

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Lesson One

Introduction to the Book

Southgate Church of Christ

Milt Langston

INTRODUCTION:

A. THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK.

1. There are four men in the Bible named James.
 - a. James the brother of John both apostles and both the sons of Zebedee and Salome (Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19; Luke 5:10). In Acts 12:2 this James was put to death by Herod.
 - b. James the less, the son of Alphaeus (or Clopas) and also an apostle (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13).
 - c. James the father of Judas (not Iscariot). This James was the father of Judas (not Iscariot) the apostle (Luke 6:16).
 - d. James the brother of Jesus and the brother of Jude and the son of Mary and Joseph (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Acts 12:17; 15:13).
2. James the apostle and brother to John did not write the book because he was killed by Herod (Acts 12:2) before the book was written.
3. It is very unlikely that James the father of Jude the apostle wrote the book. We know very little about either Jude nor his father James. That leaves two choices...
 - a. James the brother of Jesus...
 - b. Or James the apostle who was the son of Alphaeus.
4. Little is known about the other apostle James the son of Alphaeus.
 - a. His mother was present at the death of Jesus.
 - b. His name is always listed with three other Zealots, therefore; he was probably a Zealot also.
 - c. He has the same father as Matthew (Mark 2:14), therefore; he is at least a half brother to Matthew making Matthew the older brother (one being a tax collector and the other a Zealot). Tax collectors were allies to Rome, and Zealots were plotting the overthrow of Rome.
 - d. None of the early Apostolic Fathers attribute the book of James to James the son of Alphaeus the apostle.
5. That leaves only James the Lord's brother, who is believed to have written the book. As early as the apostolic fathers James the Lord's brother is assumed to be the author.
 - a. He was the half brother of Jesus, Matt. 13:54-56; Mark 6:3.

- 1) James did not believe in Jesus while Jesus was alive (John 7:5). In Mark 3:21 James and Jesus' family try to restrain Jesus from speaking publicly in Judea. They thought Jesus was beside himself.
 - 2) After his resurrection Jesus appeared to James (1 Cor. 15:7), and James' faith becomes established.
 - 3) In Acts 1:14 James and Jude both are with the apostles waiting for the coming of the kingdom.
- b. James was an elder in the church at Jerusalem.
- 1) In Acts 15:13-21 it is James who speaks up.
 - 2) In Gal. 2:8 James with Peter and John is called one "reputed to be pillars" of the church at Jerusalem.
 - 3) In Gal. 1:18 Paul said that he visited with only Peter and James when he first went to Jerusalem.
- c. James was so well known in the first century church, that when he said, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" everyone knew who he was....his authorship was never challenged until many, many years later.
- d. Tradition says that Jesus destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70 because the Jews martyred James shortly before that date. Of course we do not know this for a fact; Jerusalem's destruction was predicted by Christ for their rebellion against God. However, the tradition's existence proves that James was a well known and respected figure in the first century church.

B. THE DESTINATION OF THE LETTER "....THE TWELVE TRIBES."

1. The book was written to "the twelve tribes which are of the dispersion."
 - a. The twelve tribes could refer to the church such as in Rom. 2:29; 9:6; Gal. 3:6-9, 26-29.
 - b. It could also refer to the Jewish Christians who had been dispersed from Jerusalem by the persecution recorded in Acts 8.
 - 1) The term "**diaspora**" was a word used to describe Jews living outside of Palestine.
 - a) We must note that before AD 70 the church was recognized by the world as a Jewish sect.
 - b) It was not till after the destruction of Jerusalem and the acceptance of the gospel by the Gentiles that the church began to be seen as separate and apart of the Jewish religion.
 - 2) These facts together with Paul's statements in Gal. 2:9 where he says, "**James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised**" help us determine the meaning James intended for this word....
 - a) James and John and Peter worked primarily with the Jewish Christians.

- b) Where Paul and Barnabas worked with the Gentiles
 - c) Because the book was written fairly early in the first century we can assume that it was written primarily to Jewish Christians much as was the book of Hebrews.
- c. It must be noted, however; that these Jews were Christians...
 - 1) They were born of the word (1:18).
 - 2) They held to faith in Jesus (2:1).
 - 3) They are called by Christ's name (2:7).
 - 4) They were waiting for the Lord's return (5:7).
- 2. Where were they located? To the west.....
 - a. In Acts 9:2 Saul went to Damascus looking for Christians to persecute them.
 - b. [READ ACTS 11:19 and 13:1.](#)
- 3. The condition of these churches....
 - a. Groveling before the rich, 2:2-7.
 - b. Loving money, 1:10; 4:3-6, 13-16.
 - c. The rich were oppressing the poor, 2:6,7; 5:3-6.
 - d. They were enduring trials, 1:12; 2:6-8, 10,11.
 - e. Problems of weakness....
 - 1)weak faith (lacking conviction), 1:22, 25-27; 2:14-26.
 - 2)murmuring, slandering, gossip, 1:6-8, 13; 4:11; 5:9.
 - 3)weak love, 2:15-16.
 - 4)quarrelsome, 3:1, 6,9,14; 4:1-8, 13,16.
- 4. The historical background – A.D. 30-70.... “Years of crisis” for the Jewish nation. The nation was headed toward political destruction.
 - a. In these years as the church began to grow, the lines of acceptance or rejection of Jesus as the Christ or Messiah became clearer. The bulk of the Jewish nation (like Saul) rejected Jesus as the Christ. This separated Jewish Christians from their national life. Jewish Christians were outcasts and rebels. But to the Gentiles they were just another sect of the Jews.
 - b. The National existence of Israel was about to end in A.D. 70.
 - 1) There was turmoil and strife between the Zealots, Pharisees and Sadducees....the Jewish church was right slap-dab in the middle and were prosecuted by everyone.
 - 2) It was a time of internal conflict as the power of the Sadducees waned and the power of the Zealots took over with the Pharisees being pushed from one extreme to another.
 - 3) It was a time of terrorism and intrigue (there were wars and rumors of wars, etc.).

4) Finally – revolt – war- AD 70!

C. PURPOSE FOR THE WRITING.

1. To rebuke social injustice.
2. To expose their poor spiritual condition.
 - a. Failing in prayer (1:5).
 - b. Class conflict (1:9-10; 5:1-8).
 - c. Materialism (4:13-17).
 - d. Prejudiced (2:6-7).
 - e. Worldliness (4:11-12).
 - f. Compromise with the world (4:4-10).
 - g. They had cut religion loose from their daily life. They were keeping religion in the church meeting place – like Sunday morning Christians (2:14-26).
3. The Problem....
 - a. They had separated their faith and devotion to God from their daily life.
 - b. James is not like Paul in the book of Galatians or Romans, his book contains many tests proving genuine faith.
4. Theme – “The Necessity of Wholeheartedness in Faith!”

D. THE DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING.

1. **PLACE:** Jerusalem. This is where James lived. The book has little references to Gentiles. There is no problem with circumcision; the Christians met in Synagogues.
2. **DATE:** A.D. 45 (?).

E. OUTLINE USED IN THIS COURSE:

- I. Our Faith Tested by Trials (1:1-11)
- II. Our Faith Tested from Within (1:12-18)
- III. Our Faith Tested by Our Attitude Toward the Word (1:19-2:26)
- IV. Our Faith Tested by Our Speech (3:1-18)
- V. Our Faith Tested by Worldliness (4:1-10)

- VI. Our Faith Tested by Gossip (4:11-12)
- VII. Our Faith Tested by Humanism (4:13-17)
- VIII. Our Faith Tested by Affluence (5:1-6)
- IX. Our Faith Tested by Suffering (5:7-11)
- X. Our Faith Tested by Lies (5:12)
- XI. Our Faith Tested by Sickness (5:13-15)
- XII. Our Faith Tested by Sin and Failure (5:16-18)

F. LESSON TITLES FOR THIS STUDY....

LESSON 1	Introduction	4 pages
LESSON 2	Faith and Trials (1), 1:1-8	5 pages
LESSON 3	Faith and Trials (2), 1:9-18	7 pages
LESSON 4	Faith and Our Attitude Towards the Word (1), 1:19-25	6 pages
LESSON 5	Faith and Our Attitude Towards the Word (Pure Religion)(2), 1:26-27	5 pages
LESSON 6	Faith and Our Attitude Towards the Word (Loving Others)(3), 2:1-13	5 pages
LESSON 7	Faith and Our Attitude Towards the Word (Works)(4), 2:14-26	7 pages
LESSON 8	Faith and Words (1), 3:1-12	5 pages
LESSON 9	Faith and Words (Wisdom)(2), 3:13-18	5 pages
LESSON 10	Faith and Worldliness, 4:1-10	8 pages
LESSON 11	Faith and Gossip and Humanism, 4:11-17	6 pages
LESSON 12	Faith and Prosperity, 5:1-6	4 pages
LESSON 13	Faith Suffering and Lies, 5:7-12	4 pages
LESSON 14	Faith and Sickness, 5:13-15	4 pages
LESSON 15	Faith Sin and Failure, 5:16-18	4 pages



LESSON TWO

Faith Tested by Trials (1)

1:1-8

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I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS (1:1-18).

A. THE SALUTATION AND GREETING (1:1).

1. (1:1) “James” is “Jacob” in Hebrew. James was the brother of Jesus, and he was an elder in the church at Jerusalem, Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12; Mark 6:3; Matt. 13:55.
2. (1:1) A “servant” = *doulos* ; a slave (literally or figuratively, involuntarily or voluntarily; frequently therefore in a qualified sense of subjection or subservience):—bond (-man), servant” (Strong’s Hebrew & Greek Dictionaries).
 - a. The Old Testament uses the term “slave” or “servant” as a term of honor when used in relation to service to Jehovah.
 - b. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are referred to as “servants” or “slaves” of God.
 - c. It also denoted discipleship...only a Lord has slaves or servants, [Romans 10:12-13](#).
 - d. James was the brother of Christ, but he calls himself a slave (servant) of God Notice His attitude!
 - 1) Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it” (Matt. 16:24-25).
 - 2) Paul understood what He was saying, and he says, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21), and in Gal. 2:20 he adds, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.”
 - 3) If we could place Jesus and Paul face to face, this is what they would say to each other:
 - a) Christ: Paul, if you would come after me you must deny yourself.
 - b) Paul: Lord, it is no longer I who live at all; self is gone!

- c) Christ: You must take up your cross.
- d) Paul: Lord, I am crucified right along with you!
- e) Christ: And you must follow me.
- f) Paul: Lord, the only life I live now is your life, the faith life!

3. (1:1) James shows that you cannot serve God without serving Jesus when he says, “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

- a. James was a slave to God...but he calls Jesus “Lord.”
 - 1) In today’s culture we have forgotten what it means to call someone “Lord.”
 - 2) But in New Testament times men knew what it meant...indeed not long ago men knew what it meant....
- b. The lordship of Christ demands more than just words from us as his “slaves.”
 - 1) Many today say, “I can remain loyal to Jesus without being loyal to any church.”
 - 2) What is the church? Is it not the body of Christ?
 - 3) If it is....it is extremely important because there is no life outside of the body!
 - 4) To try to serve Christ outside and separate from the body is like calling Him Lord, but refusing to become a part of Him...refusing to be subjugated to His authority.

4. (1:1) The book is written to “the twelve tribes in the Dispersion...”

- a. The “twelve tribes” as stated in our last lesson....
 - 1)could refer to the church of Spiritual Israel (Rom. 2:29; 9:6; Gal. 3:6-9, 26-29).
 - 2) But it more than likely refers to the Jewish Christians who were scattered abroad or dispersed from Jerusalem because of the Jewish persecution recorded in Acts 8.
- b. “Diaspora” or “dispersion” is a Jewish term to describe Jews who lived in Gentile lands outside of Judea.
- c. Paul considered himself an apostle to the Gentiles, and in Galatians 2:9 he refers to James, John and Peter as they who preach to the Jews.
- d. We can conclude that this book was written to those Jewish Christians who had been dispersed by Jewish persecution much as the Jews themselves had been dispersed by Nebuchadnezzar in antiquity.
 - 1) Notice the providence of God which worked as James will describe it working in the next few verses...
 - a) A great band of Jewish believers gathered at Jerusalem from all over the world who were converted after the Holy Spirit appeared on the Day of Pentecost.
 - b) They were from many different places and spoke many different languages. They had gathered together for the Passover celebrations. Acts 2:5ff records that from these the first congregation of the Lord’s church was established.
 - c) They were content to wait at Jerusalem suffering from cramped conditions and lack of activity (Acts 6) believing that Jesus’ return to take them to heaven was imminent.

- d) In Acts 8 God used the Jewish persecution to scatter this first congregation back to their homes all over the world.
 - e) When they arrived back home in places like Samaria, Rome, Corinth, etc., they started the church in every place.
- 2) When Paul and Barnabas went out to preach the gospel they encountered Jewish believers in every place, and they branched out to the Gentiles with the gospel in these places usually after Jewish opposition (not from the Jewish Christians, but from Jews in the community who opposed the teaching of Jesus as the Christ).
 - 3) These Jewish Christians became the seeds of the kingdom of God.

B. THE JOY AND VALUE OF TRIALS (1:2-4).

There is an overriding theme recorded in verse 17, **“Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above.”**

1. (1:2) James says, **“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials!”**
 - a. The KJV says **“diverse trials”** the ASV says, **“manifold trials”** and the NASB says **“various trials.”**
 - 1) This comes from the Greek word, **ῥῑέέβῆῖο** (poikilos poy-kee'-los) Of uncertain derivation; motley, that is, various in character:—divers, manifold.
 - 2) Unfortunately or fortunately however you look at it, there are going to be many trials of different kinds in this life. The NIV reads best here when it says, **“trials of many kinds.”**
 - a) Satan hits us from many different directions.
 - b) We know that trials come from Satan, **“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone”** (1:13). He entices us with our own lusts (v.14).
 - c) We usually do not feel too happy when trials fall upon us. But because of our trust in God’s ability, we are being told to rejoice when Satan hits us with trials for it gives us an opportunity to testify and demonstrate with our actions the power of God.
 - b. The **“temptations”** as it reads in the KJV = trials not lust here. In the KJV the word **“temptation”** is used. The word comes from **ῥᾱῆῆᾰῖῖῖο** peirasmos; pi-ras-mos) a putting to proof or a trial. or to try. The more modern translations use the word **“trial.”**
 - c. We have no control over trials. Indeed we **“fall into”** them. The original language reads: **ῥᾱῆῆᾰῖῖῖο**(peripiptoô per-ee-pip'-to) From G4012 and G4098; to fall into something that is all around, that is, light among or upon, be surrounded with:—fall among (into).
 - 1) This always denotes an unpleasant situation. You don’t fall into pleasant situations.
 - 2) Example: The traveler in the parable of the **“Good Samaritan”** **“fell among thieves.”**
 - d. Therefore, joy does not come from our trials themselves....they were sent by Satan to test our faith.

