2 Peter 1:5). Though this is evidently the primary intent of the phrase, its meaning certainly includes also the general suggestion that men should be more ready to hear than to speak.

Slow to speak. In view of the repeated references to unbridled tongues found in this epistle (chs. 1:26; 3:1–18; 4:11), it is apparent that James often encountered the problem of hasty speech. This evil is mentioned elsewhere in the Scriptures (see Prov. 10:19; 17:27, 28; Eccl. 5:2). The emphasis is on being slow to begin speaking, not on speaking slowly.

Slow to wrath. Above all others, a Christian should be able to restrain his temper (see Job 5:2; Prov. 15:18; 16:32; 19:19; 22:24; 25:28; 27:3; Rom. 12:18). The three admonitions in this verse are in the light of the privilege set forth in James 1:18. For example, those who fulfill the will of God in their lives will be known for their eagerness to learn continually of truth, for their self-control in not prematurely urging the truth on others, and for their winsomeness in studying with those who disagree.

20. Wrath. Or, “anger.” Anger is especially inappropriate and harmful when brought into a religious controversy. An angry zeal for the cause of Christ does not recommend a person as being acquainted with the spirit of Christ. It is still true that “a kind, courteous Christian is the most powerful argument that can be produced in favor of Christianity” (GW 122).

Righteousness of God. The character of a loving Father is not reflected in a hasty-tempered church member. This declaration is an understatement of a truth known by all,

that wrath actively produces the opposite of righteousness. It does not induce us to embrace truth, but leads us to oppose. It does not heal, but hurts.

21. Wherefore. James now turns to a practical application of the general principle set forth in v. 20.

Lay apart. Or, “strip off,” as clothing. (See Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9; 1 Peter 2:1.)

All filthiness. As one strips off soiled clothing, so church members are to remove all “filthiness” of mind and soul.

Superfluity. Gr. *perisseia*, “abundance,” “residue.” Any evil is superfluous in the Christian life. With all diligence the Christian is to address himself to the task of eliminating whatever imperfections of character may still persist.

Naughtiness. Gr. *kakia*, “ill will,” “malice,” “wickedness” (see Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; Titus 3:3). The spirit of kindness and humility, both in receiving Christian instruction and in giving it to others, is stressed as the practical goal for each church member. The problem of unbridled tongues could be eliminated if church members would lay aside all “ill will” and suspicion.

Meekness. Gr. *praitēs*, “gentleness.” For the adjective *prais* see on Matt. 5:5. “Meekness” is the opposite of the “wrath” of v. 20, which makes men unteachable. Meekness is not a low estimate of oneself, but a modest, gentle, forbearing spirit, and a calm, forgiving disposition.

The engrafted word. Rather, “the implanted word.” The gospel is a gift of God and is likened elsewhere to the “seed” that is planted in the soil of the heart (see on Matt. 13:3–8). Salvation is not the result of personal study or of any other achievement of man. The “word” is “engrafted” within a man when he chooses to make the principles of Scripture the pattern for his life.

Able to save. The “word” may be compared with the “gospel,” which Paul declares is the “power of God” (see on Rom. 1:16). The Scriptures reveal this gospel of the power of God, which is available to all. When, by the power of God, a man lives according to the principles of the “word” he is inwardly guided by the “implanted word” (see on Rom. 10:17).

22. Doers. James refers to the Sermon on the Mount (see p. 500; Matt. 7:21–29). This qualifies the foregoing precept, to be “swift to hear” (James 1:19). It is not enough to remember what we hear or even to be able to teach it to others. We must systematically and persistently practice the “word of truth” (v. 18) in our personal program of life. Thus the apostle James is in perfect agreement with the teachings of Paul: “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (Rom. 2:13).

Not hearers only. This is certainly no condemnation of those who hear the “word of truth” read and explained. The wrong lies in “only” hearing and going no further in applying the “word” to the life (see on Matt. 7:21–27; Rom. 2:13).

Deceiving. Gr. *paralogizomai*, “to delude,” “to deceive by false reasoning.” The deception is one into which a man betrays himself by false reasoning. The hearer deceives himself when he reasons that mere listening to the word, or much discussion about truth, or membership in the church is sufficient for salvation. There must be a complete transformation of the life by the power of the Holy Spirit, which energizes believers into being “doers of the word.”

23. Not a doer. By itself, hearing produces only transient impressions and momentary convictions of duty. The sincere Christian learns in order that he may do the will of God, not merely that he may know.

Beholding. That is, considering attentively. Presumably, the person who looks into a mirror thereby gives evidence of a genuine desire to find out the facts. Similarly, “a hearer of the word” should seek, as a result of what he hears, to understand his spiritual condition. But this is not enough; he must do something about it.

Natural face. As a mirror reflects the likeness of the human face, soiled or blemished as it may be, so the law of God reveals the moral countenance, marred with defects and stained with sin. To hear and to understand the Word of God is like looking into a mirror. In viewing the perfect precepts of the law as magnified in the character of Jesus Christ, we become aware of our own shortcomings and defects. The mirror of truth never flatters. Paul was unaware of his own corrupt nature until he saw himself in the mirror of the law. Without the law he thought himself morally adequate, “alive,” but when he really understood its lofty principles he realized that he was spiritually dead (see on Rom. 7:9).

Glass. Or, “mirror.” Ancient mirrors were made of polished metal, not glass.

24. Goeth. The moment he turns from the mirror he forgets his true appearance. The test of sincerity and purpose is in the response a man makes to the challenge of the Word of God. Those who are “hearers only,” as a result of either procrastination or “false reasoning” (see on v. 22), choose not to surrender their lives to God. The man who hears only may be compared to the “way side” hearer of Matt. 13:4.

Straightway forgetteth. The apostle does not necessarily refer to any intention to forget but to what inevitably occurs when sincerity is lacking. Without a wholehearted decision to conform to the will of God as it is made known, even the best of intentions “straightway” vanish.

25. Looketh. Here begins the application of the “mirror” illustration (v. 24).

Perfect. See on Matt. 5:48; James 1:4.

Law. There may be an allusion to Christ’s teaching concerning the law, in the Sermon on the Mount (see on Matt. 5:17, 18). Also, a close parallel to Paul’s comments on “law” is obvious (see on Rom. 2:12; 7:12). In ch. 2 James equates “law” with the Decalogue (vs. 10, 11), and apparently refers to that code here also (see GC 466). For another inspired statement about the “law” being “perfect” see Ps. 19:7. The “perfect law” may be compared to the “word of truth” (James 1:18) and to the “engrafted word” (v. 21), the “doing” of which is the life of Christian obedience. The “law” is a description of the character of God—the true standard of righteousness—and outlines proper relationships between God and man, also relationships among men. The “law,” therefore, becomes a “mirror” by means of which a man can evaluate his motives and actions.

Liberty. The lawbreaker finds his freedom restricted. The motto, “Obedience to law is liberty,” is frequently seen on courtroom walls, and is a worthy motto for every Christian to remember. When, by the grace of God, a man accepts the Saviour’s yoke (Matt. 11:28–30), he sees the law as being clearly in accord with his highest interests and conducive to his highest happiness (see DA 329). He then looks upon the will of God as liberty, and upon sin as bondage. The apostle points to the moral law as the infallible rule of duty (see on ch. 2:12). When we acknowledge the defects of character it points out to us, and turn to Christ to remedy them, we find that the law has pointed the way to true

liberty, for the highest liberty is freedom from sin. However, the keeping of the law, whether moral or ceremonial, as a means of justification, makes of it a yoke of bondage (see Vol. VI, pp. 933–935; see on Gal. 2:16).

Continueth. Only to those who “seek” first the “kingdom of God” (see on Matt. 6:33) will the law be an avenue to “liberty.” It brings freedom only to those who, by the grace of God, make it a life habit to reflect the character of Christ (see on John 8:31–36).

Doer of the work. The law of God gives direction and motivation for the living of a genuine Christian life. Thus, the Christian will be a doer of Christlike deeds. Every man will finally be judged “according to his deeds” (Rom. 2:6), and the “law” alone provides man with a safe yardstick by which to measure his deeds (see on Rom. 2:6, 13).

Blessed. There is no end to the “blessings” that come to those who fully commit their ways to God (see on Ps. 1:1–3; Matt. 19:29).

In his deed. Literally, “in his doing.” He will be blessed in the very act of obedience to God’s law (see Ps. 19:11). The action itself is not the source of blessing, for that would constitute a man righteous by works; rather, the doing of the will of God removes barriers that would otherwise shut us off from His blessing.

26. If any man. James now concludes with a practical application of his comparison between the mere “hearer” of the law and the “blessed” “doer.”

Among you. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this phrase.

Seem. Gr. *dokeō*, “to think,” “to suppose.” The stress is on what a man thinks of himself, imagines himself to be, and not on what he “seems” to be to others. James here amplifies his warning of v. 22, that mere knowledge of the truth does not constitute genuine Christianity. To think that it does is self-deception.

Religious. Gr. *thrēskos*, religious, especially from the point of view of religion expressing itself in outward service. A man may think that mere outward attention to religious form is genuine Christianity. A man may think that such things as regular church attendance, substantial gifts, and leadership in church affairs constitute “religion” pleasing to God (v. 27). He fails to realize that all this outward attention to religion without inner heart devotion will prove to be in “vain” (see on Matt. 6:1–7, 16–18).

Bridleth. James compares a reckless, uncontrolled tongue to an unbridled horse. Without a “bridle” both tongue and horse endanger all who are near. The apostle pleads with his fellow church members to acquire the commendable habit of discretion in speech (see v. 19), which reflects the inner man (see on Matt. 12:34–37). Some feel that zeal in talking *about* “religion” is evidence of true religion, but James urges Christians to do right rather than merely to talk about right. Outward attention to “religion” is necessary, but if the tongue is unbridled or if any other sin is indulged, it will be evident that the inner man has not yet been transformed by the grace of God.

Deceiveth. No deception is more pitiful than self-deception. An external show of righteousness may win the commendation of men, who look only on the outward appearance (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7). The heart must be motivated by the “perfect law” (James 1:25) before a man can live meekly (v. 21) before God and man.

Vain. Gr. *mataios*, “useless,” “aimless,” “to no purpose” (see on 1 Cor. 15:17). Outward piety and good deeds come to nought if not motivated by a sincere desire to have every thought and deed conform to the “perfect law of liberty.”

27. Pure. See on Matt. 5:8.

Religion. Gr. *thrēskeia*, religion, especially as it expresses itself in religious worship. However, the apostle does not here define “true religion,” but points to the fact that the outward evidence naturally accompanies the true heart experience. This is not a description of the whole of religion, but of only two pertinent examples of the genuine religious spirit that leads to such acts. See on Micah 6:8.

Undeified. The Pharisees relied on the forms of ritual righteousness to keep themselves undeified, but they were full of moral defilement within (see on Mark 7:1–23). James here points to a far superior type of outward evidence of “pure religion.”

God and the Father. Or, “God even the Father,” that is, “God the Father.” True religion teaches us to do everything as if we were in the presence of God. Furthermore, God knows the motives as well as the actions (see on Matt. 6:1–18). Even the performance of the good works here mentioned is not evidence of “pure religion and undeified” unless the works are prompted by right motives. Many give to charity only to enhance their standing in the eyes of their fellow men, or perhaps with their eyes only upon their income tax deductions.

To visit. Gr. *episkeptomai*, “to visit,” with the idea of looking after. The related noun, *episkopos*, is translated “overseer,” or “bishop” (see on Acts 11:30). The “bishop,” or “elder,” should be an example to all the believers in practicing “pure religion” as here defined, thus revealing a heart filled with the love of God (see on Ps. 68:5).

Fatherless. Gr. *orphanoi*, “orphans” (cf. on John 14:18).

Widows. James’s readers doubtless knew well of the contemporary practices of the Pharisees, who took advantage of widows (see on Matt. 23:14). Orphans and widows need the comfort and encouragement of interested friends, not merely financial support.

Keep himself. Exerting the true power of the will, the Christian endeavors to serve God, at the same time praying and depending wholly on Him (see John 17:15; Jude 24). Success in the Christian life comes only to him who unites human effort with the omnipotent power of God.

Unspotted. Gr. *aspilon*, “without moral blemish” (see 1 Tim. 6:14).

World. As it now exists, the “world” is synonymous with evil principles and practices that are contrary to the will of God (see John 17:14–16). The truly converted church member will avoid any thought or deed that allows the filth of the “world” to stain him.