- e. The joy comes from serving Jesus and suffering for it.
 - f. The joy comes from God's providence which makes us better servants because of the endured trial. Consider the example of David the shepherd boy....
 - g. There can be no joy if we loose faith because of Satan's trials!
 - h. Endured trials brings honor to God whom we represent, and that brings us joy!
 - i. Some things to remember about Satan our adversary....
 - 1) He is a liar, John 8:44.
 - 2) He is an accuser (Devil = accuser), Rev. 12:10.
 - 3) He is a deceiver, Rev. 12:9.
 - 4) Satan the word means "the adversary."
 - a) Satan is opposed to God. When he opposes us how does it bring us joy?
 - b) Trials give us the opportunity to show the world and our fellow brethren, and even Satan himself on who's side we belong. When you and I say, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Lord!" Satan says, "Prove it!"
 - j. Knowing that Satan is a liar, a false accuser, and a deceiver; how should you and I react to trials?---- with confidence, with faith in God, and with joy says James!
2. (1:3) They prove our faith. James says **"the testing of your faith."**
- a. **ἀπέδειξις** (dokimion) a testing:—proof (1), testing (1). Trials give Christians the opportunity to prove their faith in God.
 - b. If we are faithful only when things run smoothly that's not such a big thing.
 - 1) It is easy to be faithful when I'm in class studying God's word with you.
 - 2) It is also easy to believe when we sing songs brother Michael or our other song leaders lead us.
 - 3) It is also easy to have faith when we meet together in our unit meetings and fellowships. That's why meeting together is so important.
 - c. But if we are faithful when it is hard to be faithful....in the midst of trials.....what does your faith say about the one in whom you believe?
 - 1) It says that He is worthy of your sacrifice.
 - 2) It brings His name honor!
 - 3) A suffering servant who is faithful in diversity brings the worthiness of his Lord to light!
 - d. Satan's attempts are to destroy our faith, but he risks bringing eternal glory to the one he opposes when we endure with faith our trials!
 - e. What does it say for a Lord if his servants dissent him in the hour of trial? (This is what Satan wants to do to our Lord by sending trials).
 - 1) When Jesus died for the sins of the world all his disciples forsook Him, but He remained faithful.

- 2) Trials give us an opportunity to become like Jesus!
3. (1:3) Trials give us endurance or perseverance in our faith, "the testing of your faith produces endurance."
 - a. The word for "endurance" or "patience" is ὑπομονή (hupomone) a remaining behind, a patient enduring:—endurance (7), patient enduring (1), perseverance (21), steadfastness (3).
 - b. This speaks of staying power....the power to remain faithful is given to us through our endured trials.
 - c. Consider again David as an example of the endurance trials brought to him....
 - 1) When he talked to Saul he had an easy argument:
 - a) Satan sent one bear....(proposition #1) one dead bear by God's help.
 - b) Satan sent one lion....(proposition #2) one dead bear by God's help.
 - c) Now there is a giant out there....(conclusion) the giant is as good as dead with God's help!
 - 2) The trials of the bear and the lion gave David confidence on the day of the giant.
 - d. This is a benefit of trials to us also says James.
4. (1:4) Trials will make us mature in our faith if we endure them, "And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."
 - a. Remember in Eph. 6:16 Paul says of our faith that it is like a shield. He says, "taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."
 - 1) Faith connects us to God.
 - 2) God always overcomes Satan.
 - b. And now we've learned that enduring the trials sent our way instead of destroying us makes us more and more mature in our faith.
 - c. Christians can see past the present situation to the over all totality of God's rule and God's plan!
 - 1) Christians can see the good things past the trials because we believe.
 - 2) Paul says it this way, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

C. THE WISDOM OF TRIALS (1:5-8).

1. (1:5) James says, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."
 - a. In the context here James seems to be saying that we need wisdom to understand trials.

- b. "Of " as it connects with "God" in our text comes from the Greek word, **para** - which means "alongside" God.
- 1) If you do not understand your trials, ask God because He is right there beside you!
 - 2) We could paraphrase verse five to read: "If any of you lacks wisdom, ask God who is right there beside you. He gives generously to all without finding fault. Don't be afraid to ask Him!"
- c. God is liberal in His gifts. He gives to those who ask!
- 1) What happens if we don't ask?
 - 2) God gives what we ask for --- it does not say how He does nor does it say He'll give answer immediately.
 - 3) But God gives to all.
 - 4) God will not scold us for asking for foolish things.
- d. But most importantly God gives wisdom to him who asks for it (probably through the trial we are enduring!).
2. (1:6) A man or woman must ask! "But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind."
- a. Not only must we ask, but we must believing that God can and will answer our prayers.
- b. We must ask "without any doubting" or as the KJV reads "nothing wavering."
- c. Doubt makes us like "the surf of the sea" this is like not being anchored down but tossed about by the circumstances of life.
- 1) A driven person by the circumstances of life is not living a victorious life.
 - 2) Remember we were born again to a new life wherein we live for Jesus....Jesus is purpose driven and so are His disciples. He rules for us if we have the faith to recognize his rule!
- d. A person who is "driven and tossed by the wind" is a person who lacks conviction in his faith.
3. (1:7-8) Doubt is unbelief. We are connected to God by faith. Jesus always tolerated "little faith," but the doubt here is unbelief. "For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."
- a. Doubt does not equal faith....faith equals salvation; therefore doubt = ?
- 1) All doubt is not bad....doubt will drive us into God's word for understanding.
 - 2) The doubt we're talking about here is doubting God. Distrusting His promises and ability.
- b. A person who doubts God is "double minded" = two souls = a divided man.

- c. The word "unstable" comes from the Greek word **akatastatos** (akatastatos) which is a derivative of the word **kathistemi** (kathistemi) which means "not being able to stand down." This has reference to the waves of the sea tossing a person around who is not anchored.

B. SUMMARY....

1. Satan digs holes into which we fall, but God gets us out.
2. **ILLUSTRATION:** A father and his young son were caught in a blizzard. The son asked repeatedly for his father to carry him, but the father was stern with his son refusing to carry the boy he made him walk. They both ultimately survived the storm making it to safety. Had the father carried the boy, he would have frozen to death. Because he had to walk he stayed alive. In the same manner God uses trials to preserve our spiritual and eternal lives.
3. The word "patience" or "endurance" comes from **hupomeno** (hupomano) which is a compound word **hupo**= under + **meno** = to stay. It is our staying power.
4. The KJV uses the word "perfect" it is better translated "**complete**" coming from the word **holokleros**(holokleros) = complete or entire.
 - a. Our proven faith gives us endurance which causes us to become complete (or perfect) servants of God.
 - b. Trials were sent to trouble us, but God uses them to benefit our service.
5. **TRIALS TEST OUR FAITH....**
 - a. James 1:2-4 is the Test from Without....these are the trials sent by Satan to attack our faith.
 - b. James 1:5-8 is the Test from Within.....this is the way we react to the test from without.
 - 1) We can react with faith which proves and improves our faith.
 - 2) Our we can react with doubt which drives us without purpose in this life.
6. **REMEMBER TO ASK GOD FOR WISDOM...HE IS RIGHT BESIDE US!**



THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

LESSON THREE

Faith Tested by Trials (2)

1:9-18

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Milt Langston

REVIEW

- **What is the theme of James? (The necessity of wholeheartedness in our faith).**
- **What is the Joy of enduring trials? (It proves that we believe in God).**
- **What is the benefit of enduring trials? (It produces patience which develops maturity or completeness!).**
- **What do we need to understand all this? (Wisdom).**
- **Who do we ask for it? (God).**

I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS (1:1-18).

A. THE SALUTATION AND GREETING (1:1).

B. THE JOY AND VALUE OF TRIALS (1:2-4).

C. THE WISDOM TO UNDERSTAND TRIALS (1:5-8)

D. THE TRIALS OF THE POOR AND OF THE RICH (1:9-11). Satan attacks the poor man's faith through his poverty, and he attacks the rich man's faith through his riches....

1. (1:9) James says, "But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position."
 - a. The Jews of this time believed that physical blessings were a manifestation of God's affection for a person.

- b. James is teaching that our worth in the kingdom of God is not determined by outward or carnal possessions.
 - c. The “**low degree**” person’s high position in the kingdom of God has nothing to do with his state physically.
 - 1) Example of Billy Searcy....
 - 2) Example of Jody Robbins....
 - d. Men honor money, looks, college degrees and high position, and cash in the bank; but these things distract from what is of much more value: eternal life in heaven.
 - e. The man of “**humble circumstances**” already has these stumbling blocks removed giving him a higher position.
 - 1) Covetousness and materialism can be just as much a stumbling block to a man of “**humble circumstances**” as it can be for a rich man.
 - 2) But the “**low degree**” person is much less likely to depend on his wealth and much more likely to depend upon help from God giving him a higher position in matters of faith.
 - f. [READ MATTHEW 6:19-21; 19:21-24.](#)
 - g. Riches can never replace these blessings: [READ EPHESIANS 1:3-14; 2:6-7.](#) But they can keep us away from these blessings if we allow them to do so.
 - h. A poor person does not have as much between himself and his God in the way of material possessions. That gives a higher position
2. [\(1:10-11\)](#) Riches are of no value towards salvation much to the opposite of what the world thinks. Listen to James, “**And let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.**”
- a. The rich man just like the poor man must seek his salvation through his faith and trust in God.
 - b. He is not likely to do this till he understands that his physical blessings are only a temporary blessing and not near as important as the spiritual blessings that are accessed by faith.
 - c. Many righteous men were rich: Abraham was rich. Joseph was rich. Jeremiah it appears was rich having his own servants.
 - d. It is not the amount of possessions a person has that hinders his faith in God, but his attitude towards it.
 - e. The lasting blessings of God come through faith, they are not temporary as are riches.

II. OUR FAITH TESTED FROM WITHIN, 1:12-18.

A. THE BLESSINGS OF GOD FOR ENDURING TRIALS (1:12).

1. (1:12) The same word used here is used by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount...**"blessed."**

a. There are two words for **"blessed"** used in the Greek.

1) One is **eulogeo** (eulogeo) to speak well of, praise:—bless (9), blessed (25), blessing (3), giving a blessing (1), praise (1), praising (1), surely *(1). We get our word "eulogy" from this word. It is the good things we say about a departed person. It's the word Jesus used when He blessed the bread at the first Supper recorded in Matthew 26:26.

2) Another word is **makarios** (makarios) [from **makar** (makar)= happy]; blessed, happy:—blessed (1), blessed (46), fortunate (1), happier (1), happy (1). To the Greek mind this was the state of the Gods. They lived happy care free contented blessed lives.

b. And this is the word used in our text. It represents the "inner prosperity or quality from within; prosperity from within."

c. The same God who spoke the world into existence has right here promised us eternal life if we endure the tests that Satan sends our way.

2. (1:12) Those who are so blessed are those who **"endure."** This word comes

from **hupomeno** (hupomeno) which we already looked at in verses 3 & 4. It represents staying power meaning "to stay behind, to await, endure:—endure (3), endure...with patience (1), endured (5), endures (3), patiently endure (1), perseveres (1), persevering (1), remained (1), stayed behind (1)."

3. (1:12) This verse also talks of being **"approved"** which comes

from **dokimos** (dokimos) tested & approved:—approved (7). Perhaps the best translation of this Greek thought is found in the NIV which reads, **"when he has stood the test."** When we are tested and when we stand firm in our faith against the test, we are tested and approved.

a. Enduring the trial (whether it be a temptation, trouble or whatever) means standing up against it with no retreat because we believe in God in spite of Satan's deception.

b. When we endure trials, James pronounces this blessing which is not so much a reward as it is a state of being. We are blessed with an inner prosperity even if outwardly we are being tested in the flesh.

4. (1:12) You and I are made happy and blessed by taking our stand with God and suffering for it. James says, **"he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."**

a. The **"crown"** here is not the diadem, but the stephanos crown.

1) A diadem is the crown of royalty denoting rule.

2) But a stephanos was the laurel crown given to the winner of the race.

b. No wonder we are told to rejoice at tribulation because when we endure it because we are Christians we gain ultimate victory over Satan.

c. Here is a bit of logic if you are mature enough to accept it: Satan literally batters himself to destruction trying to defeat Jesus Christ and His body.

- 1) When Jesus was upon the earth Satan caused Him to suffer in order to remain loyal to God.
- 2) And when we remain loyal to Jesus he will also cause us to suffer.
- 3) Satan brushed Jesus' heel, but his head was crushed in the process.
- 4) John told us in 1 John 3: 5-8... "And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

- a) Jesus destroyed Satan by enduring suffering.
- b) And He destroys the works of Satan in us and in that process we suffer.
- c) The trials and tribulations we endure are making us perfect and mature, and they are eliminating Satan's influence in our lives (no wonder we should rejoice!).

d. Our crown is a "stephanos" (Greek) or "victoria" (Latin).

- 1) The victory of Christ over Satan came after Jesus suffered, bled and died on the cross at His resurrection.
- 2) Our victory will come the same way. There are trials and temptations to endure. We have to learn to die to ourselves and live through Christ's death. Our resurrection to eternal glory is coming and assured to us. I can hardly wait. God help us remain faithful till it comes!
- 3) We win by standing firm against Satan's trials and attacks.
- 4) Why does a Christian stand up for what is right? He does it for the glory of it to God's praise.

5. (1:12) God promises "life" to "those who love Him."

a. Love is the proper motivating power for us to endure temptations or trials for God.

- 1) Little Johnny is good while mamma is with him....why? Because mamma will met out due recompense of reward if little Johnny is not good, and he knows it.
 - a) The reason a lot of little children are not well behaved is because they know mamma will not met out due recompense of reward, therefore; they are not afraid to misbehave.
 - b) My mom was very fair with us. She always listened to our excuse before she met out due recompense of reward.

2) But why will little Johnny be good when mamma is not there? Only love for mamma will make him be good then.

b. Why are some kids well behaved in college and some sow wild oats? Why are some young men righteous even when he goes off to the army? Why do some young married couples faithful to the Lord's church and others not?

- 1) Love makes the difference.
 - 2) Those who were loved and learned to love mom and dad learned not to shame mom and dad by misbehaving.
 - 3) And those who learned to love were introduced to Jesus by that love and learned to love God and the same rule carries effect in our relationship with God.
- c. 1 John 4:8 & 16 states that God is love.
 - d. That love....or God in us....causes us to be faithful whether anyone is looking or not.

B. THE TEST OF INWARD TEMPTATIONS (1:13-15).

1. (1:13) The Source of Temptations. James says, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone."
 - a. The word "tempted" comes from **peirazo** (peirazoo) = to test (objectively), that is, endeavor, scrutinize, entice, discipline:—assay, examine, go about, prove, tempt (-er), try. It is "an enticement to sin."
 - b. We do not have the right to blame God for being tempted though many do.
 - 1) We tend to blame God: Adam said to God, "This woman You gave me, she did give me and I did eat." Old Adam was trying to blame God for what he himself had decided to do.
 - a) Adam was saying, "This woman made me do it," and it was understood that if God had not given him the woman he would have never done it.
 - b) So God was to blame.
 - 2) We do that too..."You made me....so it is your fault."
 - c. James show us that we as free moral agents are solely responsible for our own actions. This is a rare concept today!
 - d. Temptations or enticements come in many forms....
 - 1) A desire to get drunk....is an enticement or temptation.
 - 2) A desire to have what belongs to someone else...is an enticement or temptation.
 - 3) A desire to offer God token service and not committed service is also an enticement and temptation.
 - 4) Temptations come from our own desires.
 - a) When Jesus wanted to avoid the cross it was a temptation because as the Son of God he could have avoided it.
 - b) Therefore, temptations come from within us...not from God.
 - e. God is not the source of temptations.

- 1) God cannot be tempted to do evil for He is good.
 - 2) Nor does God tempt man to do evil. God's only desire is that we do good.
 - a) A man far from home sitting in an airport terminal, if a pretty young woman comes and sits down beside him, can he say God sent her to test his fidelity to his wife?
 - b) Can he say, "God you made me with this sensual desire of the flesh, and You are to blame for my temptation to fulfill these desires which burn within me?"
 - c) This is exactly what the gay community tries to do about their cravings for homosexual encounters. They say, "I was created, or I was born, with this tendency" in an attempt to blame God.
 - 3) Look at what God promises us about temptation: 1 Cor. 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."
 - a) We do not have to give in to our lusts.
 - b) We want (that is desire) to give in to our lusts!
 - 4) Is God ready to stand with us during temptation or trial? YES!! And Satan is defeated by our faith in Jesus when we endure the temptation.
- f. What about God hardening Pharaoh's heart.....isn't that tempting man?
- 1) If you read Exodus, ten times it says Pharaoh hardened his heart. Five times it says God hardened it, and five times it says Pharaoh hardened it.
 - a) God would send a plague which was a miraculous intervention till Pharaoh relented and said, "Ok, you can go..."
 - b) Then God would remove the plague, and Pharaoh would change his mind... his heart would harden.
 - 2) So God hardened his heart by taking away the plagues....He did not make Pharaoh do what Pharaoh did.
 - a) He did use what Pharaoh did to work out His own purpose.
 - b) His power was never thwarted by Pharaoh's rebellion....His power worked through what Pharaoh did.
 - c) Such is the awesome power of our God, but He did not make Pharaoh do what Pharaoh did....Pharaoh chose to do what he did and suffered the consequences of his choices.
2. (1:14-15) There is an evil purpose behind temptations. James says, "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."
- a. Temptation's purpose is to draw us away from God. Jesus' purpose is to provide us with a way to draw near to God (Hebrews 10:22).
 - b. Our text shows us that our own lust (which is strong desires) gives Satan power to carry us away or tempt us.

- c. The term “**drawn or carried away**” comes from **exelko** (ex-el'-ko) = to drag forth, that is, (figuratively) to entice (to sin):—draw away. It means to be “taken in tow.”
- d. “**Lust**” comes from **epithumia** (epithumia) = strong or passionate desire.
- 1) This word was used by Jesus when He said, “**I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer**” (Luke 22:15).
 - 2) In Sesotho the word for “will” is “takatso” = strong desire. So in Sesotho when you say, “We must do the will of God” you are really saying, “You must do the lust of God.”
 - a) Here’s the point: Lust is not the problem....it is who’s lust we follow.
 - b) Our lust draws us away from God to unrighteousness.
 - c) But God’s lust draws us to God and to righteousness.
 - 3) Satan is a master of using a good thing and making it evil. Sin is a perversion of a good thing God has provided. It is carrying a good thing to excess.
 - a) For example: fornication is a perversion of a God given sexual desires.
 - b) Homosexuality is a perversion of these same God given sexual desires.
 - c) Hate is a perversion of our God given ability to feel anger.
 - d) Or gluttony is a perversion of our God given and needed hunger for nourishment.
- e. Our strong points become our weak points.....
- 1) A very caring preacher loves and has a strong desire to help others. Satan will try to get him into a sinful situation with a sister in the congregation whom he as genuinely trying to help as it started out. We’ve always got to guard against lust....desiring instead the desires of God.
 - 2) A capable leader and elder in the church who is chosen as an elder because of his leadership abilities and his strong desire to lead God’s people can be led astray. Satan can cause him to become filled with pride and self importance
 - 3) The examples are endless....
- f. Not only are we “**carried away**” by our own lusts, we are “**enticed.**” This comes from **deleazo** (del-eh-ad'-zo) = to entrap, that is, (figuratively) delude:—allure, beguile, entice. This is a hunting term; to entice means to catch using bait.
- 1) Satan does the enticing...
 - 2) His bait is our own strong desires.
- g. (v.15) Full grown lust is sin which results in death. “Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”
- h. (v.15) That which is in us which gives power to Satan is our lusts or our strong desires. Selfish desires are the power of temptation.
- 1) Sin is like cancer....it destroys life.

- 2) The only hope for a cure from sin is radical surgery.
 - a) We must work to remove sin from our own lives.
 - b) Repentance is the radical surgery. Faith in God leads to repentance from sin.
- 3) Lust is the power we give Satan that leads us to sin.
 - a) This lust is described by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. He says, "But I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart"(Matthew 5:28).
 - This is not a casual glance at an underdressed woman.....is it?
 - It is a long, desiring, lingering stare at another person to commit sin.
- When we desire to do wrong is when we give Satan power to lead us to evil.
 - a) If we control the lust, what do you suppose will happen to the sin?
 - Are we controlling our desires?



LESSON FOUR

Faith and Our Attitude Toward God's Word (1)

1:19-25

Southgate Church of Christ

Milt Langston

REVIEW

- **What is the theme of James? (The necessity of wholeheartedness in our faith).**
- **What is the Joy of enduring trials? (It proves that we believe in God).**
- **What is the benefit of enduring trials? (It produces patience which develops maturity or completeness!).**
- **What do we need to understand all this? (Wisdom).**
- **What man does James say is blessed by God? (The one who endures trials still believing)**
- **What does God send? (Only good things)**
- **What does Satan use to draw us away from God during temptation? (Our own strong desires)**
- **What is the result of strong desires without restraint? (sin)**
- **Sin full-grown results in what? (death)**

[I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS \(1:1-11\).](#)

- A. The Salutation and Greeting (1:1).
- B. The Joy and Value of Trials (1:2-4).
- C. The Wisdom to Understand Trials (1:5-8)
- D. The Trials of the Poor and of the Rich (1:9-11). Satan attacks the poor man's faith through his poverty, and he attacks the rich man's faith through his riches....

II. OUR FAITH TESTED FROM WITHIN (1:12-18).

- A. The Blessings of God for Enduring Trials (1:12).
- B. The Test of Inward Temptations (1:13-15).
- C. The True Nature of God's Giving (1:16-18).

III. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD (1:19-2:26).

A. PROPER ATTITUDES ARE DEVELOPED BY THE WORD OF GOD (1:19-25).

- James is hard to outline because some of his points change from one point to another abruptly.
- Verses 19-20 are transitional verses introducing a new subject: "Our Faith Tested by Our Attitude Towards the Word." It is kind of like an introduction to a new train of thought.

1. (1:19-21) AN ATTITUDE OF MEEKNESS HELPS US HEAR (RECEIVE) THE WORD.

a. James describes meekness here, and starts out by saying, "This you know, my beloved brethren."

- 1) One of the works of teaching is to teach or remind people of things they already know.
- 2) We need to be reminded of things we already know...because we are not doing it!

b. Meekness is being "quick to hear."

1) A proud person is so full of himself that he cannot listen to others. So, James says, "Don't be so full of yourself that you will not listen to others.....that you will not listen to God."

- a) Have you ever seen a person who cannot learn because he is always talking?
- b) Its hard to listen with your mouth open.

2) The word used here is **tachus** (tachus) = prompt and ready. The idea is to be alert.

- a) You and I need to be alert and alive to every little word God has said.

b) If we miss what God says to us....look what can happen.

* In the Louis L'Amour books when the pioneer was out in the woods he stood perfectly still so he could hear the slightest sound.

* That's the idea here....strain to hear God's word!

c. Meekness is being "slow to speak."

1) The idea here is as we are listening attentively to God, be slow to speak.

2) This is hard for young and inexperienced men. They tend not to want to waste their time listening and speak up too soon.

3) Listen to God's word:

a) "A prudent man conceals knowledge, But the heart of fools proclaims folly" (Prov. 12:23). What that means is that a wise person doesn't tell all he knows, and a fool tries to tell more than he knows.

b) Have you ever seen someone who speaks before the person he is listening to has finished? Solomon says, "He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him" (Prov. 18:13).

c) Solomon will say, "He who guards his mouth and his tongue, Guards his soul from troubles" (Prov. 21:23) which will go right along with what James will say in James chapter three.

d. Meekness is being "slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."

1) Remember that these verses are James introduction to his teachings concerning how our attitude toward the word of God tests our faith in God.

2) Remember Solomon's exhortation in Proverbs 29:11, "A fool always loses his temper, But a wise man holds it back."

3) Most members of the Lord's church that I know have worked hard to preserve the truth. They if they are really Christians have also worked hard to live by the truth....we respect it.

a) But if we get angry with those who are involved in false religion, will it serve God's righteousness?

b) Example of brother George Raseleso.....

c) Example of studying with the old man in Ohio....

d) Our anger can confuse the truth....there are some who are going to ignore the truth....they do not love it like we do....our wrath will not serve God's righteousness, therefore; it aids and assists error and not the truth.

e) Debating does not save the lost....Jesus instead teaches: "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you"(Matthew 7:6-7).

* Anger is trusting in self.

* Turning to someone else more receptive is trusting God.

* Anger is not asking, seeking nor knocking.

f) It is not we who convert the sinner....it is the word of God....that is why we listen....try to save the lost by coaxing them to listen to it too!

4) Our attitude must become a complement to the truth, but anger can become a detriment to the truth.

a) They might slap you for teaching the truth....turn the other cheek.

b) They may criticize you for teaching the truth....endure the trial for God's sake and He will make your faith stronger for it!

5) We cannot build up God by tearing down His creation with our anger....love is the victory that was introduced by Jesus our Lord.

e. James says, "Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness."

1) "Filthiness" comes from **rhuparia** (rhuparia) = literally wax build-up in the ears translated moral filth. "Wickedness" comes from **kakia** (kak-ee-ah) = naughtiness or depravity. A good synonym would be "good for nothingness."

a) When a young man visits an X-rated movie, will that movie make him think of Jesus and salvation?

b) When we watch the sit-coms on television that depict a less than wholesome lifestyle, will that which we absorb make us more spiritual? Soap operas?

c) No, it is like a wax build up in your ear till you cannot hear the truth about sin anymore.

d) Unless we involve our young children, our teenagers, even our young married folks in wholesome fellowship....we stand the danger of losing them to the filth which is present in the world's activities....like wax built up it will block out the truth.

e) Filthiness is anything that keeps us from hearing the truth....do you see why it is so dangerous to begin to forsake the fellowship of Christians....Satan is trying to drag us away from the truth....to make us deaf to it.

f) The "filthiness" blocks us from the truth, and then we fill up on the "wickedness"....that's the goal of Satan.

f. Finally in verse 21 he finishes by saying, "in humility receive the word implanted."

1) The word "implanted" comes from **emphutos** (em-pho-tos) – implanted or engrafted. The implanting is directly related to our receiving.

a) Paul says that those who perish will do so because they refused to love the truth (2 Thess. 2:10).

b) It is possible to reject the word that saves; it is also possible to receive it.

c) The work of teaching and studying God word is to place the truth in our hearts as a foundation for our faith....this will fill us grafting into us as it were spiritual things instead of carnal things.

2) Jeremiah prophesied in Jeremiah 31 which is quoted in Hebrews 8 that the new covenant would be a taught religion.

a) In the old covenant a person was born a Jew and had to be taught about Jehovah.

b) In the new covenant a person is taught about Jehovah and is then born again. **"For they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the LORD!"**

c) Jesus commanded His disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

....Teaching is necessary.

....Hearing is necessary ([Romans 10:14](#)).

....Then after conversion more teaching is necessary, "...teaching them..."

3) The word of God is used in two figures in scripture:

a) First it is like a seed planted which grows and bears fruit ([Luke 8:11](#)).

....The word planted in us bears fruit for God.

....This is the same figure used by James here.

b) But the word is also figuratively the Holy Spirit's sword ([Eph. 6:17](#); [Heb. 4:12](#)).

....Jesus used the word as His spiritual sword to defeat Satan when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness.

....No where in scripture does the Bible teach that the Holy Spirit works through our carnal feelings or emotions, yet; most today attribute feelings or emotions to the Holy Spirit's presence.

....The Holy Spirit is a gift to the saved ([Acts 2:38](#); [5:32](#)).

....Romans 8:10 says, **"If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness."**

....This is spirit with a small "s."

....So the human spirit and the Holy Spirit have fellowship after salvation. This is not necessarily an emotional experience as much as it is a matter of faith.

....The Holy Spirit guides us and uses the word to cut away the evil in our own lives.

....We empower the Holy Spirit through our study of the word.

....The word and the Holy Spirit are inexorably linked. I would not know that I received God's Spiritual presence in my life had I not read about it in the word. I can prove it through an examination of the fruits of the Spirit listed in [Galatians 5:22-23](#) which will be present in the life of a Spirit led Christian.

....When I say that the Holy Spirit and the word are linked, I am not saying that the Holy Spirit and the word are the same thing. I know men who know the word, can quote it and have a full measure of it memorized. But they are reprobates in whose life the Holy Spirit is absent.

....Does the Holy Spirit draw men? Bible hints that Jesus does ([John 6:45](#); [12:32](#)).

....Remember that the word came to us through men inspired by the Holy Spirit....elaborate about gifts of the Spirit...

....[Romans 8:26-27](#) shows that the Holy Spirit's communion with our spirit helps us in times of prayer....this shows that the Holy Spirit is not just the word, but since Jesus is the incarnation of the word ([John 1:1ff](#)), the Holy Spirit of Christ and the Father is definitely linked to the word....because the word of God and the Spirit of God are both of the truth!