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2 6T 365

4 CH 381; MH 231; ML 15, 97; 4T 39; 7T 131

5 CT 360; DA 313, 363; Ed 191, 231; Ev 327; FE 299, 441; GW 417; MH 208; MYP 124; PK 31; PP 248, 384; TM 323, 325, 376, 478, 499; 2T 152; 5T 322, 427

5, 6 2T 643; 5T 725; 8T 106

5–7TM 193; 2T 130

5–8FE 437

6 ML 8

6, 7 1T 121

6–8FE 300

7 PP 384

8 2T 234

10 Ed 183; PK 548
 12 COL 155; 4T 522; 5T 71
 13 MB 116
 14 4T 623
 15 5T 177
 17 CT 554; Ed 50; GC 66; MH 233; MM 92, 213; PP 33, 373, 630; SC 21; 5T 315; 6T 175; 8T 23
 19 SL 16; 2T 83; 8T 167
 19, 20 2T 164, 426
 20 2T 52
 21 2T 91
 21–24FE 460
 22 AA 558; CSW 94; Ev 344, 515; MH 466; SL 60; TM 266, 454; 2T 694; 3T 53; 4T 188; 6T 153; 8T 51, 323
 23, 24 TM 344; 2T 452; 4T 398
 23–253T 116; 4T 59
 23–27TM 125
 25 GC 466, 467; SL 81; 1T 508, 523, 708; 4T 294; 5T 537
 25–27FE 461
 26 2T 54, 86, 185; 4T 331
 27 AA 579; CH 507, 535, 629; CS 46, 163, 299; FE 290; GW 305; MH 205; ML 239; MYP 142; PP 369; 1T 133, 190, 285; 2T 25, 239, 252, 506; 3T 239, 377, 516, 522, 528; 4T 495; 5T 215, 482; 6T 263, 281, 422; 8T 295; 9T 150; WM 35, 218

CHAPTER 2

1

1 *It is not agreeable to Christian profession to regard the rich, and to despise the poor brethren: 13 rather we are to be loving, and merciful: 14 and not to boast of faith where no deeds are, 17 which is but a dead faith, 19 the faith of devils, 21 not of Abraham, 25 and Rahab.*

1. My brethren. See on ch. 1:2. This common phrase is especially suitable because of the stress here placed on the principle of equality. If church members keep themselves “unspotted from the world” (ch. 1:27), they will carefully avoid discriminating between fellow believers because of wealth or poverty.

Have not. The context suggests that there had been favoritism in the church toward the “rich.” The apostle’s counsel was therefore directed to an immediate problem in local churches.

Faith of our Lord. The Greek may mean either “our Lord’s faith” or “faith in our Lord.” Here, the context implies that the latter is intended (see on Mark 11:22; Eph. 3:12).

Glory. Literally, “the glory” (cf. 1 Cor. 2:8). Our Lord Jesus possesses all the prerogatives of Deity (see Vol. V, p. 919). He is the “King of glory” (Ps. 24:7). In proper

¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Jas 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

perspective, even the richest of men is poor compared with the saint who shares the inheritance of the Lord of “glory” (see on Rom. 8:17).

Respect of persons. Gr. *prosōpolēpsiai*, “acts of partiality” (see on Rom. 2:11). In keeping themselves “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27) church members must be careful lest riches and worldly position are made qualifications for church office, in place of the needed spiritual graces.

2. For. James now gives a practical illustration revealing the dangers of partiality.

Assembly. Gr. *sunagōgē*, “meeting,” “assembly.” This is the only place in the NT where *sunagōgē* is applied to the Christian church.

With a gold ring. Gr. *chrusodaktulios*, “with a gold ring [or “rings”] on one’s finger[s].” Rings were common ornaments of the rich.

Goodly. Gr. *lampros*, “shining,” “magnificent,” “splendid” (cf. Luke 23:11; Rev. 18:14).

Vile raiment. That is, unwashed and poorly kept clothing, in contrast with the elegant clothing of the rich. James here seems to refer to those who casually visit the worship service of Christians rather than to the members themselves. These visitors were evidently being treated according to their riches, one neglected and another honored.

3. Have respect. Or, “look upon,” “regard,” with a concern to please.

Gay. Gr. *lampros* (see on v. 2).

In a good place. Gr. *kalōs*, which some think here means “comfortably,” and others, “please” (see RSV). Regardless of the reading, the picture is of deference and fawning respect.

Stand. The poor man is given no courteous consideration. The alternative is between standing inconspicuously along the wall or sitting on the floor between the footstools of the presumably more respected members or guests.

Under. That is, beside, another’s footstool. Having a footstool as well as a seat, this favored person treats the poor man as though he were not worth the least attention.

4. Partial. Gr. *diakrinō*, “to make distinctions,” “to differentiate” (cf. on ch. 1:6). Such partiality is really an indication of uncertainty over the plain teachings of the Lord regarding humility and service for others. By this double standard, according to which the rich and the poor are treated so differently, the church members are denying by deed their professed allegiance to the lowly Jesus (see on ch. 2:1). By showing partiality such persons show they are double-minded (ch. 1:8), halting between God and the world.

Thoughts. Gr. *dialogismois*, “reasonings.” The apostle calls the partial ones “judges” because they have expressed their judgment by their conduct. They judged the rich and the poor by un-Christlike standards. Their judgment in making a distinction between the rich and the poor was based on a false sense of values—the standard usually practiced by the “world” (see ch. 1:27). To a genuine Christian the soul of the poor man is worth as much as the soul of the rich man, Calvary being the great equalizer.

5. Harken. As it were, James here brings these self-constituted judges to trial (v. 4).

Brethren. See on chs. 1:2; 2:1.

Chosen. Gr. *eklegomai* (see on Rom. 8:33). The form of the Greek word here used emphasizes that God chooses men for Himself. That is, He chooses men who make it a life habit to contemplate, and to trust in, Jesus (see on John 6:40). God will take unto Himself only those who genuinely desire to be like Him. Paul also uses *eklegomai* to describe God's choice of the "base things of the world" in the formation of the Christian church (see on 1 Cor. 1:26–28).

Poor of this world. That is, poor in the estimation of this world. Because the "world" (see on ch. 1:27) judges a man's worth on the basis of his material possessions, the poor are often despised by those more fortunate. However, Christ has pronounced a blessing on them, teaching that His kingdom will be made up largely of the poor (see on Luke 6:20–25). Men are not called *because* they are poor but because they are willing to give wholehearted loyalty to Jesus Christ and to trust Him completely (see on Matt. 6:33). The possessions of the rich man often become a substitute for trust in God. Consequently, complete confidence in Christ may not seem so needful to the rich man as it does to the poor man.

Rich in faith. That is, rich in the exercise of faith. The same man may be poor in the eyes of the world but rich in the sight of God.

Heirs of the kingdom. James is here speaking of the future kingdom of glory, the plan for which was laid prior to the entrance of sin into our world (see Dan. 7:27; see on Matt. 25:34). Christians are not only heirs but "joint-heirs" with Jesus, and obtain all the privileges that such an honor imparts (see on Rom. 8:17). This "kingdom" may be compared with the "crown of life" (James 1:12), which also is given "to them that love him."

6. Despised. Gr. *atimazō*, "to dishonor." The first sentence of this verse seems to be more closely connected in thought with v. 5. God's dealings with men are contrasted with those of the church members James here refers to. God treats all men alike, preferring no man on the basis of worldly status. If God had judged and selected men as these church members were doing, how very few of them would then have been in the church and become "heirs of the kingdom" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26). This practice of discrimination may have appeared to nonchurch members as standard Christian procedure, and it is this false representation of Jesus Christ that James is anxious to avoid (see on v. 1).

Rich. That is, the rich as a class, most particularly the rich Jews (see v. 7). The early persecution of the Christian church was instigated by the politically powerful Jews, notably the Sadducees (see Vol. V, p. 52; see on Acts 8:1), the traditional oppressors of the poor.

Oppress. Gr. *katadunasteuō*, "to exercise harsh control." The same Greek word is used to describe the afflictions by Satan (see Acts 10:38). Church members are to treat others as they would wish to be treated (see on Matt. 7:12). James reminds the "partial" (v. 4) church members of the injustices inflicted on them by the "rich," and thereby urges these members to avoid any similar oppression of the "poor" in their congregation.

Judgment seats. Gr. *kritēria*, "courts of justice" (see on 1 Cor. 6:2, 4). These courts need not be confined to the Jewish tribunals, although Jewish men of wealth frequently led out in the persecution (see Acts 16:19; 17:6; 18:12).

7. They. Emphasis is placed upon this word in the Greek. It refers back to the “rich men” in v. 6. Is it not “they,” these very rich ones who blaspheme your Lord, to whom you are disposed to give preference?

Blaspheme. Obviously these rich blasphemers were either unbelieving Jews (see Acts 13:45) or heathen, for no Christian would “blaspheme” the name of Jesus Christ. It was obedience to Christ that made normal living so difficult in the first few centuries of the Christian Era.

Worthy. Gr. *kalos*, “beautiful,” “excellent,” “honorable.”

Name. Undoubtedly, the name of Christ, by which the disciples were known (see on Acts 11:26) and for which they suffered (see Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 4:14–16). The name of Christ is “worthy,” or “honorable,” for it reflects honor and imparts worth to those who bear it.

Which ye are called. A similar expression is found in Acts 15:17 in the speech of James (see Amos 9:12). James is saying that in view of these arrogant practices of “rich men” (v. 6) the rich visitor does not deserve the fawning partiality granted him when he visits the church. Church members are to show respect for the rich, but no more than the respect and consideration they show the poor.

8. If. Literally, “if indeed.”

Fulfil. Gr. *teleō*, “to bring to completion,” “to perform perfectly.” *Teleō* is stronger than *tēreō* (v. 10). Compare *plēroō* “fulfill,” in Matt. 5:18, which is used in the sense of “fill full.”

Royal. Gr. *basilikos*, “belonging to a king,” hence, “chief,” “supreme.” “Royal law” may thus mean either a law given by a king, here the King of heaven, or a supreme law. The law of love is the supreme principle upon which all other sacred law hangs. This “royal law,” the Decalogue, which is also called the “perfect law” (see on James 1:25; cf. GC 466), is based on this principle.

Scripture. Gr. *graphē*, literally, “writing.” The rule of Christian practice is settled by the Scriptures. James, in common with other NT writers, employed the term *graphē* to denote the OT (see on 2 Tim. 3:16). The precept to “love thy neighbour as thyself” first appears in Lev. 19:18, and is endorsed and strengthened by the teachings of Christ (see on Matt 5:43; 19:16–19; 22:37–40; Luke 10:27–29; John 13:34).

Ye do well. The divine approbation rests on the church member who lives out this law of love perfectly in his daily life. But this law applies to the poor as well as to the rich, for both are “neighbours” and without partiality should be considered as equals. Loving only the “rich” as “thyself” is not fulfilling the law.

9. Respect. See on v. 3.

Sin. By showing deference to the “rich,” Christians could conceivably think that they were fulfilling the law of love. But this very law shows that they are sinning by their practice of exhibiting partiality in their dealings with people.

Convinced. Gr. *elegchō*, “to convict [with proof of guilt],” “to expose” (see on John 16:8).

Law. The law is the perfect standard of righteousness by which the deeds of men are evaluated (see on Rom. 3:20; James 1:25).

Transgressors. Gr. *parabatai*, literally, “those who deviate from the [true] way.”

10. Keep. Gr. *tēreō*, “to guard,” “to attend to carefully.” James here sets forth the example of a church member who supposedly keeps the whole law, save for one point. He does not say that such an example actually exists.

Offend. Gr. *ptaiō*, “to stumble,” “to fail in one’s duty.”

Point. The law is not a mere collection of isolated precepts; it is a perfect harmonious transcript of the divine will. All the precepts are manifestations of love at work, either to God or to our fellow men. To select that part of the law that is convenient and to ignore the claims of the rest, even if in only one detail, reveals a desire to do our own will and not God’s. The unity of love is broken and the basis sin of selfish willfulness appears.

Guilty of all. Lawbreaking, whether civil or religious, need not be a violation of all the laws—one violation is enough. The basic question if loyalty to authority is the primary problem, and one violation is sufficient to show the disposition of the heart. “A glass that is struck at only one point is nevertheless shattered. The law is not a set of ten pins, one of which may be knocked down while the others are left standing. The law is a unit, its unity is love; to violate it at one point is to violate love as such, the whole of it” (R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James*, Wartburg Press, Columbus, Ohio, 1946, p. 572).

As a chain is snapped by the failure of its weakest link, as one note may spoil the whole harmony, as one wounded part injures the entire body, or as leprosy in any part causes the whole man to be called leprous, so the breaking of one commandment spoils the completeness and harmony of the whole law for the transgressor.

11. He. There is only one Lawgiver (cf. ch. 4:12), the law being the expression of His will (see on Ex. 20:1). Thus His authority is equally revealed in each of the ten precepts spoken by Him on Sinai, and whoever deliberately violates one commandment rebels against the expressed will of God.

Said. Probably a reference to the fact that the Lord spoke the Ten Commandments (see Ex. 20:1; Deut. 5:26).

Do not commit adultery. The apostle cites two of the Ten Commandments as examples, although any other two would have been equally illustrative. The Lord Himself cited these same two commandments in the Sermon on the Mount, where He shows that they may be violated in the heart as well as by an overt act (see Matt. 5:21–28). With this illustration James shows that the keeping of one part of the law does not cancel the violation of another part. No earthly judge will pardon the violation of one law simply because the culprit has kept many other laws. Thus, the church members who excused their deference to the rich as a carrying out of the law of love are reminded that this practice does not cancel their injustices to the poor. The unity of genuine Christian love is shattered.