- 4) The word "humility" comes from **prautes** (prah-oo-tace) = mildness, humility or meekness.
 - 5) This means that we are to be teachable....it shows a desire to grow....
 - 6) Meekness is the attitude of the one who receives the word....of the one being taught....of the one hearing the truth.
 - a) If you cannot be taught you cannot be saved.
 - b) If you cannot be taught you cannot learn.
 - c) But a meek person will allow the word to cut from his life what needs to be cut away making the word the Holy Spirit's sword.
- g. And lastly James says about this implanted word of God: "**which is able to save your souls.**"
- 1) We need more teachers who teach what is needed to save man's soul.
 - 2) There is no greater gift to another human being than the salvation of his soul.
 - a) If we give our children great gifts of material blessings....even if we give them the ability to earn riches on their own....it will tarnish and last only the days of our sojourn.
 - b) The greatest gift we can give our children, our friends, our relatives....is to teach them how to be saved.
 - 3) Salvation comes through the teaching of God's word!
 - 4) Some general observations about soul winning.
 - a) Can we save the lost if we do not pray?
 - b) Can we save the lost if we do not try to befriend others?

- c) Can we save the lost all by ourselves?
- d) Can we save the lost if we compromise the truth?
- e) Will standing for and proclaiming the truth cost us anything? What? Why?

2. (1:22-25) AN ATTITUDE OF FAITH HELPS US DO WHAT THE WORD SAYS.

a. (1:22) Christianity is not a spectator activity. It is not a profession, but a fellowship together with others and with God. James says, **“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”**

1) In the Greek....

a) The word **“hearer”** comes from **akroates** (ak-ro-at-ace) = to listen, a hearer. The idea is one who attends a lecture.

b) The word

LESSON FIVE

Faith and Our Attitude to God's Word (Pure Religion)(2)

1:26-27

Southgate Church of Christ

Milt Langston

REVIEW

- **What is the theme of James? (The necessity of wholeheartedness in our faith).**
- **What is the Joy of enduring trials? (It proves that we believe in God).**
- **What is the benefit of enduring trials? (It produces patience which develops maturity or completeness).**
- **What do we need to understand all this? (Wisdom).**
- **What man does James say is blessed by God? (The one who endures trials still believing).**
- **What does God Send? (Only good things) In what form do some of these good things come?**
- **What does Satan use to draw us away from God during temptation? (Our own strong desires)**
- **What is the result of strong desires without our restraint? (Sin).**
- **What is the result of full grown sin? (Death).**

- **What should be our first response to hearing the word? (Meekness).**
- **What desired result does God want from our hearing the word? (Doing it).**

I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS (1:1-11).

II. OUR FAITH TESTED FROM WITHIN (1:12-18).

III. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD (1:19-2:26).

A. THE PROPER ATTITUDE IS DEVELOPED BY THE WORD OF GOD (1:19-25).

1. (1:19-21) An Attitude of Meekness is Needed to Help us Hear the Word.
2. (1:22-25) An Attitude of Faith & Trust Helps us Do What the Word Says.

B. THE TEST FOR PURE AND ACCEPTABLE RELIGION (1:26-27).

1. (1:26) If anyone is truly religious he will bridle his tongue. “If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.”
 - a. The way this is worded indicates a test.
 - 1) There were obviously some who thought themselves to be religious when they were not religious.

In verses 19-25 of chapter one we saw that a Christian’s attitude is developed by the word of God. Starting in verse 26 of that chapter through the second chapter, we get the application of the formula laid down (LOOKING, DOING, BEING BLESSED). Our faith is now tested by the attitude we possess compared to the attitude we should have as prescribed by James.

- TEST ONE – Our religion.
- TEST TWO – Discrimination.
- TEST THREE – Faith and Works.
 - 2) There were religious pretenders in James’ day and there are religious pretenders in our day.
 - a) Our job in this Bible Study is to make sure that it is not us.
 - b) That we are not deceiving our own hearts with a pretentious religion.
 - b. James in this text tells us how to spot or identify a person with a pretentious religion....they cannot hold their tongue.

- 1) A person who will not listen to another person's point of view (even if that person is wrong and in need of instruction) is a religious pretender.
 - 2) A person who does not have enough faith in Jesus' ability to help others but feels he himself must control the thinking of others has an imperfect religion.
 - a) This is how many false religions have started.
 - b) Men with an imperfect religion could not control their own speaking and introduced false teaching which does not come from God in an attempt to help God out.
 - 3) Remember the theme of James: The need for concentrated faith. It takes faith not to shoot your mouth off too quickly while you listen to what someone else is saying.....or for that fact to listen to God.
 - 4) Jesus demonstrated this type of faith by placing confidence in Peter, in James, in John and in others.
 - a) After Peter's denial Jesus still trusted him to preach the first gospel sermon.
 - b) Jesus was leading Peter. He did not try to control Peter. Peter's gift to Jesus was his desire to serve Him.
 - c) God takes our desires which motivate our efforts which are not perfect, and by His death makes them acceptable.
 - d) The desire and efforts which came from Peter and come from us are the fruit of Jesus' own faith and His labors.
- c. Sometimes Christians must hold their tongue and become "slow to speak" to give God time to work on others the way He is working on us.
- d. The kind of faith James is stressing relies upon God's fellowship with our service to Him as we deal with others.
- 1) An unbeliever will leave God out of the mix.
 - 2) And his speech betrays his true belief. Paul says it this way, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear" (Eph. 4:29).
 - a) **EXAMPLE**... If a young brother stands up giving a devotional and gets his doctrine wrong....
 - b) Religious pretenders will shoot him down with the possibility of destroying his faith.
 - c) But a person with a pure religion born of a wholehearted faith in God will gently speak and lead this young Christian back to the truth preserving and establishing his faith making it ever stronger into the word of God.
- e. Many times we think this "speech" here refers to unwholesome speech, and while a person with a pure religion will certainly not have such a type of speech; the context indicates that it refers to the type of speech we use in religious matters. Peter will describe in 1 Peter 4:11 the type of faith filled speech we should have: "Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is

serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

2. (1:26) An impure religion is “vain.” The quality of a person’s religion, which fails the test, is that it is vain. It wastes time and effort.

a. “Vain” comes from **mataios** (mat-ah-yos) = “empty, futile, fruitless; failing to reach the goal.”

b. A person with a vain religion does not mean his religion lacks content, nor does it mean that his religion lacks faith and commitment....

1) The religious people condemned by Jesus in Matthew 7 had a religion, which accomplished “**many mighty works**” in Jesus’ Name, but it failed.

2) In 1 Corinthians 15:17 Paul states that if we do not believe that Jesus rose from the dead, our faith is in vain (remember that faith represents what we are doing for God).

a) The implication is that we must believe **ALL** of what God says, not just **SOME** of what we want to believe. Accepting God as God means believing all that He said.

b) We cannot pick and choose what we want to believe from God’s word.

3) In Titus 3:9; 1 Corinthians 3:20; Matthew 15:8-9 and 1 Peter 1:18 the discussion is about a “**vain manner of life**” which is not living, but dying...which is not happy, but sad...it is not fulfilling but empty. Therefore, vanity means it does not get the job done!

c. Vain religion may be full and faith motivated, but it does not get the job done. Vain religion fails in its purpose: to save our soul.

➤ God’s intent for our faith is that it drive us into activity and action....a faith that acts fulfills its purpose and it is not vain!

➤ But when faith does not produce action on our part, it has failed in its purpose. It did not reach the goal God intends it to fulfill.

➤ We can conclude that faith which reaches its goal of salvation is...#1. Based upon the word of God and #2. Produces action on the part of the believer in an active fellowship with God.

3. (1:27) Here James further defines pure religion: “**This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress.**”

a. “Pure” comes from **katharos** (kath-ar-os) = “authentic, genuine, clean, innocent, pure.”

b. The word “undefiled” comes from **amiantos** (am-ee-an-tos) = “undefiled, unsoiled, undefiled.” The idea is holy and unspotted as God designed it to be.

c. Pure religion is a life practice of fulfilling the needs of others. The word “visit” in our text comes from **episkeptomai** (ep-ee-skep-tom-ahee) = the idea from this Greek word is to “go to see about and relieve” a need.

- 1) The same root word here gives us **episkopos** or “overseer” from which we get our word “bishop.” The idea is to “superendend or oversee” in relation of a parson’s needs. This is not a social visit, but to go in and see what needs done and then see that what needs to be done is done.
 - a) It doesn’t mean knowing about a need.
 - b) It doesn’t even mean caring about and feeling about a need in others.
 - c) It does mean doing somethinga bout the needs of the widows and orphans (and anyone else for that matter).
- 2) Paul puts it this way, “**Do nothing from selfish or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself, do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others**” (Phil. 2:3-4).
- 3) Pure religion, says James, is to do what we have learned to do from God’s word. Remember verse 22 of this chapter: “**Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says**” (NIV).
 - a) Getting back to the illustration of the young Christian who giving a devotional gets his doctrine wrong....

A Christian who’s religion is pure will know that this young Christian has not mastered his doctrine yet, nor has he probably mastered Christian practice yet, instead of being quick to rebuke the Christian with a pure religion will be slow to speak. That doesn’t mean he will not speak, because this young person needs teaching. It just means that the Christian will take care not to damage the weak brother’s faith. This is acting like Christ acts. This is practicing Christianity. This is pure religion. This is being a doer of the word.

The over bearing pretending Christian will not consider the faith of others, but in a spirit of superiority will in his own mind defend the faith by destroying the weaker brother’s faith. This is not a practice of his religion; it is an abuse of it.

To put it bluntly....these actions betray faith in God.

- b) We cannot be spiritual if we act in a carnal, hateful and un-Christ like manner. James would put it this way: We cannot forsake the need to teach the young Christian back to the truth, but neither can we destroy the young man’s faith by speaking too quickly and too harshly.
- 4) In our text we are told to “**visit orphans and widows in their distress.**”
 - a) Because “**visit**” has as its root “overseer” this is the same type of religion an elder in the church is to have. Remember that an elder is the spiritual best we can find in the church.

- b) Also, Jesus uses the same word “visit” in Matthew 25 when He says, “I was sick, and you visited Me.”
- c) In the church where pure religion is practiced: The hungry are fed, the sick are cared for, the lonely and imprisoned are visited (or cared for).
- d) Let’s get practical: Can you give me some examples how we are to visit one another with a view to fulfilling needs?

....What about a woman who goes to the hospital to have a baby. Do we ask her, “Is there anything I can do for you?” What will she say?

....What should we do?

....What about a single mother’s who’s son needs to hear the facts of life from a father figure....what can we do to visit her in a pure religion’s sense of the word?

d. “Orphans” comes from the word, **orphanos** (or-fan-os) = this has come to mean: “bereaved, parentless, comfortless and fatherless.” But it comes to us with a far deeper meaning in the Greek: It means to be destitute; one who is without what is essential to survive (in this context a child left alone without parents).

- 1) An “orphan” can be anyone who lacks what they need to survive.
- 2) There should be no spiritual orphans in the Lord’s church because “pure religion” will see to the needs of those who are destitute.

4. (1:27) Not only is pure religion seeing to the needs of others, but it is also being set apart from the world’s kind of thinking or defilement. James says, “and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”

- a. The word “from” in this text (KJV & ASV) comes from the word **apo** (apo) which is a preposition of separation.
- b. The church of our Lord is to be led from God and not from man. **READ** Paul’s commentary on this subject in [1 Corinthians 5:9-13](#).
- c. Our attitude toward God’s word is a test of our faith. If we really do believe we will have a religion or at least be striving for a religion which is described here.

Acceptable Religion Does What God Plans

It is having a manner of speech that reflects our attitude toward the will of God.

It is a religion that works to fulfill the needs of others as it sees those needs, this will reflect our faith in God’s instructions found in the word.

It is also a religion that maintains a fellowship of Christian morals separate from the morality of the world which damns man's soul.



LESSON SIX

Faith and Our Attitude Toward God's Word (Loving Others) (3)

2:1-13

Southgate Church of Christ

Milt Langston

REVIEW

- **What is the theme of James? (The necessity of wholeheartedness in our faith).**
- **What does God Send? (Only good things) In what form do some of these good things come?**
- **What does Satan use to draw us away from God during temptation? (Our own strong desires)**
- **What should our first responses to the word be? (faith & meekness)**
- **What should be the result of our listening to or receiving the implanted word? (doing it)**
- **What three things can we use to test to see if our religion is acceptable? (Our speech, actions & morality)**

I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS (1:1-18).

II. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD (1:19-2:26).

A. THE PROPER ATTITUDE IS DEVELOPED BY THE WORD OF GOD (1:19-25).

B. THE TEST FOR PURE AND ACCEPTABLE RELIGION (1:26-27).

C. THE TEST OF LOVING OTHERS WHO ARE DIFFERENT (2:1-13).

In verses 19-25 of chapter one we saw that a Christian's attitude is developed by the word of God. Starting in verse 26 of that chapter through the second chapter, we get the application of the formula laid down (LOOKING, DOING, BEING BLESSED). Our faith is now tested by the attitude we possess compared to the attitude we should have as prescribed by James.

- TEST ONE – Our religion.
- TEST TWO – Discrimination.
- TEST THREE – Faith and Works.

1. Attitudes Towards the Rich and the Poor (2:1-7).

a. (2:1) Don't have faith that makes room for discrimination towards others who are different. "My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism." Notice the NRSV here: "My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?"

1) "Hold" ἔχετε (echo) = to have....the idea is to possess something.

a) Have you ever thought of where we get our faith?

1] ...We did not buy it.

2] ...We did not earn it.

3] ...We did not even inherit it...we may have learned it, but we didn't inherit it.

b) In John 6:28-29 Jesus shows that God entrusts us with faith. The disciples ask Jesus, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

1] In a sense we have our faith; we possess our faith; we guard our faith; and we can even disgrace our faith.

2] But we would have nothing to believe in for salvation had not God worked and planned Jesus' redemptive work upon this earth.

2) "Do not hold....faith....with an attitude of personal favoritism." We are not to tarnish our God given faith by having it together with respect for persons.

a) The term "respect of persons" as in the ASV or "personal favoritism" comes from ὀφθαλμοῦσι προσκολλησῶμεθα (prosopolempsia) = to reject or receive by face. To make judgments on another on the basis of looks or appearances.

1] This would include race differences, class differences, educational differences, dress, or outward appearance differences.

2] James says that it tarnishes the glory of Christ when we discriminate.

b) If we know that our God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), the faith we have that connects us to Him should also be void of discrimination.

b. (2:2-4) An example of the type of prejudice we are not to have: “For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and you say to the poor man, ‘You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,’ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?”

1) Here James illustrates how we discriminate (or how we judge by face value – Greek).

a) Rich man looks important.

b) Poor man looks unimportant.

c) Who is not important to God?

d) One is not more important than another. One race is not superior to the One who created them all.

e) Remember Samuel could not see in Jesse’s sons what God could see in their hearts.

2) The phrase “pay special attention” is translated “regard” in ASV, “respect” in KJV. It comes from the Greek word $\epsilon\pi\text{-}i\text{-}b\text{-}l\text{-}e\text{-}p\text{-}o$ (ep-i-ble-po) = to gaze upon, to take note of differences. It means to discriminate.

a) The brethren here discriminated by forcing a seating arrangement.

1] Much like we used to force black people to sit in the back.

2] This type of discrimination is opposed to Christian faith.

3) It is not wrong for one person to prefer a certain spot....as a matter of fact try getting some poor old sister’s spot, and you risk injury...but it is wrong to force a person to sit in a certain spot to show honor or dishonor by position.

4) (2:4) James analyzes the sin of discrimination calling it judging others. “Have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?”

a) Listen to Gal. 3:26-28, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

b) God calls men by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14).

1] It is God who makes the call.

2] It is Jesus who chooses me (John 15:16).

c) Discrimination is not of God, therefore; it is not spiritual.

d) It is worldly.

e) It usurps God’s choice. This leads to verse 5....

c. (2:5) Discrimination nullifies God's choice. "Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?"

- 1) Does God call the rich of this world too?
- 2) Who are the "poor of this world?"
 - a) What are some of the things the world values which would make a person rich or poor "of the world?"
 - b) What are some of the things which we should value above these things?
- 3) How is a poor man rich in faith?

d. (2:6) Discrimination attacks the poor man's dignity dishonoring him. "But you have dishonored the poor man."

- 1) I believe fornication and adultery are wrong because it lowers a human being created in God's image to an object of sensual fulfillment. I believe the same principle applies to discrimination.
 - a) A person may be of a different ethnic group. He may be poor. He may be uneducated.
 - b) But no one created by God is unimportant, and we do not have the right to devalue by our actions anyone God has made in His own image.
 - c) Every kind of person deserves his own dignity, and our respect.
 - 1] Illustration: What the insulting term "boy" has done to the black culture in America.
 - 2] I heard brother James Maxwell, a black preacher who was an administrator at Southwestern Christian College, say: "God said that we are to be the light of the world, but instead of the church being the headlights of racial integration, we are the tail lights of it."
 - a] That was a biting criticism.
 - b] But there is some truth in it (Marshall Keeble).

2) The righteousness of Christ which is manifested in His church is the answer to such things as racial discrimination....or discrimination of any kind, but it is also the only way we can work our way out of cultural norms which are wrong.

e. (2:6b-7) It is better to pay honor to God (and His creation equally) than to honor people of prestige. "Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?"

- 1) In the culture of James' day it was customary for Jews to honor a rich man as being blessed by God.
- 2) So these Christians James is addressing in this epistle were honoring these rich successful folks when it was these very one who oppressed the family of believers.
- 3) So James is accusing them not being very smart....but a little dumb.
 - a) They were giving the rich man a place of honor in their assemblies when he was not very interested in Jesus and salvation at all.

- b) Yet when a poor man who might very well be interested in the gospel, they were placing him in a position of dishonor.
 - c) It did not make very good evangelistic sense.
- f. Notice what we have learned about the testing of our faith....
- 1) Many people in the Lord's church will never be tempted to commit adultery, to steal, to murder or to lie....
 - 2) But Satan sneaks up on us and tests our attitude toward people that are different to see if we honor God's instructions.
 - a) If your faith is not being tested one way...
 - b) It will be tested in another way...
 - c) And the day of testing will come in the mundane and ordinary activities of our life.

2. Love eliminates discrimination (2:8-13).

- a. Now James launches off into the solution to the problem....
- b. (2:8-9) James contrasts the difference between the "royal law" of love to discrimination: "If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors."
 - 1) The "royal law" = the law of the king, therefore; it is Christ's law.
 - a) READ JOHN 13:34-35.
 - b) READ 1 JOHN 2:7-11.
 - 1] Discrimination is darkness that comes from sin.
 - 2] Loving others...even when they are different...is light that comes from Jesus.
 - 2) Notice the contrast: If we practice love with others we do well, but if we discriminate, we sin against the royal law (James is not teaching us to be legalists; he is teaching us to examine our faith....it will be void of discrimination!).
 - a) "You are committing sin" does not mean: "You are practicing sin."
 - 1] This comes from *ἔργαζομαι* (ergazomai) = more ministering to, with an occupation in mind. It would best be translated "working out into the open."
 - 2] This shows that we are somewhat discriminatory by nature...we are being told to suppress our natural tendencies. We are being told not to bring it out into the open.
 - a] Look at very little kids.
 - b] Why is the new kid at school persecuted for a period of time before he is accepted?
 - c] Why do children tease the kid with big ears?
 - 3] It is a sin....

- a] The world persecutes Christians because they are different.
 - b] We should never have a faith that allows ourselves to persecute someone else because they are different...it is worldly, not Christ like.
- b) Discrimination is born out of fear and a feeling of inferiority.....
- c. (2:10-11) James' commentary on the royal law: "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,' also said, 'DO NOT COMMIT MURDER.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law."
- 1) Remember that James is writing to a Jewish audience. He addresses the "twelve tribes of the dispersion."
 - 2) Jews understood that when a person was accused of murder, he could not justify it by claiming never to have committed adultery.
 - a) Law condemns law breaking and justifies law keeping. Keeping one law does not make up for another broken.
 - 1] J.D. Bales used to tell the story of a man accused of stealing chickens and hauled into court. Three witnesses all said they saw him do it. The chicken thief tried to justify himself in the eyes of the court by bringing 30 other witnesses who told that they did not see him steal any chickens.
 - 2] It did not work!
 - b) And if you and I do not murder....if we do not steal nor commit adultery, it does not give us a right to discriminate.
 - 3)

James gives an important principle of law which agrees with Paul in Galatians chapter three: A sinner cannot justify himself for doing wrong because he does most things right.

- 4) Remember the theme of James....we cannot excuse one sin on the grounds that we are not guilty of other seemingly greater sins! Our faith must demand better obedience than that.
- 5) While it is true that God's grace covers all our sins and all our mistakes as we serve Him ([Remember 1 John 1:7](#)), grace's purpose was not and is not to allow us to indulge in sin in a half-hearted faith.
 - a) Do you remember the illustration of the young Christian who got his doctrine wrong in his devotional talk.
 - b) While the grace of God will cover such a mistake while the family around him corrects the mistake, it does not allow a person to willingly choose to do something wrong.
 - c) Grace was given to us to bring our practice up to the measure of our profession of faith in God's righteousness.

6) A modern day application of this principle might be: "The same God who said that we must be baptized also said that we must love and serve one another regardless of differences."

d. (2:12-13) James exhorts us to live as under the Law of Liberty! "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy..."

1) The world will be judged by God for every deed done, but Christians will be judged by the "law of liberty."

a) What is the law of liberty?

b) Let me suggest that it is salvation by grace through faith in the gospel.

1] READ ROMANS 8:1-2... "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."

a] The Law of Moses is called the "Law of sin and death."

b] Grace does not set us free from rules....we follow the commands of Christ. He said,

LESSON SEVEN

Faith and Our Attitude Toward God's Word (Faith & Works)(4)

2:14-26

Southgate Church of Christ

Milt Langston

REVIEW

- **What is the theme of James? (The necessity of wholeheartedness in our faith).**
- **What three things can we use to test to see if our religion is acceptable? (Our speech, actions & morality)**
- **Christian faith should not judge others more harshly than we judge ourselves. In James 2:1ff James tells us that our faith should be void of what? (discrimination)**
- **In 2:8-13 what will eliminate discrimination? (Christian love)**
- **What will win over judgment (2:13)? (Mercy)**

I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS (1:1-11).

II. OUR FAITH TESTED FROM WITHIN (1:12-18).

III. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD (1:19-2:26).

A. **THE PROPER ATTITUDE IS DEVELOPED BY THE WORD OF GOD (1:19-25).**

B. **THE TEST FOR PURE AND ACCEPTABLE RELIGION (1:26-27).**

C. **THE TEST OF LOVING OTHERS WHO ARE DIFFERENT (2:1-13).**

In verses 19-25 of chapter one we saw that a Christian's attitude is developed by the word of God. Starting in verse 26 of that chapter through the second chapter, we get the application of the formula laid down (LOOKING, DOING, BEING BLESSED). Our faith is now tested by the attitude we possess compared to the attitude we should have as prescribed by James.

- TEST ONE – Our religion.
- TEST TWO – Discrimination.
- TEST THREE – Faith and Works.

D. THE TEST OF THE WORKS OF OUR FAITH (2:14-26).

1. (2:14) Is James' view of faith and works different from Paul's view? "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?"

a. Compare Paul: "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one" (Romans 3:21-30). Paul declares that salvation is by faith!

1) There are some who think that James and Paul contradict each other. We are going to see that this is absolutely not true.

2) Martin Luther did not like James, but we must emphasize that he also did not adhere to the doctrine of Irresistible Grace or Faith Only as members of the church call it.

a) Faith Only or Grace Only are names we have given for the doctrine which finds its origins in the doctrine properly known as Irresistible Grace.

1] Irresistible Grace is a doctrine formulated from the teachings of John Calvin (he did not believe all this, but his teachings have been interpreted to mean it) that God chooses some for salvation and others for damnation by predestination, and it really does not matter what one does or does not do. Fate has been set before creation.

2] From this doctrine many religious groups believe that a person is saved by Spontaneous Regeneration. This means it is not what you do or do not do that saves you (see the Calvinistic thinking), but your decision which marks your salvation and identifies you as a part of the group God has chosen for salvation.

b) When members of the church call this false doctrine Faith Only or Grace Only what we mean is Faith without works and Grace without works as James states in James 2:24.

c) However we need to be very careful that we do not fall into the same trap Calvinists have made in creating denominational terms and denominational

interpretation. We do not need a “Church of Christ” creed here, but we need to be very careful to teach the Bible here. We need to make sure those we are talking to understand that when we say “faith only” as James does that we are not talking about Christian faith which includes works of service. What we are talking about is a counterfeit faith which is empty of obedience and works. We must also be very sure those we talk to understand that works of merit (as Paul says) have no place in Christian faith. In other words we need to get this down ourselves before we can ever explain it to others. Christian faith only is what a Calvinist is thinking about when he says “faith only will save you.” And we can agree with that. But we need him to know that Christian faith without works of service is nothing at all...it is no faith. That is what James is talking about. When talking to those who have fallen into false teaching we must make sure we both are talking about the same terms. We need to define “faith only” (as it is used by James) as a faith that does not honor the Lordship of Christ nor obeys His commandments. Otherwise it comes across as if we believe that faith plus works saves us, or that we believe that grace plus works saves us, and this is as unscriptural as denominational doctrine on this subject.

1] Unfortunately some immature Christians have espoused this “faith only” doctrine found in James to promote legalism which is also false teaching.

2] Hopefully this study in James will help us get a scriptural perspective instead of a traditional one or one we have adopted from someone else who has done the studying.

3] There is a need for us all to study to show ourselves approved....instead of taking someone else’s word for it.

b. Getting back to Paul’s teaching on faith, let’s summarize his teaching as follows:

1) Faith in Jesus = justification ([Romans 3:22, 26, 28](#)).

2) Faith in works = nothing at all ([Romans 3:27-28](#); [Ephesians 2:9](#)).

3) Faith in Jesus = works of service ([Titus 2:11-14](#); [Ephesians 2:10](#)).

4) It is obvious that the apostle is speaking of two different types of works:

a) Works of merit...

b) And works of righteousness.

5) Faith in works of merit Paul will insist such as the Jewish Law cannot save man, but faith in Jesus produces works of service or works of righteousness. (READ ROMANS 6:15-18 and discuss it).

c. Now we will find in our text today that James says: Faith in Jesus – works = nothing at all!

1) Is James different from Paul.....No!

2) What Paul means by “faith” James means by “works.”

a) Remember the theme of James: Wholeheartedness in our faith.

b) James is not talking about salvation by works; he is talking about salvation by Jesus!

c) Paul and James are talking about the same thing just taking different approaches.

3) Faith in the Bible is always associated with action...(i.e. Look at Hebrews cp.11)
....

a) "By faith Able offered..." = action.

b) "By faith Noah...prepared an ark..." = action.

c) "By faith Abraham...obeyed...." = action.

d) "By faith Abraham...offered up Isaac..." = action.

e) "By faith Isaac...blessed..." = action.

f) "By faith Jacob...blessed..." = action.

g) "By faith Joseph...made mention..." = action.

h) "By faith Moses....refused....left Egypt..." = action.

4) If you take away the actions you take away the faith because faith is what prompted Godly men and women to act in times past!

5) James takes it for granted that people knew that works are done trusting Jesus, because he is writing to a Christian audience.

a) Perhaps because he is writing to a primarily Jewish Christian audience he does not stress legalistic works of merit as does Paul.

b) Paul's problem involved Judaizing teachers who were trying to reestablish keeping the law as a means of salvation.

d. Neither James nor Paul condone the false teaching which has arisen today which suggests that God saves man separate and apart from any fellowship with man's obedience born of his faith in God (or as we have called it in the past: faith only or faith without works).

e. James does say that it is possible to have a faith in Jesus which is empty and void. Just as he suggested that it is possible to have a worthless religion, he now warns us that it is possible to have a worthless faith....

1) Saving faith is faith in Jesus!

2) Saving faith is a working faith.

3) A faith without works is not a saving faith.

1. (2:15-16) James' illustration that saving faith is working faith: "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?"

a. Remember James 1:27.... Acceptable religion is to actively seek and fulfill the needs of others. James again shows that we are obligated to seek out the needs of others.

1) To say, "be warmed and be filled" is saying the right words.

- a) It indicates the correct basis of our faith: **"Faith comes by hearing..."** (Romans 10:17).
 - 1] The word tells us that we ought to take care of the needs of others.
 - 2] Saying it shows that we know it.
 - b) But what about that faith if we do nothing?
 - 2) James is showing us that Christian faith is more than just going to church and praising God in a social setting.
 - 3) It is a profession or as the Bible puts it....it is a confession of faith!
 - a) Having faith enough to know something ought to be done is not enough....we need to know...
 - 1] That we should preach the gospel to the lost.
 - 2] That we should visit the weak and encourage the fainthearted...
 - b) But we do not really believe till our faith motivates us to become involved in works of service.
 - c) The church or body of Christ is like a family where each member finds a place and a chore to perform that helps the whole church carry out it's responsibilities.
 - 4) **ILLUSTRATION:** Another way of looking at it is this: Faith is the engine that drives our Christian life forward with active works. If we are not moving....our faith is dead, and it is time to look at our faith....work on it to get it working again.
 - b. The warning here in James is that it is possible to train ourselves not to see the needs of others—this exposes an immature and imperfect faith.
 - 1) In Africa when a person was baptized we went to a pond or tank of water. After the baptism the person doing the baptism and sometime the person being baptized had to change into warm clothing—they did it in the car or behind a bush—and everyone gave you privacy by not looking.
 - 2) It is possible for us to know of needs, but become used to just not looking or ignore those needs or excuse ourselves from getting involved.
 - 3) Later James will say, **"...to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin"** (4:17).
 - c. The bodily needs of others are important, but the spiritual needs are more important.
 - d. Action born of faith is needed to meet both these kinds of needs.
2. (2:17-18) James' second illustration: Saving faith cannot be known unless one sees the works of that faith! **"Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'"**
- a. The proof of Able, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses' faith is their works!
 - b. The same is true of us!
 - 1) Illustration of a typical Bible study in Africa....