Transgressor. See on v. 9.

Law. The spirit of the whole law is thus violated and reveals a lack of full commitment to God’s will.

12. Speak. In summation, the apostle exhorts his fellow church members to strive for a daily practice of speaking and doing that is conformable to God’s law. James’s assertion that men are responsible for their words and deeds is characteristic of him, and is another allusion to the teachings of Christ (see Matt. 12:36, 37).

Judged. The life record of every man will one day be reviewed by God (see on Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Law of liberty. See on James 1:25. In addition to the Decalogue, the other “words” which Jesus spoke will also finally judge men (see on John 12:48). “Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul. Subjection to God is restoration to one’s self,—to the true glory and dignity of man. The divine law, to which we are brought into subjection, is ‘the law of liberty’” (DA 466). See Mishnah *Aboth* 6.2.

13. Judgment. James concludes his specific counsel concerning favoritism to the rich. The scriptural warning of judgment without mercy to those who fail to practice mercy is an equitable principle, and is set forth in both the OT (see on 2 Sam. 22:26, 27; Prov. 21:13) and the NT (see on Matt. 5:7; 6:15; 7:1, 18:21–35; 25:41–46).

Mercy. Gr. *eleos*, “compassion,” “pity,” “mercy.” Compare on Matt. 5:7 (see Additional Note on Ps. 36; see on Micah 6:8).

Rejoiceth. Gr. *katakauchaomai*, “to exult over,” “to boast against.” The merciful man faces the judgment with glad confidence, unafraid. He knows that God will be merciful to those who show mercy. In showing mercy God does not dispense with justice as Satan had charged. The cross proved the falsity of this charge (see DA 761, 762), and revealed the transcendent splendor of the quality of mercy divine (see on Ps. 85:10).

14. What doth it profit? Literally, “What the profit?” that is, as to eternal salvation. The apostle here turns to another aspect of the practical duties of “pure religion” (see on ch. 1:27). Presumably some church members (ch. 2:1–13) were excusing their deference to the rich on the basis of a perverted use of the law of love. Other church members (vs. 14–26) seemed to excuse themselves from their Christian duty of good works by appealing to their possession of “faith.”

Brethren. See vs. 1, 5; see on ch. 1:2.

Faith. Gr. *pistis*, “conviction,” “trust” (see on Heb. 11:1). Apparently, the church member in question asserts that faith can exist without works, whereas James contends that “faith” which does not result in good “works” is worthless. Genuine faith is obvious to others from the “works” it produces; its existence does not rest on mere personal testimony. The man who claims “faith” without “works” may be compared with the man who thinks himself to be religious (cf. James 1:26) but fails to manifest the deeds of “pure religion.”

Works. In chs. 1 and 2 the apostle has stressed the importance of Christian deeds. He now directly confronts those who neglect the duties of “pure religion” (cf. ch. 1:27) under the pretense of faith. Here, in common with the writings of Paul (see on Rom. 2:6–10), the epistle of James stresses the necessity of both faith and works in a genuine Christian experience. Works become the conduct of a converted life—deeds that spring forth spontaneously because of the motivation of faith.

Can faith. Literally, “can *the* faith [that is, faith without works].” The Greek makes clear that James expects a negative answer: “No, of course not.” Faith that does not find expression in habitual good deeds will never save any man, but neither will good deeds without genuine faith (see on Rom. 3:28).

If. James cites a common situation that frequently tests the genuineness of a church member’s faith.

Naked. Gr. *gumnos* (see on John 21:7). This word frequently describes those who are thinly clad and who face the elements with insufficient protection.

Destitute. Or, “lacking.” This person lacks not merely luxuries but the essentials of life.

16. One of you. Without personal references the apostle tactfully highlights the inhumanity of such conduct, perhaps with actual occurrences in mind.

Depart in peace. A common form of farewell among the Jews, though not restricted to them (see Acts 16:36). It reveals, here, an offhand shirking of responsibility: “Depart, and may God or some friend provide for your needs.”

Be ye warmed and filled. Something more than faith alone is needed to clothe the shivering body and remove the pangs of hunger. To be given scriptural texts and godly precepts without the material help needed would be cruel mockery. The Greek implies that these church members suggested that someone else was to warm them.

Needful. That which is absolutely necessary for life was denied by fellow church members, who boasted of their “faith,” even though it is implied that they were able to satisfy the needs.

What doth it profit? This empty faith does not profit those who need material help. Nor does it profit the church member who loses another opportunity to help Christ in the person of one of the “least” of His “brethren.” (See 1 John 3:17; see on Matt. 25:41–45).

17. Faith. Literally, “the faith,” that is, the “faith” without “works” of v. 14. Such a faith is merely an intellectual conviction that certain doctrines are true. The mind is convinced because of the overwhelming evidence from God’s Word, but the heart remains cold and unconverted.

Not works. As good wishes for the poor and needy can be shown to be genuine by works only, so faith cannot be proved genuine without works. Faith without the fruit of Christian works is faith in name only, without the living principle controlling the actions of the heart (cf. Rom. 2:13; 1 Cor. 13).

Dead. Like a corpse, faith without works may retain an outward resemblance to its living counterpart, but it is lifeless. As a dead vine bears no fruit, dead faith produces no consistent pattern of Christian deeds. Both are worthless.

Being alone. James is not comparing faith with works, but a genuine faith with a dead faith. The dead faith believes in God, but it will prove useless in that this mental conviction has not made Christian service a life habit. In addition to being worthless in this life, this dead faith cannot save its owner (see on v. 14).

18. Yea. Gr. *alla*, “but.” James here presents two hypothetical persons engaged in an argument, one speaker being “thou” and the other “I.” The former, apparently a Christian, claims to be saved by faith alone, and the latter, apparently a Jew, perhaps a Christian Jew, by his own works. James does not exactly share either point of view, but addresses his own challenge (in the latter part of the verse) to the man who argues for faith alone.

Shew. Gr. *deiknumi*, “to demonstrate,” “to give proof.” James, as it were, now enters the argument and exposes the fallacy of thinking that faith can exist apart from works.

Without. To show faith apart from works is an impossible task because faith, being a principle, an attitude of the mind, will always reveal its nature in outward behavior. But one who exhibits an absence of good works thereby also demonstrates a lack of genuine faith.

I will shew. Genuine faith will find expression in unselfish deeds, for it begets a desire to serve men. Thus it was Christ and thus it will be with all who follow His example.

19. Believe. James concedes that a “dead” faith may accompany a correct theology.

One God. This doctrine underlies all Christian thinking. Belief in one God, omnipotent, personal, distinguished the Jews and early Christians from the followers of other religions.

Thou doest well. Compare James’s irony with that of Christ in Mark 7:9. Theological correctness is essential, but it is only a means to the more important end of a symmetrical Christian life.

Devils. Gr. *daimonia*, “demons” (see on Mark 1:23). Concerning the origin of demons see 2 Peter 2:4. No one doubts that demons believe in the existence of God (see on Mark 3:11; 5:7). Their belief may be intellectually correct, but they remain demons nevertheless. No one would say now that theological correctness is faith enough. The faith that saves transforms the life.

Tremble. Gr. *phrisso*, “to bristle,” “to be horrified,” “to shudder.” The demons are so convinced of the existence of God that they shudder at the thought of their punishment in judgment (see on Matt. 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4).

20. Wilt. Gr. *thelō*, “to be determined,” “to desire.” The clause may be translated “do you desire to know?” James appeals to the intellect, for often the real obstacle to the reception of truth is willful ignorance.

Know. Gr. *ginōskō*, “to understand appreciatively.”

Vain. Gr. *kenos*, “empty of content,” “deficient” (see on 1 Cor. 15:14). A dead faith is an empty faith because it will save no one. James, in solemn warning, pleads with those church members who have a faith no more effective than that possessed by demons.

Without. Gr. *chōris*, “apart from” (cf. v. 18). The idea is not that works cause faith to live, but that a living faith produces living works.

Dead. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading “unproductive,” “barren,” “ineffective.” Regardless of which reading is accepted, the meaning is clear—a mere profession of faith is profitless (see on vs. 14, 16) both to its owner and to those in need.

21. Was. The Greek implies that James’s readers would readily agree with his statement.

Abraham our father. Both Jewish and Gentile Christians are spiritual descendants of Abraham (see on Rom. 4:10–12; Gal. 3:7–9, 29). To his appeal to logic (v. 19) James now adds an appeal to Scripture. Sincere church members could wish for nothing better than a faith like Abraham’s.

Justified. Gr. *dikaioō*, “to declare righteous” (see on Rom. 2:13; 3:28).

By works. Literally, “out of works.” James does not say that “works” alone will declare a sinner righteous. He is emphasizing that Abraham’s works proved the genuineness of that faith which God had declared righteous. Like Paul (see on Rom. 4:1–25; Heb. 11:4–39), James places faith at the core of justification and illustrates its vitality by citing the worthy deeds of justified men.

When. The occasion referred to is not the first instance in Abraham's experience when God declared him righteous. That first experience occurred some years before the birth of Isaac, and is described in Rom. 4. Years later God tested Abraham's faith by calling on him to offer up Isaac. As Abraham engaged in the "works" preparatory to the offering, he gave full proof of the genuineness of his faith.

Offered. See Gen. 22:5–13; Heb. 11:17.

Altar. Only Abraham's unswerving confidence in the trustworthiness of God can account for this supreme act of obedience. His faith, as evidenced in his "works," received again, as in the first instance of justification (see Gen. 15:6), the declaration of God's approval (see Gen. 22:15–18).

22. Seest thou? Or, "thou seest." The Greek may be read as a simple statement, and probably should be here. The illustration of the experience of Abraham is clear for all to comprehend.

Faith. Literally, "the faith," that is, the faith that prompted Abraham to offer Isaac.

Wrought with. Gr. *sunergeō*, "to work together," "to cooperate with." This verse marks the logical climax of the argument concerning the relationship of faith to works. James is not primarily contending for the recognition of works but for the complete union of genuine faith and Christians deeds. No man can willingly face problems and hazards unless he possesses the inner girding of a steadfast faith. True faith helps men to do great works.

By works. See on v. 21. The "works" of Abraham here referred to consisted of obedience to God's commands, not of the performance of a routine of works prescribed by human authority.

Perfect. Gr. *teleioō*, "to bring [something], to its goal," "to complete" (see on Matt. 5:48; Luke 13:32). Faith and works cannot be separated in a genuine Christian life. when the test came to Abraham his works provided proof that his faith was genuine.

Fulfilled. That is, fully realized (cf. Gen. 15:6; see on Matt. 5:17). Before the birth of Isaac God declared that Abraham would have many descendants (see on Gen. 15:1–5). This prophecy depended upon the birth of a son and the perpetuation of the family line. Abraham believed God's promise would come true even though he was still childless in his old age (see on Gen. 15:6). Now, many years later, God called for an act that would apparently thwart the original promise to make Abraham a great nation. But Abraham still trusted the wisdom of God and obeyed.

Believed. See on Gen. 15:6.

Imputed. Gr. *logizomai*, "to reckon," "to count" (see on Rom. 4:3). Abraham was declared righteous because he trusted God's word and joyfully accepted the promise of a Redeemer (see on Gal. 3:6). The crowning evidence that he trusted God was revealed in his willingness to slay Isaac at God's command—an act that apparently would have nullified God's own promises. This supreme ordeal vindicated God's declaration of the patriarch's worthiness.

Friend of God. See 2 Chron. 20:7. This title was commonly applied to Abraham by the Jews, and is current among Arabs today. The transparent genuineness of Abraham's trust in God is an example all should aspire to emulate.

24. Ye see. Using Abraham as an example of the inseparability of faith and works, James now draws his conclusion to the argument of vs. 14–23.

By works. No man who chooses to be increasingly like Christ will live a life barren of good works.

Is justified. James does not deny that a man is declared righteous by faith, for the quotation he has just given from Gen. 15:6 is evidence of this belief. However, he does deny that a mere profession of faith alone can justify a man. Good works accompany faith and prove the validity of the faith by which a man is justified. If there are no “works,” it is evident that genuine faith does not exist (see on James 2:17, 20).

Only. Or, “alone.” The apostle continues to stress the inseparability of faith and works (see on v. 22). He, of course, is not discussing the problem of “works of the law” in the sense of the ritual requirements of Judaism (see on Rom. 3:28).

25. Likewise. James cites another well-known OT incident to illustrate the principle of faith demonstrated by good works. The lesson is parallel with that drawn from Abraham’s experience, though the supreme act of faith in each case differed much from the other.

Rahab. See on Joshua 2:1; Heb. 11:31. Abraham was noted for piety; Rahab for immorality. Abraham believed for many years before the offering up of Isaac; Rahab possessed a young faith. But both proved their faith by their utter disregard for personal security and by casting their lot with God’s program. James shows that the most venerated of the faithful and the most despised of the Gentiles alike find justification through a faith that works.

Justified. See on v. 21. Rahab cast her lot with the people of God and demonstrated her faith in Israel’s God by jeopardizing her life to save the spies. James implies that if she had professed faith in the God of Israel and yet had not hidden the spies, her faith would have been barren and dead.

26. Spirit. Or, “breath.” The apostle closes his argument with an irrefutable fact that he invites his opponents to consider—there is not life in the body when the breath is absent (see on Gen. 2:7).

Faith. That is, so-called faith, because apart from works genuine faith does not exist. Intellectual assent, creedal conviction, may exist without good works, but not living faith, which cooperates with God’s plan for man’s restoration.

Dead. There was nothing dead about either Abraham’s or Rahab’s faith or that of any of the other heroes of faith honored in Heb. 11. By faith they obeyed. Church members in name only, without personal witness that reflects the ministry of Christ on their behalf, are, as it were, mere corpses.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–26TM 125

2–54T 550

5 CH 424; Ev 565

5, 6 2T 160

6, 7 AA 157

7 MB 107; MH 491

8 GC 466

10 AH 327; DA 763; Ev 372; FE 118; GC 582; MB 51; 1T 532; 3T 524; 4T 55, 253

12 DA 466; GC 482

13 COL 178; 6T 282

14 GC 472; 2T 657, 663; 4T 58, 250

14–162T 685
 14–172T 160
 15–17MM 251; WM 32
 16 7T 291
 17 CS 29; PP 73, 154; SC 61; 1T 192, 620, 705; 2T 159, 167, 236, 645, 663; 3T 249, 393;
 4T 58, 228; WM 316
 17–192T 657
 18 CS 41; FE 337; PP 279; 1T 123, 132; 4T 308, 596; 5T 537
 19 DA 777; EW 227; SC 63; 2T 161
 20 CS 29; TM 443; 4T 250, 527; 6T 112
 20–22GC 472
 21–23PP 153
 22 CS 263; PP 73; SR 289; 2T 689; 3T 393
 23 PP 128, 140; 4T 615; 6T 342
 24 GC 472; 3T 526

CHAPTER 3

1 *We are not rashly or arrogantly to reprove others: 5 but rather to bridle the tongue, a little member, but a powerful instrument of much good, and great harm. 13 They who be truly wise be mild, and peaceable, without envying, and strife.*

1. My brethren. See ch. 2:1, 5, 14; see on ch. 1:2. The apostle continues the main themes introduced in ch. 1. He urges his fellow church members to make a life habit of hearing and studying the “engrafted word” (see on ch. 1:19, 21, 25). This program will result in “meekness” (ch. 1:21), impartiality to rich and poor (ch. 2:1–13), and genuine faith (ch. 2:15–26). Furthermore, a proper understanding of the goal of Christlikeness will give urgency to the necessity for control over hasty speech (see on chs. 1:19, 26; 2:12). Chapter 3 expounds the responsibility of each church member with respect to hasty, ill-advised speech (see on vs. 2–8). This chapter further amplifies the inseparability of faith and works, in that genuine faith is manifested in a Christlike character (see on vs. 9–18).

Be not. Or, “stop becoming.”

Masters. Gr. *didaskoloi*, “teachers.” In the economy of the Christian church the Holy Spirit qualifies certain persons to be teachers (see on Eph. 4:11).

We. The apostle includes himself, both as a teacher and as one prone to the dangers and mistakes of this high office. In so doing he reveals the spirit of genuine humility that he also urges upon his brethren.

Greater condemnation. That is, a more severe judgment. There are degrees of responsibility in the work of the Lord, and those who presume to teach will be held accountable both for their personal conduct and for their influence upon others (see on Matt. 23:14). The teacher is expected to know God’s will more thoroughly than others, and his conduct should be correspondingly exemplary.

2. Offend. Gr. *ptaiō*, “to stumble,” “to fail in one’s duty.” The statement may be paraphrased, “In many ways, all men make mistakes every day” (see on 1 John 1:8). The sober fact is that “teachers” (James 3:1) also “stumble,” even though they should know more than others. Consequently, James implies, only the best of men should seek to be teachers.

In word. That is, in his speech, or use of the tongue (cf. ch. 1:26). Controlling the tongue is man's most difficult assignment (see Matt. 5:37).

Perfect. Gr. *teleios* (see on Matt. 5:48). He who speaks only what is pure and honest and kind has attained to the goal of Christlikeness. Such a man makes the best kind of teacher.

Able also. With the most difficult member of the body under control it should be relatively easy to control the other members.

Bridle. See on ch. 1:26. A man's words reveal the general tenor of his thoughts. If he controls his thoughts to the extent that his words are consistently Christlike, the "whole body" is safely under control (see on Matt. 12:34–37).

3. Behold. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "now if."

Bits. Or, "bridles."

Horses' mouths. A horse is perhaps the most spirited of domestic animals, but it takes only a small mechanism in the mouth to control all its actions.

Obey. As an unruly horse endangers the life of its rider, so an unruly tongue jeopardizes the whole Christian experience. Obedience and control are desirable for men as well as for domesticated animals.

Whole body. See on v. 2.

4. Ships. Ships were familiar objects to many of James's readers, for the Roman Empire bordered the Mediterranean Sea.

Great. Ancient ships seemed large to people of that time, though today's ocean liners far exceed them in size. Paul's journey to Malta was on large ship for it carried 276 persons, including both crew and passengers (see Acts 27:37). However, any ship is large in comparison with the rudder that controls it.

Fierce. Gr. *sklēros*, "harsh," "strong," "stiff." The horse (cf. v. 3) possesses its own headstrong will and a ship is the victim of strong winds, but both forces can be controlled by a relatively small device.

Helm. Or, "rudder." The emphasis is on the smallness of the indispensable rudder.

Governor. Or, "steersman," or "pilot."

Listeth. Gr. *boulomai*, "to will deliberately," "to purpose." Although the rudder guides the ship, it is the helmsman who controls the rudder. Similarly, although the tongue may, in a sense, give direction to the whole body, it is directed, in turn, by the will (cf. ch. 1:15).

5. Even so. James compares the relative smallness of the bit and rudder to the smallness of the tongue and stresses the potentialities of the tongue for good or for evil.

Boasteth great things. The tongue is able to inspire great deeds, whether they be good or evil.

Matter. Gr. *hulē*, "forest." The forest's being large is no guarantee against the destructiveness of a little flame. So also the most important affairs of an individual, or of the whole church, may be endangered as a result of the forces set in motion by only one critical tongue.

6. Fire. All that can be said about the destructive power of a small flame can also be applied to the potential power of the tongue. Church members are not only to avoid destructive speech but also to avoid fanning destructive sparks discharged from the speech of others.

World. Gr. *kosmos* (see on John 1:9).

So. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word. According to the preferred reading the first part of the verse may be translated, “The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity is the tongue among our members.”

The tongue. That is, the evil-speaking tongue.

Defileth. Compare the words of Christ, “That which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man” (Matt. 15:11; see on p. 500).

Whole body. Compare vs. 2, 3.

Course. Literally, “wheel,” but here implying the cycle made by a wheel when it turns on its axis.

Nature. The course of an individual’s life, or that the church, is often set aflame by anger and ill-chosen words.

Of hell. Literally, “by Gehenna” (see on Matt. 5:22). Gehenna here symbolizes all that is evil and worthy of destruction. The “tongue” that destroys harmony, peace, and friendship is motivated by a will that is under the control of Satan (see on Matt. 13:25–28).

7. Kind. Or, “order,” here of the animal world, in contrast with the human “kind,” or “order.”

Tamed. Rather, “subdued” (see Mark 5:4).

Mankind. The animal “nature,” or “order,” has been subdued by the human “nature,” or “order,” as the Creator intended (Gen. 1:28).

8. But. James draws a sharp contrast between the four classes of wild animals (v. 7) which have been subdued by man, and man’s own tongue, which man himself cannot subdue.

No man. This does not mean that the tongue can never be brought under control, but that sinful human nature lacks the power to subdue it. Man can tame animals, but lacks the power to subdue his own tongue. Divine grace alone can accomplish that. James clearly acknowledges the possibility of taming it (see v. 2), and declares that followers of Christ ought to gain the victory over undisciplined speech (see on v. 10).

Unruly. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “unsteady,” “restless” (see on ch. 1:8).

Evil. The tongue is evil only when it is controlled by a mind motivated by the forces of evil. When a man does not let the Holy Spirit control his thoughts, and thus his speech, the tongue functions as an instrument of evil.

Deadly poison. That is, it acts upon the happiness of man and the peace of society, as poison upon the human body. The loss of confidence, peace, and friendship inevitably results from a hasty, ill-advised tongue (cf. Ps. 140:3; Rom. 3:13).

9. Therewith. Literally, “in connection with it.”

Bless. Gr. *eulogeō*. “to speak well of,” “to praise,” “to bless.”

God. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “Lord.” Compare ch. 1:1.

Curse. Evidence that we are genuine Christians is seen when we bless our enemies (see on Matt. 5:44, 45), Christ Himself did not bring against Satan “a railing accusation” (see Jude 9). Cursing springs from hate and exhibits the spirit of Satan, “the accuser of our brethren” (see Rev. 12:10). James here shows that a man may be “double-tongued,” as well as “double minded” (see on ch. 1:8).

Similitude. Gr. *homoiōsis*, “likeness.” This verse refers primarily to the “likeness” of God in which man was created (see on Gen. 1:26) and which he still retains to some degree (see 1 Cor. 11:7). Even though that image has been well-nigh obliterated by sin, God has made provision whereby it may be restored.

10. Out. The first sentence of v. 10 completes the thought of v. 9.

Blessing and cursing. The mixture of cursing with the blessing may suggest the insincerity of the blessing (cf. Prov. 18:21).

My brethren. Again James appeals to the fellowship of believers in Christ and to the unity found in the fatherhood of God (see v. 9). Though some of the church members to whom James writes are guilty of cursing men while blessing God, he still regards them with affection.

Ought not. Or, “it is not necessary that.” The rebuke is phrased in the most tactful terms. A deliberate understatement often adds emphasis and encourages a cooperative response. Notwithstanding the difficulty of taming the tongue, the Lord will work for us if we yield our will to Him. Actually, the thoughts must first be subdued before the tongue is tamed (see on 2 Cor. 10:5), but to control the thoughts a man must first yield his heart to God (see on James 1:14).

11. Doth? The Greek implies that a negative answer is expected.

Fountain. Gr. *pēgē*, “spring.” As the fountain is the source of water, so the heart is the source of words (see on Prov. 4:23, 24). Though a fountain is inanimate, its flow is regulated by the laws of nature. Accordingly, Christian men should act in harmony with the law of their renewed nature. The apostle reasons from what is impossible in nature to what is absurdly, but unfortunately, true in human conduct.

Send forth. Literally, “gush forth.”

Place. Gr. *opē*, “opening,” “cleft.”

Sweet. That is, fresh.

Bitter. That is, brackish. No spring pours forth fresh and brackish water from the same cleft. Those familiar with Palestine would think of the contrast between the mineral springs near the Dead Sea and the fresh streams of the north, fed by the snows of Lebanon.

12. Can? The Greek implies that a negative answer is expected.

Fig tree. Fruit trees and springs of water produce according to their respective natures. No other result is expected. James here suggests that cursing and other abuses of the tongue obviously mark a person as not a genuine Christian. He does not imply that a converted person never lapses into sin (cf. v. 2), but he does show that a truly converted person will not make a practice of engaging in un-Christlike speech (see on v. 10).

Vine. The illustrations here used resemble those employed by Christ (see Matt. 7:16). James is not primarily contrasting good with bad, but insists that a tree must produce “after his kind” (Gen. 1:11, 12) and that, conversely, the nature of the fruit inevitably testifies the kind of tree that produced it (see Matt. 7:20).

So. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading of the last clause of v. 12 as follows: “Neither can salt water produce fresh water.” James here shows that it is impossible for true worship to come from a heart of evil. His conclusions are especially applicable to teachers.

13. A wise man. Rather, “wise.” James is here speaking of wisdom such as is needed for pious living (see 1 Cor. 6:5; Eph. 5:15).

Endued with knowledge. Or, “understanding.”

Shew. Genuine wisdom will be demonstrated in works. The nature of a man will be shown by the fruit he produces, as emphasized in v. 12.

Good. Gr. *kalos*, “excellent,” “commendable.”

Conversation. Gr. *anastrophē*, “manner of life,” “conduct.” Compare Eph. 2:3; see Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 4:12; Heb. 13:7; 1 Peter 1:15; see on Eph. 4:22.

Works. That is, works of faith.

Meekness. Gr. *praiūtēs*, “gentleness” (see on ch. 1:21). False meekness is mere complacency and lack of initiative. The truly meek wise man speaks his convictions and implements his plans in a gentle, though firm, manner. Gentleness of spirit is most conducive to clear thinking as well as to calm administration. A wise man is humble before God, and this spiritual experience becomes a barrier against arrogance and merciless domination of his fellow men (cf. ch. 2:13). A wide grasp of facts alone does not constitute wisdom, for “meekness” in conduct marks the educated man as truly wise.