- a) Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God...."yes!"
 - b) Do you believe that a person must believe in Jesus and obey His command to be baptized to be saved...."Oh, yes!"
 - c) Do you believe the Bible is true....."Oh, yes, of course it is!"
 - d) Would you like to be baptized into Christ now....."Oh, no!" Then he would start giving excuses complementing me for preaching the truth, thanking me for helping him see the light, but just too afraid of making that final commitment to put his faith into action.
- 2) This is the way our faith after conversion is some times....
 - 3) But it is not saving faith.
 - 4) It is a faith that is dead.
- c. In the Lord's church we have a fellowship of faith, but faith must be present for the church to function within this fellowship....
- 1) We could divide all works of faith into about five different areas within the church:
 - a) Shepherding = visiting, leadership, organization.
 - b) Evangelism = bringing the saving message of salvation to the lost.
 - c) Exhortation = encouraging the weak, encouraging the sick, encouraging....
 - d) Teaching = instructing from God's word.
 - e) Benevolence = caring for the needs of the weaker within the church.
 - 2) Many of these works overlap, but no one person can do all the shepherding, all the evangelism, all the exhortation, all the teaching and all the benevolence all by him or herself.
 - 3) That's why we are instructed by passages like Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 that we are members of the whole body of Christ.
 - a) No one person is expected to do it all...
 - b) But we are in fellowship together to do it all together.
 - 1] Each person of faith must find his place of service.
 - 2] And faith's presence in the church as well as in the individual is known and recognized by the amount of work being done.
3. (2:19-20) James' third illustration: Faith which is empty of works is no faith at all.....even demons believe to that extent! "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?"
- a. **READ ACTS 16:16-18.** "It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, 'These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.' She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and

said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!' And it came out at that very moment."

- 1) This spirit was saying the right things!
 - 2) Why did Paul become irritated?
- b. **EXAMPLE OF MOHALE FROM LIOLONG**...who wandered into worship from time to time drunk as a skunk...he could quote scripture and sing songs, but he was drunk.
- c. Saying the right things is not what we need in the church.
- d. Doing the right things is what we need.
- 1) This has been James' theme right along.
 - 2) In chapter one he said, "Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."
 - 3) Now he merely continues on this theme.
 - a) God does not need the approval of demons.
 - b) Nor does he need the approval of town drunks.
 - c) But it honors Him when trusting faith is proved by faithful deeds of service which honor Him and which honors His creation.
 - 4) Since this was obviously a problem in first century times and because it is today as well—why do you suppose men try to delude themselves by holding to an empty faith?
4. (2:21-24) James' Old Testament example: Abraham was justified by faith! "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,' and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone."
- a. In Romans 4:1ff the apostle Paul used Abraham as an example to show that he was justified by faith not by works, and here in James we are being told that Abraham was justified by works. Are the two talking about the same kind of works?
 - 1) Obviously not! Paul is talking about works of the law....saying Abraham in Genesis 15:6 was called righteous because of his faith prior to his circumcision or the giving of the Law of Moses proving that faith preceded the law!
 - 2) Notice what Paul says: **READ ROMANS 4:18-22**... "In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, 'SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE.' Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore **IT WAS** also **CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**"
 - a) Paul shows that Abraham's faith was rooted not in his own understanding nor his own failing power, but in his unwavering confidence in God's ability to do what He said He would do.

b) James complements Paul by showing that Abraham's deep faith was illustrated by his willingness to do whatever God said, even if he did not understand why God was asking what He was asking (in this case the killing of Isaac who had been given to Abraham against all odds).

b. Therefore, Abraham's great confidence and faith in God's power and goodness was proved by his obedience to God's command to kill Isaac.

1) We must remember that in the day when Abraham lived it was the practice of some who worshipped idols to sacrifice their own children to honor their god.

2) Let me ask you a question: Did Abraham love Jehovah to the same extent that pagans loved their gods?

a) How do we know that as a fact?

b) What is it that proved Abraham's devotion and faith?

c) The same is true of us James says!

c. **HERE IS THE TEST AND APPLICATION OF JAMES' EXAMPLE TO US TODAY:**

Are we using our faith to dodge our responsibilities in life, or are we using our faith to direct our lives into service?

1) Faith causes us to die to self and live for Jesus.

2) Faith without works is dead because we still live.

3) Proper faith puts God back in control of a life we put out of control.

4) God saves those who believe, but our willingness to obey and work proves our faith in God.

d. God allowed Abraham's faith to be tested.

1) Does God allow our faith to be tested?

2) I believe this is what this book is all about.

3) How is our faith tested?

e. (2:24) James says that we are justified by works not faith alone.

1) Remember he is not talking about works of merit.

2) He is talking about works of service in obedience to God's commands.

3) **Always bare in mind that Jesus provided salvation to us because we could not provide it on our own. Therefore God provided salvation for believers. If we believe....**

a)

LESSON EIGHT

Faith & Words (1)

3:1-12

Southgate Church of Christ

Milt Langston

REVIEW

- **What is the theme of James? (The necessity of wholeheartedness in our faith).**
- **What three things can we use to test to see if our religion is acceptable? (Our speech, actions & morality)**
- **Christian faith should not judge others more harshly than we judge ourselves. In James 2:1ff James tells us that our faith should be void of what? (discrimination)**
- **What will win over judgment (2:13)? (Mercy)**
- **What is the breath of life to acceptable faith? (Works)**

I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS (1:1-11).

II. OUR FAITH TESTED FROM WITHIN (1:12-18)

II. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD (1:19-2:26).

- A. THE PROPER ATTITUDE IS DEVELOPED BY THE WORD OF GOD (1:19-25).
- B. THE TEST FOR PURE AND ACCEPTABLE RELIGION (1:26-27).
- C. THE TEST OF LOVING OTHERS WHO ARE DIFFERENT (2:1-13).
- D. THE TEST OF THE WORKS OF OUR FAITH (2:14-26).

III. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR SPEECH (3:1-18).

A. BRIDLING THE TONGUE (3:1-12).

1. The Responsibility to Teachers of the Word (3:1-5).

- a. (3:1) “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.”
 - 1) The word “teacher” comes from **didaskalos** (didaskalos) = teacher; from the root of this word we get words like dictation, dictate, dictator, master [KJV] is like master in “Master’s Degree.”
 - 2) Preachers, teachers, elders, Christians all must use their tongues to teach the word of God, therefore; one way Satan attacks our faith is in the way we use our tongue....it is another test.
 - 3) This does not teach that we should not be teachers.
 - a) The commands of Jesus in the Great Commission demand that we all become teachers of God’s word: Jesus said that we should be “teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
 - b) Look at the pit-falls of those who are not taught: **READ HOSEA 4:5-9; READ HEBREWS 5:11-6:10.**
 - c) Our problem is that we do not have enough good teachers.
 - 1] God ordains every Christian to be a teacher.
 - 2] If we teach others what Jesus taught us (Matthew 28:20) we must become teachers.
 - 3] Some use James as an excuse not to teach....don’t do it!
 - 4) James is telling us that when we teach there comes with it an awesome responsibility.
 - a) Teachers have great power over those they teach....illustrate Africa....
 - b) It is very, very easy to lead men astray with the words we use and it becomes easy to teach our opinions and our interpretations as facts instead of teaching the word and letting people decide for themselves.
 - 1] That’s why in chapter one James said, “If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.”
 - 2] I must teach my interpretations and opinions.
 - 3] But I must take care to hold up the Word as authority and fact!

- 4] The insights and opinions of the teacher will bless his students, but a good teacher will honor and respect the truth and authority of God's word, and never try to thrust forth his views as the truth.
- c) This is what the Judaizers did in Galatia, and James is warning us against trying to take short cuts in teaching the truth.
- 1] There were two congregations in Lesotho: Maseru and Teyateyaneng....
 - 2] In these two congregations were two preachers: George and Andreas....
 - 3] George demanded the church to read the right scriptures and say the right things at the right time; Andreas taught the brethren what singing meant, what praying meant, what the Lord's Supper meant, what giving meant, why we study God's word.
 - a] The worship service at Teyateyaneng is the same every time you go there....they read the right passages and say the right things.
 - b] The worship in Maseru is spontaneous and joyful and different each time you visit the church...it is just as correct as Teyateyaneng's worship, but not as stifled.
 - c] When the brethren from Maseru visit the church in Teyateyaneng they understand the significance of the passages the brethren there are forced to read, and they understand the words the church in Teyateyaneng parrot. As a matter of fact it is they who understand the words and scriptures the church in Teyateyaneng uses better than they do!
 - 4] One church was taught, the other needs a lesson from James 3.
- d) Listen to verse 1 in the NIV: **"Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."**
- 1] This is not instruction not to teach....if you fail to teach your children; you are teaching.
 - 2] This is telling us not to presume to teach without first considering consequences...let's look at this....
- b. **(3:1) "...knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment."**
- 1) I don't think we can escape this passage by not teaching (as some try to do) because we are all to be teachers, but we are being told that we will incur a stricter judgment not only now but in the life to come ("**shall**" or "**will incur**" is a word in the future tense).
 - 2) **EXAMPLE:** Let's use raising your kids as a teaching activity God asks fathers to do. James is telling us not to presume to do this without first considering the

consequences. Let's use brother Steve Sherrod as an example (he's not in here)....

- a) He teaches the College class every Sunday morning and every Wednesday night...I praise God for his devotion. He is faithful to teach God's word to the college kids...he's even involved in other activities with them...
 - b) He also goes to work to earn a living every day during the week.
 - c) Does he teach his children by going to work and providing faithfully for his family? What does he teach his children by teaching the college class?
 - d) We all teach by example....as fathers....grandfathers, etc....
 - e) What are the consequences if....
 - 1]Steve doesn't teach Cody or Crystal at all?
 - 2]he teaches them haphazardly?
 - 3]he puts his heart and soul in teaching?
- 3) Knowing that we will be judged more harshly in this life and in the life to come...how will that help us in our teaching whether it be by going to work to support our families or teaching a Bible class for the Lord?
- a) We will become better teachers because we don't take our responsibility lightly....
 - b) Look at the harsher judgment this congregation will receive if we fail to teach righteousness as the Christian way of life....we'll receive as a home a place where righteousness is not know.
 - c) When God went to destroy wicked Sodom and Gomorra He told Abraham that for the sake of 10 righteous souls He would spare them all.....do you think that maybe you and our children will receive a heavier judgment if we fail to convert souls to Christ???....it could save our nation!
- 4) Teachers (that includes every Christian here) are responsible for how they use their tongue!
- a) All this goes back to 1:26, "If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless."
 - b) The real point here is that our faith will show up in how we speak.
- c. (3:2) We do not have to be perfect here, but we must be mature and sober: "For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well."
- 1) If a person was perfect in the first place it would show up in his speech. Likewise maturity demonstrates itself from what we say.
 - 2) No one is perfect...we all know that.

- 3) James is not expecting perfection, but he does expect that each one of us strive for it!
 - a) Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: **“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”**
 - b) We are given perfection in Christ (our spiritual state with Jesus), and we are instructed to seek perfection in our lives (or in the flesh).
 - c) We may not be perfect, but we can aim for it!
- d. **(3:3-4)** Smaller things many times control larger things: **“Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.”**
 - 1) The small bit in the horse’s mouth controls the entire animal.
 - 2) The great ship is controlled by a small rudder! What happens when you lose control of the rudder?
 - 3) **ILLUSTRATION:** The trim-tab on an aircraft’s elevator or rudder....
- e. **(3:5)** The Tongue is the little controlling member of the body, and James tells us that, if we can control it (and we can), we’ve gone a long way in gaining self-control over the entire body: **“So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!”**
 - 1) Our words can cause great problems....an unguarded comment can cause irreparable problems....big fires come from just a little spark.
 - a) Teacher’s need to be well prepared to teach so they will know what to say....they must tame the tongue they intend to use!
 - b) Personally, I like to have plenty of notes when I teach....they help tame a careless tongue.
 - 2) If Satan can get to a person’s tongue, he can ruin that person (can you think of examples: John Clayton; Bill Clinton)?
 - a) Example: If a person used dirty language of suggestive speech all the time it will show up when he doesn’t want it to show up.
 - 1] If the person who is careless with his language got an opportunity to share Christ with a friend, and that friend knows the type of speech he usually uses.
 - 2] When the person tells his friend about Jesus, will the friend likely listen to him?
 - 3] Why not?
 - 4] That’s why Jesus exhorts purity in spirit (Matthew 5:8).
 - b) The devil is always trying to destroy our effectiveness and our credibility....our tongue can become his tool to destroy us.

- c) What about cutting remarks?
 - d) What about gossip?
 - e) What about angry words?
 - f) I have trouble with teasing....I do it all the time, but we must take care not to insult nor to hurt with our wit....
 - g) Solomon reminds us, "Like a madman who throws Firebrands, arrows and death, So is the man who deceives his neighbor, And says, 'Was I not joking?'" (Prov. 26:18-19).
 - h) God help us to be loving and gentle!
- 3) Notice the power of the tongue....
- a) Roosevelt's fire side chats united a nation in time of distress.
 - b) Churchill's speeches probably saved a nation in time of war.
 - c) We all know the power and persuasion of Adolf Hitler's speeches upon a nation which caused it to do what it knew it shouldn't do.
- f. Christians are commanded to teach, and the tool we use is the tongue. So James has shown us the responsibility we need to be aware of in relation to the tongue's use in teaching God's word.
2. (3:6) The tongue is a controlling member. If the tongue is left uncontrolled it can set a course to destruction: "And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell."
- a. "Course" comes from **trochos** (trochos) = wheel, cycle or course. Therefore the tongue sets on fire the wheel or cycle of nature.
 - 1) In other words: the tongue determines the course of our life. No wonder James has already stated: "If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless" (1:26).
 - 2) Satan tries and tests our faith by trying to gain control of our tongue.
 - b. Look at this warning: With our tongue we can make someone else angry....notice the fire this starts....
 - 1) This anger can endanger their soul.
 - 2) The tongue can become a "world of inequity among our members" that sets fires in others that can destroy their whole course of life.
 - a) A slight slip of the tongue can be deadly!
 - b) With our words we can set a fire in someone else that can destroy their soul.