14. Envy. Gr. *zēlos*, “zeal,” in a bad sense, “jealousy” (see on John 2:17). The morality of the “zeal” depends upon the objective pursued. Here James speaks of evil zeal, for it is “bitter.” Such zeal stands in sharp contrast with the meekness earlier described (James 3:13).

Strife. Gr. *eritheia*, “partisanship,” “a factious spirit,” “self-interest.” Men may become bitterly zealous over promoting their special interests and show little regard for the desires of others. The “meekness of wisdom” is the prime requisite for the Christian.

Hearts. The factious self-interest may be hidden from outward appearance, but it is like the bitter water in a fountain (cf. v. 11)—one day it will flow forth in word or deed. James implies that a careful heart examination is always necessary.

Glory not. Or, “stop boasting.” Christians are not to boast of personal achievements or skills. Those with a partisan spirit usually seek to attract supporters by self-assertion. Such boasting reveals a lack of genuine wisdom. Service is the only sound basis for popularity.

Truth. That is, the truth of the gospel. One who professes to be wise should not betray the truth he teaches by his own lack of the spirit of truth. Christian truth consists in a way of life. The theory of the truth is worth while only when it finds expression in conduct that reveals Christ, the embodiment of truth (see on 1 John 2:6; see John 14:6; 3T 59)

15. This wisdom. That is, the wisdom of those who betray the truth by a spirit void of meekness (see on v. 13). James recognizes two kinds of wisdom, as he has recognized two kinds of faith (see on ch. 2:17). As with a deadfaith, this kind of wisdom is such in name only. In fact, it is shrewdness, logical skill, and subtle arguments, all employed in self-interest.

Not from above. Misdirected learning and skill in leadership are not from God, who is the author of true wisdom (see DA 219; see on ch. 1:5). God does not give wisdom to aid those who are concerned with bitter wrangling and self-interest (see on ch. 3:14).

Earthly. This professed wisdom springs from earthly principles and motives and is intent upon serving earthly purposes. It has only this present life in view.

Sensual. Gr. *psuchikos*, “unspiritual” (see on 1 Cor. 15:44). Earthly wisdom seeks to satisfy the desires and propensities that spring from within the natural man.

Devilish. Or, “demonlike.” Compare ch. 2:19. Professed wisdom not only lacks the characteristics of the wisdom that is “from above,” but contains positive elements that are characteristic of demons. Lucifer, now the chief of demons, was not satisfied with the wisdom God had bestowed upon him (see Eze. 28:17). Eventually this envious spirit led him to “bitter envying and strife” (cf. James 3:14). Some see in the three expressions “earthly,” “sensual,” and “devilish” the three spiritual foes of man—the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Envying and strife See on v. 14.

Confusion. Gr. *akatastasia*, “state of disorder,” “restlessness.” Compare chs. 1:8; 3:8. The result of self-interest in a home or in a church is always a state of instability that leads to unhappiness and confusion. Thus, wisdom that is not “from above” will eventually reveal its true nature by its fruit.

Evil. Gr. *phaulos*, “worthless,” “good for nothing.” A program born in self-interest and promoted by a spirit of ruthless domination will eventually fail because of its own inherent weaknesses. Sin and self-interest never produce harmony.

17. Wisdom. That is, true wisdom, which God promises to all who sincerely ask for it (see on ch. 1:5).

Pure. Gr. *hagnos*, “free from defilement.” This quality is first because the following qualities grow out of an undefiled, God-given philosophy of life. This wisdom is free from “earthly” principles, pursuits, and goals.

Peaceable. See on Matt. 5:9. He who is truly wise seeks to avoid quarrels and strife, but his desire for peace will not keep him from presenting the truth, even though trouble may result. Jesus predicted that the proclamation of truth would bring contention into the world (see on Matt. 10:34), but the resulting strife is the fault of those who oppose the truth, not of those who wisely present it. Purity of life and doctrine must never be sacrificed in an effort to secure peace.

Gentle. Gr. *epieikēs*, “reasonable,” “mild” (see 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2). True wisdom is mild, forbearing under provocation, and makes allowances for the mistakes of others. It constitutes a man a Christian gentleman.

Easy to be intreated. Gr. *eupeithēs*, “easily compliant,” that is, not obstinate and difficult to work with.

Mercy. See on ch. 2:13.

Good fruits. See on Matt. 7:17; 21:34; Gal. 5:22, 23.

Without partiality. Or, “unwavering,” “without uncertainty,” that is, not uncertain as to what course of action to take. The Christian must not vacillate between contending positions simply to gain an advantage. A wise man is not ashamed of his position, however many oppose him.

Without hypocrisy. Gr. *anupokritos*, “unfeigned,” “undisguised.”

18. Fruit. That is, the product or reward of right conduct (see on Prov. 11:30; Matt. 7:16).

Righteousness. Here represented as producing fruit (see on Matt. 3:8; cf. COL 69).

Peace. A righteous character is developed only by one who makes peace. James obviously compares the results of “envying and strife,” which produce only worthless deeds □ see on v. 16), with the reward of peaceful aims and methods.

Make peace. Genuine Christians are the conciliators of differences at home and in the church (see on Matt. 5:9). He who sows the seeds of peace enjoys the fruit of peace, partly in this life and fully in the life to come in the kingdom of the “God of peace” 1 Thess. 5:23).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 1T 308, 698; 4T 235, 367; 7T 243

2–52T 316

5, 6 4T 139, 243

5–82T 52

6 PP 659; 2T 426; 4T 244, 331; 5T 57

8 4T 236, 311; 5T 175, 176

11 FE 167; 7T 167

11–182T 178

13 ML 111; 2T 544; 5T 175

14–185T 225

15 GC 474, 554; SL 30; SR 395

15–188T 242

16 PP 385

17 Ev 368; FE 121; GC 474; GW 119, 164, 448; MB 24; MM 146; SL 30; 3T 106; 5T 121, 175; 7T 48

17, 18 AA 526; AH 18; CT 194; FE 266; GW 186; TM 157; 2T 544

CHAPTER 4

2

1 *We are to strive against covetousness, 4 intemperance, 5 pride, 11 detraction, and rash judgment of others: 13 and not to be confident in the good success of worldly business, but mindful ever of the uncertainty of this life, to commit ourselves and all our affairs to God’s providence.*

1. Whence. The apostle now takes up the specific evils within the church that are the product of untamed tongues and strife-ridden hearts. The root cause of all division and confusion is self-interest (see on ch. 3:14).

Wars. Gr. *polemoi*, “quarrels,” “feuds,” perhaps in contrast with *machai* (see below), designating feuds involving many persons.

Fightings. Gr. *machai*, “contentions,” perhaps here describing individual disagreements. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “whence fightings.”

Among you. These church members were not yet sowing “in peace” (see on ch. 3:18).

Come they not hence? The Greek implies that an affirmative answer is expected.

Of. Literally, “out of.”

²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Jas 2:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Lusts. Gr. *hēdonai*, “pleasures,” in the NT generally of evil pleasures, lusts (see Luke 8:14; Titus 3:3).

War. When the satisfaction of self-interest is the governing spirit of men, there is no end to quarrels and contention. Each man sees in another the obstacle to full satisfaction of personal desires (see on Titus 3:3).

In your members. Either, the “members” of the church body. Regardless of interpretation, the self-interest that constantly seeks for recognition and satisfaction is the source of all personal conflict, which often leads to quarrels.

2. Ye lust. Gr. *epithumeō*, “to yearn for passionately.” Compare ch. 1:14. Self-interest, if unchecked, grows into the sin of covetousness (see on Ex. 20:17).

Have not. A covetous man never feels that he has fully acquired all that he needs.

Kill. James here states the general truth that unrestrained passion for the satisfaction of personal pleasure often leads to murder (see on Matt. 5:22). He does not necessarily mean that some of those to whom he was writing were actually guilty of murder. Some would change the punctuation of this verse thus: “You lust, and because you do not have, you kill; you strongly desire but you are not able to obtain, so you fight and war.” In the sight of God hatred is as heinous a sin as murder (see on Matt. 5:22).

Cannot obtain. Whatever the result of force and violence, true happiness and satisfaction are not realized.

Fight and war. See on v. 1. Because genuine satisfaction is not found, an endless state of strife exists.

Ask not. These contentious ones depended upon their own efforts for what they desired instead of depending upon God to provide what was best for them. God has implanted legitimate desires and basic wants within the human heart (see on ch. 1:15), and, in part, happiness is dependent upon satisfying these God-given desires. When men attempt to satisfy these basic desires in illegitimate ways, disappointment, envy, and strife are certain to follow. These church members were not working in harmony with God’s plan for their genuine happiness because they had neglected the partnership of prayer. Prayer implies that a man is willing to seek for what God is willing to give.

3. Ask. See on Matt. 7:7.

Receive not. Answers to prayer depend upon both the nature of the requests and the spirit of the prayer (see on Luke 11:9).

Amiss. Gr. *kakōs*, “wrongly,” that is, with improper motives and perhaps for wrong objectives. He who prays without the determination to align himself with the will of God is praying “amiss” (see 1 John 5:14).

Consume. Gr. *dapanaō*, “to squander,” “to spend.”

Lusts. Gr. *hēdonai* (see on v. 1). Prayers of this nature are not answered because the things prayed for are to be used for personal gratification. Such prayers, even for things good in themselves, God cannot answer.

4. Adulterers. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word.

Adulteresses. That is, those unfaithful to their marriage vows. Some consider that James here speaks of adultery in a figurative sense, of apostasy from God (see on Eze 16:15; cf. on 2 Cor. 11:2). However, the persons addressed in James 4:1–5 appear still to consider themselves church members, and yet they are practicing gross sins. Hence,

James may be speaking of literal adultery. However this may be, these church members, by their favoritism of the “rich” (see on ch. 2:1–13), by their neglect of Christian “works” (see on ch. 2:14–26), by their hasty, ill-advised speech (see on ch. 3:1–10), by their “envying and strife” with one another (see on ch. 3:14–18), and by their unrestrained “lust” for forbidden things (see on ch. 4:1–3), showed that they acted no differently from the “world” (see on ch. 1:27).

Know. They should have known better, because of their acquaintance with the OT and the words of Christ.

Friendship of the world. That is, friendship for the world. The chief aim of the “world” is to satisfy the desire for personal gratification. The gospel calls men back to a program of service. Between the spirit and practice of the “world” and that of the church there is to be a supreme difference (see on 1 John 2:15).

Enmity. That is, enmity on man’s part toward God.

Whosoever. Whether on the church record or not, men and women controlled by self-interest remain under divine condemnation.

Will. Gr. *boulomai*, “to will purposefully.” The heart is deliberately set on enjoying some particular worldly pleasure.

Friend of the world. When church members who have professed loyalty to God continue to yearn for personal gratification as supplied by the world, their love to God is subordinated. Their allegiance “wavereth” (cf. ch. 1:6) and is unstable (cf. v. 8). Service for God cannot be one interest among many, for His way of life is irreconcilable with that of the world (see on Matt. 6:24).

Enemy. Compare 1 John 2:15.

5. Scripture. That is, the OT in general, inasmuch as this quotation is not from any particular passage of Scripture. However, the thought is parallel to the general teaching of the OT (cf. Gen. 6:3–5; Ex. 20:5).

Vain. Gr. *kenōs*, “empty,” “without worthy content.” The scriptural references that declare the love of God for man are not “empty” words.

Spirit. That is, the Holy Spirit, if the translations below (see under “envy”) be adopted. Other NT passages teach the indwelling nature of the Holy Spirit (see on John 14:16, 17; 1 Cor. 6:19).

Dwelleth. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “to cause to dwell,” “to give a dwelling to” (see the translations given below under “envy”).

Lusteth. Gr. *epipotheō*, “to pursue with love,” “to yearn for earnestly” (cf. Rom. 1:11; 2 Cor. 5:2; 9:14; Phil. 1:8; 2:26; 1 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 1:4).

Envy. Gr. *phthonos*, “jealousy.” The Greek here is difficult. Some translate the passage “With jealousy He [God] yearns for the Spirit which He has caused to dwell in us”; others, “The Holy Spirit whom He [God] has caused to dwell within us yearns earnestly with jealousy.” God frequently describes Himself as “jealous” (see Num. 25:11; 1 Kings 14:22; Eze. 23:25; Zeph. 1:18; Zech. 1:14; 8:2; see on Ex. 20:5; Deut. 32:16; Ps. 78:58; Eze. 36:5; Joel 2:18). Paul compared his intense love for the church at Corinth with God’s jealousy for His people (see on 2 Cor. 11:2). The friendship of church members for the world grieves the “jealous” Spirit of God, who seeks our undivided affections. Man’s jealousy is selfish; God’s jealousy reflects simply His intense concern for the welfare of His children.