- 3) Can't you see the ever present danger to a teacher or preacher....we must guard and prepare our words very carefully.
- c. The source of the tongues evil work is Satan's work: It "**.... is set on fire by hell!**"
 - 1) Hell is the source of all defilement (**READ PROVERBS 26:20-28**).
 - 2) Someone has said, "The hand only kills at close quarters, but the tongue kills from a distance."
3. **(3:7-8)** The tongue is untamable: "**For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.**"
 - a. All types of creatures --- wild and savage beasts, killer whales, poisonous snakes --- all these have succumbed to human skill, yet with all our skill , because of the fall of man in sin, we have lost dominion over self.
 - b. The tongue in particular....
 - 1) The very first words spoken by Cain after he had murdered his brother in answer to God's question as to his brother's whereabouts, were a lie.
 - 2) Cain said, "**I don't know**" (Gen. 4:9).
 - c. We who have faith in God seeing the situation we are in are driven to God for His help in controlling the tongue.
 - 1) In this same chapter in verses 13-18 James will discuss the wisdom from above.
 - 2) When we submit to that wisdom, we become spiritual, and God will help us control the tongue....not before!
4. **(3:9-12)** The tongue is inconsistent: "**With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.**"
 - a. Because the tongue is sometimes used to praise God, to teach noble truths, and to guide a sinner to eternal life; it only illustrates the inconsistency of man when we also use the same tongue to argue, curse and defame God's creation.
 - b. This is against nature....it is not natural.
 - 1) One well does not produce sweet and bitter water.
 - 2) Nor does a single tree produce figs and olives.
 - c. **READ MATTHEW 7:15-20**....
 - 1) If you combine this passage with what we see here in James 3:1-12, you get a fairly good picture of a false teacher, and you find out how to avoid becoming one yourself.

- a) Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Also in James 3:18 we will find out that "righteousness" is the fruit of God's wisdom.
- b) We are either false prophets or prophets of God depending on whether or not we control our speech or not.

Remember [JAMES 1:26](#).

LESSON NINE

Faith and Words (Wisdom) (2)

3:13-18

Southgate Church of Christ

Milt Langston

REVIEW

- What is the theme of James? (The necessity of wholeheartedness in our faith).
- In James 2:1ff James tells us that our faith should be void of what? (discrimination)
- What will win over judgment (2:13)? (Mercy)
- What is the breath of life to acceptable faith? (Works)
- What is the controlling member of our life? (tongue)
- If we want to control our life what must we try to control? (tongue)

I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS (1:1-11).

II. OUR FAITH TESTED FROM WITHIN (1:12-18).

II. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD (1:19-2:26).

III. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR SPEECH (3:1-18).

A. BRIDLING THE TONGUE (3:1-12).

B. THE TRULY WISE TEACHER (3:13-18).

1. (3:13) James points out the need for knowledge coupled with wisdom. "Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom."
 - a. James in verses 1:12 has shown the responsibility of being a teacher, and he has shown us that our faith will be tested through our use of our tongue.
 - b. Now he will show us how to be a wise teacher who has learned how to control this tongue through wisdom.
 - 1) The way we use our tongue will show which wisdom we follow....because there are two types of wisdom described here in verses 13-18.
 - 2) Therefore, to control the tongue the wise Christian needs to seek the wisdom that is from above.
 - a) Every time we say something, we need to ask ourselves: "Does what I am saying issue from God's wisdom, or man's wisdom?"
 - b) Remember chapter 1:5, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."
 - c. The wise man in verse 13 is the teacher who has knowledge, but who has learned to bridle his tongue.
 - d. "Understanding" = "endued with knowledge." It comes from the Greek word **epistaymwn**(epistaymwn) = knowing, skilled, able to stand. The idea in the Greek is = "one who knows what he is speaking about."
 - 1) This is not a superficial knowledge.
 - 2) But a knowledge that is expert.
 - 3) The teacher who bridles his tongue is not just knowledgeable; he is wise in his understanding.
 - e. The proof of the wise teachers wisdom in understanding is his good life: "Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done...." (v.13, NIV).
 - 1) The works a teacher does prove him to be a wise teacher.
 - 2) What about a knowledgeable teacher who does not live a good life? He is not wise!
 - f. There is an attitude of the wise teacher revealed in this text: What he does, and how he lives is in "the gentleness of wisdom." The KJV says "the meekness of wisdom."
 - 1) "Gentleness" or "meekness" comes from **prautays** (prautays) = gentleness, consideration, humility and meekness. This comes from the same root word Jesus used in Matthew 5:5. It means "strength under control." It is a term of submission to the authority of another.

- 2) Moses is described: "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3).
 - a) Was Moses weak because he let Aaron and Miriam criticize his choice of a black wife?
 - b) What about the time he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite? Was he meek or weak?
 - c) What about the time he ground up the idol the Children of Israel had created and mixed it with water then forced the people to drink it?
 - d) Moses was not weak, he was under the control of God, and this expressed itself in a gentle and humble spirit.
 - e) A bossy person who lords it over others is a person who trusts in himself and who lacks wisdom.
- g. Wisdom here in verse 13 is the subject of the rest of the chapter. It is the wisdom from above, and it accompanies gentleness or meekness.
 - 1) Knowledge if we are not careful can puff us up. Paul said in 1 Cor. 8:1, "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies."
 - 2) We must study to have the knowledge, therefore; care must be taken to add wisdom to our understanding so that our study does not rob us of our wisdom.
 - a) Teacher's must study. Knowledge is essential.
 - b) But to be a good teacher, we need wisdom, however; we need the right kind of wisdom....
2. (3:14-16) The wrong kind of wisdom is described by James.
 - a. (3:14a) Knowledge combined with the wrong kind of wisdom results in following qualities: "But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart..."
 - 1) "Bitter (envy) jealousy"
 - a) Why would a man or woman of God be jealous of another in the context of knowledge?
 - b) Is it possible for a person to study to be seen of men to possess much knowledge instead of studying to impart truth?
 - c) Where is the focus when "bitter jealousy" is present with our knowledge? (self).
 - 2) The words "selfish ambition" come from **eritheia** (eritheia) = from the root word eritheu (to work for hire); it indicates a rivalry, hence ambition:-- ambition(3), ambitious(1), disputes(2), selfish(3), selfishly(1), selfishness(1).
 - a) A person who puts himself out to hire (so to speak) is a factious, self-ambitious person who is seeking glory.

- b) Therefore, the earthly wisdom seeks to make one's self well known (preacher's are susceptible to this temptation as they try to sell themselves, and churches sometimes encourage this also).
- b. (3:14b) James plainly says, "...do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth." Knowledge with the wrong kind of wisdom leads to opposition to the truth. It is a lie which is against the truth.
 - 1)arrogance and boasting or glorying in self.
 - 2) This is an attitude and this is a spirit which contradicts the truth.
 - a) The center piece of the truth of the cross is that Christians must learn to die to themselves in order to become active servants to others as they trust in God's power to save which is locked up in righteousness....not sin.
 - b) A arrogant and boastful glorying in self as we teach is a wisdom which mitigates against the wisdom of truth and God's word.
- c. (3:15) This wrong kind of wisdom is shallow coming from the earth. "This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic."
 - 1) It is not from above. James uses the word **epigeios** (epigeios) = of the earth.
 - a) This wisdom we must remember is wise in man's eyes because it is of the earth.
 - b) Remember also that wisdom from God is accompanied with gentleness or meekness.
 - 1] The wrong kind of wisdom is natural to the earth.
 - 2] Christians are to be meek in order to submit to God...to bring ourselves under His control.
 - 3] Might this heavenly wisdom be viewed by some as foolishness? By whom? How?
 - 2) This wrong kind of wisdom is sensual or "**natural.**" This comes from the word **psuchikos**(psuchikos) = from the mind and soul of the natural; human nature.
 - a) Humanism is a name we give this type of wisdom. It is not spiritual.
 - b) Listen to Paul's commentary on the wisdom of God contrasted to humanism: "**Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written, 'THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.'** For to us God revealed them

through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:6-16).

- c) Having studied and having a knowledge of God's word is not enough. It can even puff up the one who has studied if we are led by the world's wisdom.
 - d) We need the attitude or spirit of God that is revealed in the word we study. This is God's wisdom and we must be meek and gentle enough to accept His wisdom.
- 3) The source of this worldly wisdom is Satan himself. It is "demonic."
- d. (3:16) Earthly wisdom again described as pride and selfishness is the source of disorder and every evil thing. "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing."
- 1) Heaven is a place of glory....God's glory shines from the throne. It is a place of love as is demonstrated by the cross. It is a place of wisdom and peace.
 - a) Pride can rob a person of God's wisdom.
 - 1] The story is told of Winston Churchill who loved to fly....he was offered an opportunity to fly a seaplane....at the end of their flight he lined the seaplane up on a familiar runway....one of the crew gently reminded him that they were in a seaplane....when they landed he was joking about the mistake he almost made as he opened the door someone had to catch him from falling into the water.
 - 2] Pride does the same thing to us....
 - b) On the day of judgment....there will be nothing to be proud of except God's love in sending Jesus to atone for our sins.
 - c) Faith, says Paul, eliminates boasting (2 Cor. 10:16-17; Rom. 3:27).
 - 2) Satan sneaks up on us to test our faith when we are trying to do what is right.
 - a) A preacher is desperately trying to do what is right....studying hard and gaining knowledge from God's word. How can Satan test his faith?
 - 1] Maybe he buys a little wig to look better....earthly wisdom.

- 2] Maybe he tries to advertise himself.....earthly wisdom.
 - 3] All earthly wisdom may not be bad. Jesus said in Luke 16:8 praising the shrewd manager, "...for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light."
 - 4] However, when we are motivated solely by earthly wisdom, we crowd out heavenly wisdom and wreck havoc.
- b) A VBS teacher works very hard and goes to a lot of trouble to make here classroom the very best class....
- 1]can you see how earthly wisdom can effect us?
 - 2]can you see how it can destroy the benefits of our hard word?
- 3) When you see a church in disorder and division....what is the problem (James will start talking about this in the next chapter). The problem is those in that church are following earthly wisdom instead of heavenly wisdom.
 - 4) Therefore, what is a fruit or byproduct of heavenly wisdom? (Unity and peace).
3. (3:17-18) The right kind of wisdom is the wisdom from above. "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."
- a. (3:17) The wisdom from above is "heavenly."
- 1) Having just looked in verses 14-16 at the wrong kind of wisdom (namely earthly wisdom),
 - 2) Now James describes the right kind of wisdom....the wisdom from above.
 - 3) Satan was the source of the wrong kind of wisdom. The right kind comes from heaven.
- b. (3:17) It is "pure."
- 1) Usually when we think of purity we think of morally pure, but here it means not earthly (literally - unearthly or holy).
 - 2) Righteousness through obedience to God is wisdom from above. It results in life, contentment, happiness and mutual regard.
 - 3) Hedonism (cp.4) is earthly wisdom.
 - a) Where God's wisdom produces happiness; earthly wisdom seeks fun. It seeks pleasure.
 - b) It results in sorrow.
 - 1] It is not wonder Jesus describes us as dumb sheep in need of a shepherd.
 - 2] We are made dumb because of earthly wisdom.

- 4) True wisdom doesn't originate on the earth.
 - a) It doesn't even fit in the earthly context.
 - b) That's why it takes faith to implement it.
- c. (3:17) The wisdom from above is "peaceful."
 - 1) Jesus was never at peace with the Scribes and Pharisees. They were always actively opposed to Him and trying to catch Him in a mistake.
 - 2) But Jesus was always peaceful to those he taught.
 - a) He was gentle in His teaching.
 - b) He was never condemning of his own followers.
 - 1] Sometimes He would say, "O you of little faith."
 - 2] They had so far to go, but He always remained gentle.
 - 3) Paul teaches this same psychology to Timothy recorded in 2 Timothy 2:23-26... "But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."
 - a) There is no room for fighting and quarreling in the church of Christ.
 - b) Jesus was peaceful...we are His body!
- d. (3:17) Wisdom from above is "gentle" or "considerate."
 - 1) Coming from **epieikays** (epieikays) = forbearing, equitable, yielding hence considerate and gentle.
 - 2) Not riding over others, not looking down on others.
 - 3) The idea is treating others with gentleness and kindness like you would treat someone at a funeral who just lost a loved one.
- e. (3:17) It is "reasonable" or "submissive."
 - 1) Coming from **eupeithays** (eupeithays) = ready to obey; hence submissive; reasonable.
 - 2) The wise teacher is not only a speaker, but a good listener, "quick to hear."
 - 3) One who is easy to be entreated as it reads in the KJV.
 - a) This is a person that you are not afraid to ask him a question.
 - b) God's wisdom keeps us open to others.

- 4) What do we need to do to make it easier for others to ask us questions?be considerate and gentle....show genuine love.
 - 5) Christians must never repel the lost, but make them feel welcome. What does this say about hospitality?
- f. (3:17) Wisdom from above is "full of mercy and good fruit."
- 1) What is the difference between mercy and sympathy?
 - a) In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the Levite and the priest had sympathy, but it was the Samaritan who showed mercy. Remember Jesus' question, "Which of these showed mercy?"
 - b) Sympathy is a feeling. Mercy is an activity. It is doing something.
 - c) It reminds me of 1:21-22.... "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."
 - 2) The wise teacher's life is full of practical things he has done to help others.
 - a) This is Michael's strong suit....he teaches our teenagers then shows them.
 - b) He is merciful, not just sympathetic.
 - 3) Mercy and good fruit, therefore; go together.
 - a) Good fruit are the accomplishments of active mercy.
 - b) Wise teachers get things done.
- g. (3:17) Wisdom from above is "unwavering, without hypocrisy" (NASB), or "impartial" and "sincere" (BSV, RSV & NIV).
- 1) "Unwavering" here comes from **adiakritos** (adiakritos) = without uncertainty or doubtfulness; unwavering; without variance.
 - a) It is easy to help some.
 - b) It is hard to help others....like the old grouch.
 - c) We need to be impartial which leads to the next word....
 - 2) Therefore, wisdom from above is "without hypocrisy" or "sincere." This comes from **anupokritos** (anupokritos) = unfeigned or genuine.
 - a) This carries with it the idea of having no prejudice.
 - b) Not playing out a part....like the preacher who stands at the back because he feels he must...not because he loves the brethren.
 - 1] The preacher who does so out of duty will soon be found out.

- 2] But the preacher who stands at the back because he really wants to greet everyone will also be recognized for his love in time.
 - 3) Wisdom from above is a sincere love of others.
- h. (3:18) Here James brings everything together concerning wisdom from above. We could call this verse a commentary on verses 13-17. "And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."
- 1) Wise Christians sow righteousness in peace.
 - 2) Guess what they reap? They reap righteousness in peace (READ GALATIANS 6:7) "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap."
 - a) If you treat others kindly, you will be treated kindly for the most part...if you treat others unkindly, you will not be treated kindly either.
 - b) This is a true axiom, and Christ's sacrifice for us should be our motivation to seek the wisdom from above.
 - c) When righteousness is sown; righteousness will be the harvest
 - 1] Peace is a byproduct of righteousness.
 - 2] Because of the harvest, we should be careful what we sow.