6. Grace. Gr. *charis* (see on Rom. 3:24). Because of God's love for His people, fresh and fuller supplies of grace are continually given to enable them to resist worldly temptations. Men who sincerely pray for grace will be constantly developing in Christian character. God demands undivided allegiance, but He also provides man with sufficient strength to enable him to obey (see on Heb. 4:16).

He saith. The quotation is from the LXX of Prov. 3:34.

God. God is an active participant in the warfare of His people against the forces of sin. Paul found that the "grace" of God was always sufficient to meet the trials of life (see on 2 Cor. 12:9).

Proud. Here, those who choose the pleasures of the world, to satisfy their self-interest (see on v. 1). They look down on the claims of God and on the "humble" ones who choose to satisfy their desires according to God's will.

Humble. Or, "lowly ones" (see on Matt. 11:29).

7. Submit. James here begins a series of ten imperatives, which every church member subject to the danger of becoming a "friend" to the world (see v. 4) does well to heed. Before God can bestow His "grace" (v. 6) the "humble" man must be willing to submit his will to God's plan. Submission implies complete trust that all God's arrangements are for his own good (see Heb. 12:9).

Therefore. That is, because of the danger of pride and self-interest Christians must place themselves under God's command. He promises not to allow any temptation beyond our power of resistance (see 1 Cor. 10:13).

Resist. Gr. *anthistēmi*, "take a stand against." Compare Eph. 4:27.

Devil. The personality of the devil is clearly implied (see on Matt. 4:1). Paul describes the Christian's preparation for successfully resisting the "wiles" of the devil (see on Eph. 6:13-17). Christ's victory over the devil in the wilderness (see on Matt. 4:1-11) was gained "through submission and faith in God" (DA 130). Every Christian will resist temptation as Christ did.

Flee. The weakest man who finds refuge in the power of Christ will cause Satan to tremble and to flee (DA 131).

8. Draw nigh. This imperative is the secret of successful resistance against Satan (cf. v. 7). Though God is "not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27), He nevertheless expects us to seek Him (see 2 Chron. 15:2; Ps. 145:18; Isa. 55:6). We draw nigh to God by faith (see Heb. 7:25) and by true repentance (see Hosea 14:1; Mal. 3:7).

He. As the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son saw his son "when he was yet a great way off" (Luke 15:20), our heavenly Father is longing and waiting for us to turn to Him. However, He will not force us to accept His love (see PP 384).

Cleanse. The cleansing of the hands was symbolic of the removal of guilt (see Deut. 21:6; Ps. 24:4; 26:6; 73:13; Matt. 27:24; see on Isa. 1:15, 16). Paul specifies "holy hands" as one of the conditions of answered prayer (see 1 Tim. 2:8).

Sinners. Compare the epithet "adulterers and adulteresses" (v. 4).

Purify. See on 1 John 3:3.

Double minded. See on ch. 1:8. There must be no divided loyalties.

9. Be afflicted. Sinners should feel the real wretchedness of their condition. Men should ever seek to be aware of their true spiritual state. Special exhortation is given the Laodicean church with respect to this matter (see on Rev. 3:17). The state of divided

friendship (James 4:4) and internal strife (chs. 3:16; 4:1) and lust (ch. 4:1–5) should have caused every sincere church member to “be afflicted.”

Mourn. See on Matt. 5:4. This is an earnest call to repentance, and is intended to reach even those whom James has sharply rebuked. There is hope, for “godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation” (see on 2 Cor. 7:10).

Laughter. That is, the laughter that had marked their “lusts,” or pleasures (see v. 1). This mirth becomes a narcotic that encourages false satisfaction and security, while all the time the soul is on the brink of destruction. However, James does not imply that the normal Christian life is to be characterized by gloomy sadness.

Mourning. The inevitable result of frivolous folly.

Joy. “Joy [turned] to heaviness” is poetically parallel with “laughter ... turned to mourning” (see Vol. III, pp. 23–28).

Heaviness. Gr. *katēpheia*, “gloominess,” “dejection.” Compare the “humble” of v. 6.

10. Humble. See on Matt. 11:29; 23:12; James 1:9. Thus James summarizes the various admonitions concerning an undivided loyalty to the will of God. For an honest man, a true picture of personal wretchedness produces a humble spirit before God, who is ever willing to forgive (see on Isa. 57:15).

Sight. The contriteness thus urged will be genuine because the “humble” man does not wear a false modesty, to be seen only by men. Neither the outward deeds nor the inward motives are hidden from the Lord (see 2 Chron. 16:9; Heb. 4:13). Regardless of the nature of the sin and whoever may have been wronged by it, the Lord Himself is the chief one sinned against (see on Ps. 51:4).

Lift. Compare ch. 1:9. The “humble” will be exalted by God in this life to a certain extent, but more fully in the life to come. It is He who will “revive the spirit of the humble” (see on Isa. 57:15). As will Jonathan and John the Baptist (Ed 156, 157), “those who through self-abnegation have entered into the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings” will reap the reward of eternal honor. He who is willing to be taught of God and to trust His guidance will never be forsaken (see on Prov. 15:33).

11. Speak not evil. Or, “stop speaking evil,” or, “stop backbiting.” James now turns from the church member’s duties to the Lord, whom he professes to serve, and resumes his denunciation of certain specific evils that plague the church. A lack of humility before God inevitably leads to a similar lack before men. The practice of criticizing fellow church members reveals flagrant self-interest and becomes a common source of church dissension (see ch. 3:2–6).

Of. Or, “against.”

Brother. That is, a fellow church member.

Judgeth. The one who speaks against a church member “judgeth” him. This judging is associated with critical faultfinding whose purpose is to injure. See on Matt. 7:1–5.

Law. Harsh judgment of any kind is inconsistent with the spirit of the moral law. The principle of love is violated by the desire for self-assertion and by criticism of others.

Judgeth the law. That is, the one who judges infers that the law does not apply in his case. He is virtually saying that there is no law to protect the maligned brother and that no law condemns his critical spirit.

Not a doer. James again censures the church member for the disparity between his Christian profession and his daily deeds (see ch. 1:22–25). Each church member should

feel a personal obligation to be controlled by the spirit of the law of God regardless of the nature of the outward provocations he may suffer.

A judge. That is, of the law. By disregarding the law's jurisdiction over all men the critical faultfinder aspires to be a lawmaker rather than a lawkeeper. Frequently the cause for faultfinding is found in the critical member's own private standards of conduct or in his own interpretations of the Bible, which lead him to condemn all who do not agree with him.

12. One lawgiver. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) adding the words "and judge." In spiritual matters, only the Lawgiver can be judge. God alone is competent to discern, without possibility of error, the character of men. Consequently, He alone is able to decide a man's everlasting destiny (see on 1 Cor. 4:5).

Save. See on Acts 4:12.

Destroy. Gr. *apollumi* (see on John 3:16).

Art thou? James emphasizes the absurdity of one man's attempting to judge another, in view of the fact that man cannot discern motives. In one way or another all men are violators of the same law, and it is selfish pride that impels one man to depreciate and hurt another by his words.

Another. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "neighbor."

13. Go to now. A phrase designed to arrest attention, implying disapproval of what follows. James continues his underlying theme—the divided loyalty of church members. The "double minded" man (ch. 1:8) does not possess heavenly wisdom (see on chs. 1:5; 3:14–18); he neglects the courtesy due his fellow men (see on chs. 2:1–17; 4:11, 12) and lacks purity of heart toward God (see on chs. 3:17; 4:3–10). James here addresses church members who neglect God in their daily business.

Say. Either by the spoken word or by the thought in the mind.

To day. These church members plan for the future as if God did not exist. Moreover, they plan as if the making of their future rested in their own hands. Compare Prov. 27:1.

Continue. The language implies that when this set period of time has passed, similar plans for another period of time will be made.

Buy and sell. The apostle does not condemn sound planning for business enterprises. But the typical case he cites reflects neglect of God's particular purposes for each life.

Gain. The "earthly" viewpoint (see on ch. 3:15) emphasizes the material advantage at the expense of the spirit. Material prosperity is no sin (see on ch. 1:10) if it remains secondary to the primary object of all Christianity—the fulfilling of the will of God. Compare the foolish rich man (see on Luke 12:15–21).

14. Whereas. Or, "inasmuch." Verse 14 is parenthetical.

What. That is, What is the nature of your life?

It is. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10), for the reading "Ye are."

Vapour. Or, "mist," "breath." A man's existence in this world is uncertain and of short duration at best (see 1 Chron. 29:15; Job 8:9; Ps. 102:11; James 1:10, 11).

Little time. Emphasis is upon the shortness of life rather than upon the fact of life.

Vanisheth. That is, human life begins to disappear almost as soon as it appears. Life, like vapor, can be dissipated suddenly.

15. For that. Gr. *anti*, "instead."

If the Lord will. James does not mean that the Christian should always speak these words, but that the spirit of submission reflected by them actually should guide every plan.

The first man (see on v. 13) neglects God's will for his future in preference for material gain. The second church member realizes the uncertainty of life and endeavors to make the service of God primary in his life. He knows that God has a special plan for him, and that only by adopting that plan will he find true satisfaction. A consistent application of this principle may mean that some of life's best-laid plans will be altered, in order that God's better plan may succeed. This the genuine Christian accepts with joy in the assurance that God controls his life. Paul lived one day at a time, knowing that his life was in God's hands. He could truly say that all of his plans were subject to the will of the Lord (see Acts 18:21; 1 Cor. 4:19; Phil. 2:24).

Live. Compare Acts 17:28.

Do. When men submit to the will of God (v. 7) they do well to remember that God's ways are often different from those of men (cf. Isa. 55:8, 9). Consequently, a faithful Christian faces each day with confidence in divine guidance in all his enterprises, whether "this, or that."

16. But now. Or, "but actually," that is, instead of what you should be saying.

Rejoice. Gr. *kauchaomai*, "to boast," "to glory." Far from realizing the seriousness of their condition, these boasting church members (cf. v. 13) continue confidently to make their plans for the future. Instead of being humble before God they vaunt their self-sufficiency.

Boastings. Gr. *alazoneiai*, "pretensions," "braggings." Presumptuous confidence in one's cleverness, skill, and strength is implied. These self-reliant church members acted as if the future was in their hands and that their success was the product of their own genius.

Such. That is, all of this kind of boasting, which presumptuously exalts the abilities of man. To boast, or glory in, the achievements of God would not be evil. Paul, for instance, gloried in the cross of Christ (see Gal. 6:14; 1 Thess. 2:19).

Evil. That is, because it exalts self-sufficiency and fosters presumption, this type of thinking in is basically wicked and akin to the spirit of Lucifer (see on Isa. 14:13, 14; Eze. 28:14-18).

17. Therefore. James here refers specifically to the issue of the immediately preceding verses, that is, the forming of plans for the future. No religious truth is so commonly taught in the Scriptures as that of the uncertainty of life and the tragedy of a life not surrendered to God, yet there are few truths so universally disregarded.

Knoweth. See on John 13:17.

Good. That is, in contrast with evil (v. 16). The parable of the Talents illustrates this general principle (Matt. 25:14-30).

Doeth it not. Those who are "hearers" only and not "doers" show that their religion is "vain" (see on ch. 1:23, 26). A perverted faith trusts in knowledge only and proves its falsity when it avoids deeds that sincere faith would gladly do (see on ch. 2:17, 20, 26). This is also a rebuke to men who avoid further study of God's Word because further knowledge would increase their personal obligation.

Sin. The plea that one has done no harm will be an insufficient excuse in the day of judgment for men such as the slothful servant (see on Matt. 25:27). Deliberate evasion of

known duty is forthright rebellion against the will of God. This fact amplifies the difficulty confronting the “double minded” man (see on James 1:8), the pseudoreligious man (see on ch. 1:26), the man of dead faith (see on ch. 2:17, 20), and the “earthly” man (see on ch. 3:15). All these characteristics of imperfect church members are the result of incomplete commitment to a full performance of the commandments of God. They vacillate between what they know they ought to do and what they personally wish to do (see ch. 4:17), with the result that they “miss the mark” of unreserved submission to the will of God.

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1–17TM 125

3 2T 373

4 Ev 270, 620; EW 274; GC 382; PP 458, 607; TM 276; 1T 285; 2T 168, 444, 492, 493, 657; 4T 47, 638; 5T 33, 341, 431; 6T 143

6 55T 337

7 MYP 50, 51, 57; Te 171; 1T 433; 3T 196, 483; 4T 32, 94; 5T 293, 395

7, 8 AH 214; DA 131; FE 226; 2T 312; 4T 364

7–101T 180

8 CSW 62; Ev 285; FEE 251; MB 85; MM 46; MYP 105; SC 55; TM 251, 478; 2T 289, 335; 5T 520, 635; 8T 128

8, 9 1T 531; 2T 93

8–104T 244; 5T 163

10 ML 31

11 PP 385

14 4T 490

17 PP 420; 1T 116

CHAPTER 5

1 *Wicked rich men are to fear God’s vengeance. 7 We ought to be patient in afflictions, after the example of the prophets, and Job: 12 to forbear swearing, 13 to pray in adversity, to sing in prosperity: 16 to acknowledge mutually our several faults, to pray one for another, 19 and to reduce a straying brother to the truth.*

1. Go to now. The sharp rebuke of ch. 4:13 is addressed to those who *seek* to be rich, without considering God’s plan for their lives. Here, James rebukes those who have attained their material goal and are now rich.

Rich. The immediate context implies that the “rich” are prime examples of men who know of many opportunities to do good but who avoid doing so. Here the “rich” may or may not be church members. James presents the position of the “rich” in proper perspective so that struggling, ill-clothed, poverty-stricken church members may not envy them. There are possessions more profitable and enduring than riches. This judgment upon the rich appropriately follows the discussion of the neglect of God in the pursuit of worldly pleasures in ch. 4. Compare Christ’s estimate of riches (see on Luke 6:24).

Howl. Gr. *ololuzō*, “to cry in distress,” “to lament audibly.”

Miseries. Gr. *talaipōriai*, “hardships,” “distresses,” “miseries.”

Shall come. Literally, “are coming,” but doubtless a futuristic present as in John 14:3 (see comment there). The apostle refers not only to the insecurity that always surrounds

an accumulation of riches but also to increasing tensions as the last days of earth's history draw near (see on vs. 3, 7).

2. Riches. Perhaps a general term inclusive of the items that follow—garments, gold, and silver. However, if the word “corrupted” be understood literally, “riches” would refer to the produce of the fields and flocks, the grain, fruit, wine, oil, and other things, which were kept until they rotted or spoiled. The foolish rich man of Christ's parable had most of his wealth in the products of the soil (see on Luke 12:16–20). These “riches” are worthless because they foster self-gratification and are acquired at the expense of the personal rights of others (see James 5:4). With all this earthly wealth, the unconverted rich man is “not rich toward God” (see on Luke 12:21).

Corrupted. Or, “rotted.”

Garments. Wealth measured by the accumulation of expensive clothing is more common in Biblical lands than in Western countries, because the fashions of the East do not frequently change. However, costly garments anywhere are tokens of wealth.

Moth-eaten. See on Matt. 6:19, 20.

3. Cankered. Or, “corroded.” James compares the best of worldly riches to worthless, rusted iron.

Rust. The tarnish on the gold and silver of the rich man's wealth is evidence of disuse for a long period of time. Compare the experience of the man in the parable of the Talents who buried his one talent in the earth. (see on Matt. 25:25–30).

Witness. This rust that marks unused possessions will be clear evidence against the “rich” in the day of judgment. Their money had been selfishly hoarded when it might have been used in service for God and man. The destruction of their treasures betokens their own impending doom. Men of OT times often laid up their money in a secret place they considered safe (see Isa. 45:3), for then there were no banks in which private funds might be deposited.

Eat. Or, “consume.” This “rust” involves the “destruction,” not only of material possessions but of body and soul as well.

As it were fire. It is possible to connect this phrase with the clause that follows, thus: “Since you treasured up fire in [or, “for”] the last days.” “Fire” would thus refer to God's final judgment upon all the ungodly. “Rust” figuratively represents the worthless treasures that the wicked chose in preference to heavenly riches. That which has been mere “rust” will be consumed in the “fire” of the last day.

The fires of hell await all who set their hearts on acquiring material possessions. Accordingly, “the last days” (see below) would refer to the day of final judgment. Compare Rom. 2:5, which reads literally, “You are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath.”

Ye have heaped treasure together. By their selfish acts misers store up, as it were, a full measure of justice, which God will visit upon them in the day of judgment. The “rich” think to secure their future by an accumulation of material wealth, but in so doing, neglect at which would make them “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21). Each man, whether rich or poor, will be given what he deserves and has earned (see on Matt. 16:27; Luke 6:35; 1 Cor. 3:8; Rev. 22:11). The reward that the ungodly rich have stored up will be the “fire” of God's wrath (see Rev. 20:15; 21:8).

For the last days. Or, “in the last days.” See on 2 Tim. 3:1. The statements of our Lord concerning the accumulation of riches (see on Matt. 6:24–34; Luke 12:13–34; etc.)

reveal that the condition described in James 5:1–6 prevailed in NT times. The same is true of OT times (see Isa. 5:8; Amos 2:6–8; Micah 2:1–3; etc.). Greed has always led to oppression, and always will. But as with the violence and injustice of which Paul speaks in 2 Tim. 3:1–5 (see comment there; cf. James 5:7), greed and oppression are to reach a climax in the days immediately preceding the “coming of the Lord.” In the “last days” the wicked are certain to receive the reward that is stored up for them.

4. Behold. James vividly pictures one method by which some of the “rich” have amassed their fortunes. Dishonesty or delay in the payment of wages is specifically forbidden in the OT (see on Deut. 24:14, 15). The rich think they are treasuring up “gold,” when in reality they may be storing up “fire” for themselves in the day of judgment (see on James 5:3).

Hire. Or, “wages.”

Labourers. By whose toil the rich have become wealthy.

Reaped down. Here, representative of any type of service for which wages are paid.

Of you. That is, by you. Any effort to take advantage of another’s labor, either by overt fraud or by the payment of meager wages, is here condemned.

Kept back by fraud. The Greek implies that the wages have been and continue to be withheld.

Crieth. Figuratively, like the blood of Abel (see on Gen. 4:10), the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah (see Gen. 18:20; 19:13), and the souls of the martyrs, under the altar (see Rev. 6:9, 10). No injustice escapes the attention of the omniscient God.

Cries of them. Joined with the inarticulate cry of the fraud itself are the personal pleadings of those who have been oppressed and as a result are in distress.

Lord of sabaoth. Or, “Lord of hosts” (see on Jer. 7:3; Rom. 9:29). The omnipotent God will not ignore the cry for justice, and oppressed laborers are assured that one day justice will prevail and that the wrongs they have suffered will be righted (see Luke 16:19–25).

5. Lived in pleasure. Gr. *truphaō*, “to live a soft and luxurious life.” The riches amassed at the expense of the poor are spent in the pursuit of pleasure (see on chs. 3:15; 4:3).

On the earth. This earth is the center of their affections; the true Christian’s affections are in heaven (see Col. 3:1, 2).

Wanton. That is, wastefully luxurious.

Nourished your hearts. The object of luxurious living is to feed every desire and whim of fancy (cf. Luke 12:19). The pursuit of self-interest is intoxicating, and those who engage in such a pursuit are never satisfied.

As. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word.

In a day of slaughter. The day of reckoning is ahead for all, good or bad (see on 2 Cor. 5:10). A life nourished on self-gratification is like that of a sheep being fattened for the slaughter (cf. James 5:3). In the OT this phrase is synonymous with “a day of judgment” (see Jer. 12:3; 25:34).

6. Condemned. As in every age, the wealth of the rich often strongly influences the processes of justice. This was pathetically true in Biblical times (cf. on ch. 2:6).

The just. Or, “the righteous [one].” From the slaying of Abel (see Gen. 4:8) to the end of time, the hand of self-interested oppressors brings misery, and sometimes death, to the innocent.

Resist. Gr. *antitassō*, “to oppose,” “to offer resistance.” The testimony of these “condemned” and mistreated righteous will rise up in awful condemnation of all oppressors in the day of judgment. The oppressed righteous are not able to resist the tyrannous rich in this life, and will secure justice only when God arises to avenge their cause. Then their cause will be vindicated, they will be compensated, and their ungodly oppressors will be destroyed (see vs. 3, 5).

7. Be patient. In view of the ultimate vindication of the righteous at the return of Christ, James urges his fellow believers to be long-suffering under provocation and not to lose their courage. The perspective of the shortness of earth’s troubles compared with the unending joy of eternal life has always been a source of encouragement to the upright in heart.

Therefore. Some may be in danger of slipping spiritually because they see the earthly prosperity of the wicked (cf. Ps. 73:2, 3). Others may lose their courage under the incessant oppression of the rich (see James 2:6; 5:6). However, the certainty of the judgment to come and the vindication of the righteous (see on Rom. 2:6) constitute an ample reason for renewed courage.

Coming. Gr. *parousia*, “presence,” “arrival” (see on Matt. 24:3). Paul describes the coming advent as “that blessed hope” (Titus 2:13). In that day the righteous will be recompensed (Luke 14:14).

Husbandman. Or, “farmer.” Compare Christ’s analogy that likens the end of the world to a harvest (see on Matt. 13:30; 24:32).

Precious. That is, dear, valuable.

Long patience. After the seed has been planted, the farmer can do no more than patiently wait for the growth of the seed. The Christian must expect to have troubles and trials even as a farmer has his troubles and trials in raising a crop.

He. Or, “it.” Either a reference to the “fruit” receiving the rain or to the farmer who regards the rain as a blessing from God.

Early and latter rain. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of “rain.” However, “rain” is undoubtedly understood (see Jer. 5:24; Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23; see on Deut. 11:14). The farmer must be patient for both rains, for without either there would be no crop.

8. Also. This admonition is based on the illustration in v. 7. If men are willing to yield to the Lord’s method of seed planting, growth, and harvest, they should be equally willing to submit to His guidance in bringing the spiritual harvest of the world to completion (see Matt. 13:39).

Stablish. Gr. *stērizō*, “to set fast,” “to brace,” “to make stable.” God strengthens the heart (see 1 Thess. 3:13), but He asks us to cooperate with Him in that work.

Coming. See on v. 7.

Draweth nigh. Gr. *eggizō*, “to come near,” “to approach.” Although Jesus said that no man knows the “day and hour” of His second advent, He encouraged Christians to understand the times and to “know” when the advent draws near (see on Matt. 24:36). Christ admonished His disciples ever to be in readiness for His return, and devout Christians in all ages have treasured the hope that His advent might be near in their day. See Additional Note on Rom. 13.

9. Grudge. Gr. *stenazō*, “to groan,” “to sigh.” A groan “against another” would be a half-suppressed murmur of impatience or condemnation.

One against another. Having exhorted his readers to patience in bearing the wrongs of the oppressive rich (see v. 7), the apostle now exhorts them to be long-suffering toward one another. Christians who bear courageously the more severe injustices sometimes become impatient with lesser problems within the church. Christians need the encouragement of their brethren as they endure affliction.

Condemned. Gr. *krinō*, “to judge.” See on Rom. 2:1; cf. Matt. 7:1–5. To grumble and to find fault is as serious a shortcoming as overt condemnation, and reveals an unloving, contentious spirit.

Judge. That is, the Lord Jesus (cf. Phil. 4:5; James 5:8). The Father has committed the judgment of this world to Him (see on John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42).

Standeth. The Greek implies that the Lord is standing, at the very moment, at the door (cf. James 5:8; see on Matt. 24:33). James here emphasized the immediacy of the advent and that the times demand a prepared character to meet the Lord. There is no time for finding fault with others.

10. Take ... for an example. Gr. *hupodeigma lambanō*, “to take as an example for copying.”

Prophets. Compare Matt. 5:12; Heb. 11:1 to 12:11. The persistent courage of others who endured faithfully under similar hardships brings encouragement to those who follow. Furthermore, if the best of men are afflicted, other good men may expect the same (cf. Matt. 10:24, 25; John 16:33).

Name of the Lord. That is, by His authority and representing His person (see on Acts 3:16). James and his readers all believed that the OT consists of messages given to the prophets by God (see on 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21).

Suffering affliction. Gr. *kakopatheia*, “suffering of misfortune.”

Patience. See v. 7. As the example of the suffering of the prophets should prevent our discouragement, the example of their patience should likewise encourage us to be patient.

11. Count ... happy. Gr. *makarizō*, “to pronounce happy,” “to call blessed.” The adjective form, *makarios*, introduces each of the Beatitudes (see on Matt. 5:3).

Endure. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “have endured.” Constant faithfulness amid the problems of life (see on ch. 1:3) reveals an undivided loyalty to God and becomes a requisite for eternal life (see on Matt. 10:22; 24:13). When church members are called to endure hardships, they can claim the same blessings.

Job. Few men have been called to demonstrate their faith under more trying circumstances. Obviously the writer of the epistle considers Job a historical, not an allegorical, person.

End. Gr. *telos*, “aim,” “purpose,” “goal.” Church members are urged to consider the purpose and result of the satanic trials that were inflicted on Job. The Lord permitted Satan to trouble Job in order that the splendor of Job’s tested faith might vindicate God’s judgment of Job’s sincerity. God never forsook Job, and when Job demonstrated his fidelity God rewarded him manyfold (see on Job 42:12, 16). Perhaps those to whom James addressed his remarks were in danger of feeling that their afflictions were a sign of

God's displeasure. If they have lost all, following Christ, they will be recompensed in the world to come (see on Matt. 19:29).

Very pitiful. Or, "largehearted."

Tender mercy. James encourages each church member to face the afflictions of life bravely and patiently, because God will compensate him ultimately.

12. Above all. James comes to the climax of his line of thought in vs. 1–11. Compare on Matt. 5:33–37.

Swear not. See on Matt. 5:34–37.

Yea be yea. When a man's words are consistently proved true by his deeds, he will have no desire to reinforce his assertions with an oath. The rabbis declared, "The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: 'Do not imagine that you are permitted to swear by My name even in truth'" (Midrash Rabbah, on Num. 30:2f., Soncino ed., pp. 853, 854).

Condemnation. Gr. *krisis*, "judgment." See on v. 9; cf. Ex. 20:7.

13. Afflicted. Gr. *kakopatheō*, "to suffer misfortune" (cf. v. 14). James frequently mentions the inevitability of encountering troubles and problems in this life (see chs. 1:2, 12, 14; 2:6, 15; 3:14–16; 4:7; 5:6).

Let him pray. Instead of murmuring in affliction (v. 7, or bursting forth with an oath v. 12), the proper response is prayer. Prayer imparts balance and perspective to both suffering and joy. The Lord expects us to call upon Him when in adversity (see on Ps. 50:15; Heb. 4:16).

Is any merry? Or, "is any joyful?" It is God's plan that church members should live serene, joyful lives (see Prov. 15:13, 15; Acts 27:22, 25). Amid the problems of life Christians can be certain of God's sustaining grace and comfort.

Sing psalms. Gr. *psallō*, "to play upon a stringed instrument," "to sing a hymn of praise" (see on Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). God is the source of all joy, and to remember this fact will keep a man from despondency. Whether in sorrow or in joy, prayer and praise will keep us ever mindful of God's loving care.

14. Sick. That is, physically. In v. 13 the reference was to general affliction, hardships.

Let him call. The sick one is encouraged to take the initiative in calling for a special prayer service.

Elders. Gr. *presbuteroi* (see on Acts 11:30).

Pray. Although "men ought always to pray" (see on Luke 18:1), they should feel increased need of prayer when sick. Often hope and confidence weaken during times of physical distress. Accordingly, Christ would have His servants administer His healing balm and reassuring love. Genuine prayer is one manifestation of man's endeavor to understand God's plan and to cooperate with it (see on Matt. 6:8; Luke 11:9).

Anointing. Gr. *aleiphō*, "to anoint," "to smear," "to rub" (cf. Mark 6:13, where *aleiphō* is also used of "anointing the sick").

The early church most certainly did not attach any sacramental efficacy to the ceremony of anointing, though the church later used supposedly "holy oil" as a substitute for pagan magic, in an attempt to heal the sick. By the 8th century this passage of Scripture had come to be used in support of the practice of what Catholics today call extreme unction, or the last rites of the church for the dying. The Council of Trent in its

fourteenth session, 1551, officially declared that James here teaches the sacramental efficacy of the oil.

Name of the Lord. Men are only the instruments; the miracles of restored health and the forgiveness of sin are wrought in the name of Jesus Christ (see Mark 16:17; see on Acts 3:16). The complete service, including the application of the oil and the offering of the prayer, must be done in harmony with the will of the Lord.

Prayer offered for any purpose is a serious undertaking, for it implies that a man is sincerely willing to cooperate with God and to obey all of His commandments. A lack of complete sincerity invalidates any prayer (see on Ps. 66:18). Consequently, the sick member cannot expect God's blessing apart from a sincere purpose to abandon practices which may, in part at least, have caused his illness, and henceforth to live in harmony with the laws of health.

Furthermore, requests are to be made in harmony with God's will, for no man knows what is best for another (see on Rom. 8:26). Some of the most necessary and precious lessons of life are learned in the crucible of suffering (cf. Heb. 2:10), and it may therefore be that, even though God does not cause suffering (see on James 1:13), He may see best to permit it to continue for a time (see MH 230). Accordingly, prayer for the sick should be offered in trust and submission, with quiet confidence in a wise heavenly Father who knows what is best and who never makes a mistake. Every intelligent Christian prayer of request, therefore, will include the submissive thought, "Thy will be done" (see on Matt. 6:10; James 4:15; cf. MH 229–231).

15. Prayer of faith. See on ch. 1:6. Lack of faith is an obstacle to healing (see on Mark 6:5), as it is to salvation (see on Eph. 2:8). A man of faith trusts the wisdom and love of God and seeks to "enter into and accomplish His purpose" (MH 231). Hence, the prayer of faith is the prayer offered in faith by the man who is distinguished by his faith.

Save. Gr. *sōzō*, "to rescue from destruction," "to heal, to save." The NT records instances of sudden and miraculous recovery to health (see Matt. 9:22; Mark 6:56; Acts 3:7; Acts 14:8–10). However, it is well to remember that not every man of faith and devotion to God has been restored to health (see on 2 Cor. 12:7–10; cf. MH 230). Accordingly, James may be understood as saying, "The prayer of faith shall restore the sick if the Lord deems it best for him." Restoration to health in answer to prayer may be immediate or may be a gradual process. It may come about directly by a divine act that transcends man's finite knowledge of natural law, or it may come about indirectly—and more gradually—by divine guidance in the application of natural remedies. The latter process is no less an answer to prayer than the former, and is as truly a manifestation of divine love, wisdom, and power. The mature Christian will recognize that God does not do for a man what he may do for himself or what others may do for him. The mature Christian will realize that divine love, and wisdom do not, at least as a rule, make supernatural provision for what can be accomplished by natural means, through the intelligent application of known scientific principles.

Sins. That is, most particularly, sins which may, at least in part, have caused the sickness (see on Mark 2:5). To be sincere the prayer must be accompanied by the confession of known sins and by the conscious purpose, untrammelled by reservations, to align the life with the will of God. When this is done the past departures from known principles of healthful living are freely forgiven on the basis of divine mercy and the sick man's determination henceforth to live in harmony with known health principles (see on

1 John 1:9). God would be encouraging sin if He were to heal a man physically without willingness on the sick man's part to forsake unhealthful, sinful practices (see MH 227).

16. Confess. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) beginning v. 16 with the word “therefore.” The prime requirement for sincere faith in prayer is a clear conscience. Wrong deeds secretly done are to be confessed to God alone. Sins that involve others are to be confessed also to those who have suffered injury. A guilty conscience erects a barrier to unreserved reliance upon God and will defeat prayer.

Faults. Gr. *paraptōmata*, “blunders,” “trespasses.” However, textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading *hamartiai*, “sins” (see on 1 John 3:4). Some have suggested that *paraptōmata* stands for less serious offenses than *hamartiai*, but the difference between the two words seems rather to be essentially one of figure—a “falling” or a “missing”—rather than one of degree. However, except for its probable occurrence here, *hamartiai* is consistently used in the NT of offenses which only God can forgive (cf. Mark 2:7), whereas *paraptōmata* is used both in this sense and also of offenses that may be forgiven by one's fellow men (cf. Mark 6:15). Here, it is the sick who are to confess their sins, and some hold that James means that they are to do so in the presence of “the elders of the church” (v. 14) who have been summoned to pray for them. Confession is to be a pre-requisite to the offering of prayer for healing. The Scriptures clearly teach that sins are to be confessed to God alone (see 1 John 1:9; etc.), and that we have but one “mediator” of sin between God and man—Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). He is our “advocate with the Father” (1 John 2:1).

Pray. Besides being a source of encouragement, fellowship in prayer enlarges our capacity for receiving blessings God would bestow upon us.

That. After the sick man has confessed all sin and after he has examined his own heart to determine its singleness of faith (see on ch. 1:6), petitions for healing may then be presented to God. Not until these conditions are met is God free to grant a request for healing, if such is His plan.

Effectual fervent. That is, earnestly exercised.

Prayer. Gr. *deēsis*, “petition,” “entreaty.”

Righteous. Prayer depends, not on talent, learning, rank, wealth, or office, but on the character of the man who prays. He is not free of all mistakes, for even Elijah (see on v. 17) was not perfect. But he is “righteous” in that he does not cling to known sin (see on Ps. 66:18). He is righteous in that he is in active fellowship and communion with God, even as Elijah was.

Avaieth. Gr. *ischuō*, “to be strong,” “to have power to accomplish [an objective].” Prayer as a means of cooperation with the will of God (see on Luke 11:9) contributes most to Christian endurance and character development when it ascends from the pure and faithful in heart.

17. Elias. Or, Elijah (see on 1 Kings 17:1).

Man. That is, a mere human being with no extra advantage over any of James's hearers. Though Elijah was exempted from death by the mercy of God, he faced life as every man must face it.

To like passions. Gr. *homoioopathēs*, “of like feelings.” Paul and Barnabas assured the people of Lystra that they were *homoioopatheis*, that is, fellow beings of the same nature (see Acts 14:15). Elijah was not immune from the trials of life that all men face and at times was affected by man’s weaknesses (see on 1 Kings 19:4). Therefore, the success of Elijah’s prayer was not the result of any superhuman qualities, but of the grace of God. Jesus was tempted as all men are (see on Heb. 4:15) and “His humanity made prayer a necessity and a privilege” (SC 94).

He prayed earnestly. See on 1 Kings 17:1; 18:42; cf. on James 5:16.

Rain. See on 1 Kings 17:1. His prayer did not spring from private resentment against Ahab, but was based upon God’s judgment against the whole nation because of Baal worship.

Earth. That is, the land ruled by Ahab.

By the space of. Literally, “for.”

Three years and six months. For the duration of the famine see on 1 Kings 18:1 (cf. Luke 4:25).

18. Prayed again. Both this and the preceding prayer were motivated by a longing desire to recall his countrymen from their terrible idolatry. When his goal was reached and they acknowledged Jehovah to be the true God, Elijah prayed in their behalf (see on 1 Kings 18:42–44). He loved the people the while he hated their sins.

Heaven gave rain. The record says, a “great rain” (see 1 Kings 18:45).

19. Brethren, if any. James concludes his epistle of warning and instruction with a solicitous concern for the salvation of each of his readers. The binding thread of James’s epistle has been his tender concern for the eternal welfare of his beloved brethren (see chs. 1:2; 2:1; 3:1, 10; 4:11; 5:7, 10, 12).

Err. Gr. *planaō*, “to go astray,” “to wander.” Church members may “err” doctrinally by embracing error, or they may abandon the principles of Christian conduct and fall into sinful practices. They may be led astray by various evil appeals to basic human needs (see on ch. 1:14, 15).

Truth. That is, the pattern of life and thought as revealed in Jesus Christ (see John 14:6; see on John 8:32).

Convert. Gr. *epistrephō*, “to cause to return,” “to bring back.” The wooing back and the steadying of fellow church members is the responsibility, not only of the elders, but of every Christian. By compassionate moments of confession “one to another” and by mutual prayer (see on v. 16) many dark hours of weakness and doubt can be brightened with hope and strength. No man lives to himself, and at times all men need the stabilizing hand of a brother who can share their problems and inspire them with courage.

20. Know. That is, through actual experience. The “joy” of heaven is shared by the soul winner when “one sinner ... repenteth” (see on Luke 15:7).

Converteth. See on v. 19. Only God converts, but men are His instruments in this heavenly work. Many are the ways by which Christians may turn the thoughts of men to God. The most potent argument to lead sinners to turn to God is the purity and peace of the Christian himself.

Death. That is, eternal death. The judgment of eternal death awaits all who remain in their sins (see Rom. 6:23). To rescue a sinner from eternal death is by far more glorious than even a rescue from physical present death (see Dan. 12:3). The desire to rescue men

who would otherwise eternally perish prompted Jesus to come to this earth. The same concern for his fellow men will motivate the genuine Christian.

Hide. Gr. *kaluptō*, “to cover up,” “to veil” (see on Ps. 32:1). Compare 1 Peter 4:8.

When a man is converted, his sins are hidden and, as it were, cast “into the depths of the sea” (see on Micah 7:19). James concludes his majestic appeal to his Christian brethren with the keynote message of the NT—the rescue of man from his sins and his restoration to the full stature of Jesus Christ.

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- 1 PK 651
- 1, 2 CS 206; 1T 475
- 1–3IT 174
- 1–4COL 352; CS 123; 2T 682
- 1–5COL 372
- 1–6COL 170; 9T 91
- 1–20TM 125
- 2, 3 6T 453
- 3 CM 17; 1T 153; 3T 548
- 3–6PK 651; 9T 14
- 4 CS 128, 166; FE 422; 1T 175; 1T 175; 5T 375
- 7 COL 61
- 7, 8 COL 177; PK 732; 9T 288
- 10 MB 33
- 11 GC 354; MB 84; SC 100
- 14 CH 373; LS 75
- 14, 15 CH 457; MM 16; 5T 196
- 14–162T 273
- 15 GW 215; MH 226
- 16 CH 380; FE 239, 240, 527; MH 228; ML 31, 32; PP 663; SC 37; 3T 211; 4T 241, 531, 534; 5T 209, 343, 639; 6T 43, 80, 356; 7T 12, 42, 251
- 17 EW 73; PK 157; SC 73, 87; 1T 295, 407; 3T 274, 288, 292
- 19, 20 5T 346
- 20 COL 250; CSW 71; CT 268; DA 440; FE 282; GW 499; MB 129; MH 166; MM 182; 4T 65; 5T 59; 7T 15, 261

³Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Jas 4:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.