Summary:

- Spiritual wisdom brings righteousness; earthly wisdom brings wickedness.
- Spiritual wisdom brings peace; earthly wisdom brings division.
- The words we speak reflect the wisdom we follow.



LESSON TEN

Faith and Worldliness

4:1-10

Southgate Church of Christ

Milt Langston

REVIEW

- What is the theme of James? (The necessity of wholeheartedness in our faith).
- In James 2:1ff James tells us that our faith should be void of what? (discrimination)
- What will win over judgment (2:13)? (Mercy)
- What is the breath of life to acceptable faith? (Works)
- What is the controlling member of our life? (tongue)
- If we want to control our life what must we try to control? (tongue)
- What characterizes worldly wisdom? (envy, divisions, etc.)
- What characterizes heavenly wisdom? (peace, meekness, a spiritual attitude)

TEXT:

I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS (1:1-11).

II. OUR FAITH TESTED FROM WITHIN (1:12-18).

III. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR ATTITUDE TO THE WORD (1:19-2:26).

IV. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR SPEECH (3:1-18).

V. OUR FAITH TESTED BY WORLDLINESS (4:1-10).

A. (READ 4:1-3) HEDONISM IS THE SOURCE OF CONFLICTS!

1. HEDONISM = THE PHILOSOPHY OF SATISFYING THE DESIRES OF THE FLESH AS A WAY OF LIFE. HEDONISM IS TRANSLATED “PLEASURE” IN OUR TEXT (“DESIRES” IN THE NIV). IN THE GREEK IT DENOTED PLEASURE AS A WAY OF LIFE. MODERN DAY PHILOSOPHIES HAVE SPRUNG UP UNDER THE PHILOSOPHICAL HEADING OF “HEDONISM.”

a. Relative morality = “Do what is right for the moment.” Otherwise known as Situation Ethics.

b. Existentialism = “Living for the moment—doing what I want to do right now.” Otherwise known as doing your own thing.

c. In America we are looking at “moral anarchy”—the total loss of restraint.

1) There is a movement to make the USA a secular nation instead of a religious nation.

2) The desire is to establish a variable morality represented as “political correctness.”

a) This morality is not concrete and set—it is fluxing and changing as desires change.

b) The goal is to reject God’s morality and replace it with one which is legislated or enforced by the strongest (under a dictatorship) or the most popular (under a democracy).

d. The Greeks called this Hedonism.

1) The word “pleasure” in verses 1 & 3 are from the Greek word ἡδονή (hedonon).

2) The word “lust” is used in the KJV.

3) Hedonism does not just mean strong desire. It’s root is “to please;” therefore, “it is sensual delight; by implication desire:—lust, pleasure.” It comes to mean pleasure as a way of life.

e. James has just finished contrasting the wisdom of the world with God’s wisdom—now he begins to illustrate the result of worldly wisdom as it relates to the church and as it tests our faith—another title of this section could be: Worldliness in the church!

2. (4:1) JAMES SHOWS THAT THE SOURCE OF CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH IS OUR PURSUIT OF PLEASURE OR HEDONISM.

a. **ἔρις** (polemos) is translated “quarrels” (NASB) and “war” (ASV) or “fights” (NIV) = the word comes from a term meaning “to bustle.” It is translated “warfare (literally or figuratively; a single encounter or a series):—battle, fight, war.” It can mean a campaign. It is not just a battle; it is a war. It is a continuing series of battles.

- b. Another word used here is **ἰμάχη** (mache) which is translated “**conflicts**” (NASB), “**quarrels**” (NIV) and “**fighting**” (ASV). It is translated “controversy:—fighting, strive, striving.” It is more like a small clash or a battle where the former word is more like a war—everyday skirmishes.
- c. James answers the question: Where do our problems in life come from?
- 1) These problems do not come from God, nor do they come from heavenly wisdom.
 - 2) They come from our pleasures which war in our members.
 - 3) It comes from earthly wisdom.
- d. Satan uses our desires in the flesh to destroy our personalities.
- 1) Romans 8:1-13 and Galatians 5:13-18 illustrate this war which goes on in our flesh against the Spirit of God who now lives in us.
 - 2) God created our personalities—He made us with certain desires.
 - a) These desires are not evil. God created them.
 - b) But God intends them to be contained within the bounds of His will.
 - 1] For example: sexual desires are not evil.
 - 2] Marriage is God's place for these desires to be met.
 - 3] Sin and the flesh drive us to fornication and adultery.
 - 4] Sin can even mar and destroy this desire to be contaminated in a marriage.
 - 5] It leads to all sorts of depravity when it is not checked by God's will.
 - c) When God's will is followed the joy and pleasure God intended is satisfied.
 - d) But through an unrestrained pursuit of pleasure as a way of life (the American way?) our lives become a destructive and raging river that has left its banks and overflowed into misery.
 - 3) A war breaks out within our flesh, and all war is destructive—look at the aftermath of any battle.
 - a) Why is social drinking wrong?—some defend their right to drink, but if it becomes an unrestrained pursuit of pleasure—it leads to the destruction of life itself (drunkenness, drugs, etc.).
 - b) What motivates young married people to divorce so quickly when a problem arises in their marriage? A pursuit of pleasure can end up not only destroying a marriage, a family, but life itself. God hates it for the damage it does to His children.
 - c) Have we forgotten the rewards of suffering?
 - 1] Hedonism avoids any hint of suffering.
 - 2] But all suffering is not bad.
 - a] Avoid suffering in the flesh and you will get fat and lazy.
 - b] Avoid suffering in the spirit and you will become a sinner.

3. **(4:2) EXAMPLES OF THE RESULT OF A LIFE IN PURSUIT OF PLEASURE.**

- a. Lust—but have not.
- 1) Isn't this always the case.
 - 2) Kids in schools today burn down the school house. Does that solve their problems?
 - 3) Young couples try to solve their marital problems by a quick divorce only to learn that they (individually) and not the other were the problem when they remarry and see the same problems again.
 - 4) Sin is addictive—it takes more and more to get the same kick until finally the one in pursuit of pleasure through sin becomes miserable, unhappy and bored.
 - a) Unrestrained sexual adventures become so boring to those in pursuit of a sexual “high” that they turn to homosexuality, bestiality and unmentionable practices.
 - b) In Romans 1:24 Paul tells that God turns a sinner over to do what he wants which is the sinner's punishment—he becomes perverted and destitute.
 - c) In ancient Rome a welfare system was first introduced. It resulted in a whole nation in pursuit of pleasure. The Roman games (entertainment) became more and more bazaar—herds of elephants were publicly slaughtered to sate the desires of a bored population. Ultimately it destroyed the nation.
 - d) Is America following in Rome's foot steps? Are we a nation of bored sinners who lust, but have not?
- b. Hedonism results in those who kill and covet, but have not “...so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.”
- 1) Cain coveted Abel's acceptance by God, so he killed Able. Did that make Cain accepted?
 - 2) So it is with all who live a life in pursuit of pleasures—no matter what we do—no matter what price we pay—no matter what we sacrifice—life ends up being less than satisfying.
 - a) By the way, do I need to say that a life in Christ satisfies?
 - b) Do we need to say that a life in Christ has a destiny other than temporary pleasures?
- c. James already told us in verse 1 of this chapter that the reason we have wars, quarrels and fights is because of hedonism. Now in verse 2 he reiterates this fact and says, “You fight and quarrel.” Why?
- 1) We argue, fight and quarrel because we don't get our own way about something.
 - a) Haven't you seen this in some church squabble?
 - b) Isn't it amazing that this fleshly demon can raise his ugly head in such a holy place as the Lord's body?
 - c) That's why we should be led by the Spirit and not the flesh—but sometimes in moments of weakness we revert—when we do we need to repent and turn back to the light.

- 2) To wage a war to get your own way is hedonistic—even if the person doing it thinks they are doing it for the Lord.
- 3) When a hedonist wages war to get his own way, he receives no spoils of war which he desires; he receives only the devastation of war.
 - a) A battle waged to please self is to take up arms with Satan against God's people, God's angels, God's Son.
 - b) And it is a battle which cannot be won.
- d. James tells us why the hedonist does not get what he wants, "You do not have because you do not ask."
 - 1) James tells us that the hedonist's problem is that he ignores God through a lack of prayer.
 - a) When our prayer life falls apart, or life falls apart.
 - b) Here the hedonist lusts, covets, destroys others to get his way (kills), makes war and fights putting his life in turmoil; but he does not get what he wants.
 - 2) This doesn't mean we will get our desires (lusts) fulfilled by praying about it (just wait for verse 3—its coming), but the fighting, biting, arguing person who is out to get his way is not thinking of God or God's will.
 - a) If the hedonist was close to God in prayer, he would know God enough to know God's will.
 - b) But the hedonist is trying to get what he wants on his own—God is out of the picture (except he may think he is doing what he is doing for God).
4. (4:3) WHY A WORLDLY (HEDONIST'S) PRAYER WILL NOT BE ANSWERED.
 - a. It is asked with the "wrong motives" (NASB).
 - 1) The term "wrong motives" comes from the Greek word, $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\alpha}\acute{\epsilon}\eta\sigma\acute{\omicron}$ (kakos) which means "badly(physically or morally):—amiss, diseased, evil, grievously, miserably, sick, sore."
 - 2) When requests are not on target with God's will, our prayer is "amis" which is the word used in the ASV (see 1 John 3:22).
 - 3) God does not give us things that will hurt us—we may not be wise enough to ask right, but God is wise enough to give us only what we need for our eternal soul's sake (Matthew 7:7-12).
 - a) The trouble with the hedonist is that he is not even thinking of God.
 - b) If you were to categorize all of us who do believe, you would find some more spiritual than others, and some more carnal in our thinking than others.
 - c) It would not be one way or the other, but we would all be scattered at varying degrees somewhere in between.
 - d) James' admonition to us is not to just hear what we need to do. His admonition is to implement it—do it!
 - e) Christian requests to God become more and more spiritual as we grow in faith. Keeping Christ's rule found in Matthew 7:12 will help us.

- b. This “**wrong motive**” is now described, “**that you may spend it on your pleasures.**”
- 1) What is the motive of sins like...
 - a) ...stealing?
 - b) ...fornication or adultery?
 - c) ...drunkenness?
 - d) When we pray with the same motives as sin, we are praying with totally the wrong motives.
 - 2) This type of prayer is an insult to God. In verse 4 James will say, “**You adulteresses!**”

5. **SUMMARY:** Here James describes a problem among God’s people. They were attending services. They were worshipping God outwardly, but they had forgotten God in their private lives. They were trying to live without Christ, and they were trying to get what they really wanted on their own without God’s help. They honored God publicly in worship singing all the right songs, but they were ignoring God in their daily lives.

- a. They had become Sunday morning Christians. Christians who go visit Jesus at His house on Sunday or maybe Wednesday night.
- b. Our faith is tested by our daily lives—that’s the message of the book of James.
 - 1) If dancing is wrong, why is it wrong? To determine that for yourself, you must investigate your motives. If it is to feed your lust or desire for pleasure, it is probably wrong.
 - 2) Why is drinking wrong? Examine your motives for drinking.
 - 3) Can you begin to see that the improper motivation turns almost any activity into a sinful activity!
- c. Love gives, serves and seeks another’s good.
- d. Hedonism takes and seeks self gratification.

6. **APPLICATION:**

- a. We have fellowships and parties involving church members. They are a lot of fun. Having fun is not wrong—Christians should be full of joy! But our joy should come from our love and desire to serve others, not from our lust and desire to have fun. Can’t you see how Satan can test our faith even when we’re trying to do what is right?
- b. The sexual part of marriage can even become evil if our only motivation is to receive pleasure. God’s desire is that it becomes an act of giving pleasure and expressing love.
- c. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount teaches that worldliness vies for our servitude when He said, “**No man can serve two masters...**”
 - 1) Pleasure is the objective of the hedonist. He never finds it.
 - 2) Pleasure is the by-product of Christian love. We live it.
 - 3) God wants to give us pleasure—so he wants us to seek Him.
 - 4) Satan wants to destroy us—so he wants us to seek pleasure and reject God.

- a) Satan cannot destroy us, but he knows God.
 - b) So he beguiles man into destroying himself against God's will.
 - c) Don't be foolish—God's will is to save us and glorify us—to give us pleasure.
- 5) Serving God brings fulfillment—serving Satan brings emptiness and destruction—it is not God's will, and it should not be our will either. God's will is best for us, and our prayers must become that His will be done!
- d. Christianity is a 24/7 service of God's will. Every single activity of our lives is an opportunity to conform our desires to the will of God—and when we want to do God's will more than we want to do our will we will have understood dying to self and become mature (Romans 8:29; Ephesians 4:12-13).
 - 1) It is kind of easy to spot the immature— isn't it?
 - 2) Our faith is going to be tested by Satan!
 - 3) Faithfulness is passing the test by God's power when we trust in Him—when we are aware of His presence in our life.

B. (READ 4:4-6) WORLDLINESS (HEDONISM) LEADS TO COMPROMISE.

1. (4:4) **"YOU ADULTERESSES..."** ARE CHRISTIANS WHO WANT TO MIX THE THINGS OF THE WORLD WITH CHRISTIANITY—OR WHO WANT TO COMPROMISE THEIR FAITH.

- a. An adulterer is one who has broken their marriage vow to God (Ephesians 5:22, 23ff).
 - 1) Jesus called the people of His generation, **"...an evil and adulterous generation..."** (Matthew 12:39; 16:4).
 - a) Jesus did not mean that they were running around committing adultery all the time.
 - b) It refers to their attitude: They were quite willing to mix God with the world...to have their cake and eat it too. The context in Matthew 12 and 16 is when the Jewish leaders kept asking Jesus for another sign or miracle.
 - 2) There are some who are interested in Christ, and they want the benefits of the church, but they also would like to enjoy the benefits of the world at the same time—spiritual adulterers.
 - 3) A man who commits adultery does not usually want to get rid of his wife and his family. He may even still hold them in high esteem. He just wants to enjoy their benefits at the same time as he enjoys the pleasures of his outside lover. That is how we become to God when we are not serious about our faith.
 - 4) Adultery here means our willingness to compromise our devotion to God and our faithfulness to Him and His kingdom.
- b. James says, **"Do you not know..."** which is a form of rebuke—Don't you know!
- c. He speaks of **"friendship with the world"** = a desire to be liked by the world. **"Friendship"** comes from the Greek word **φιλία** (philia) which is one of the Greek words for love.
 - 1) This is spiritual adultery. A willingness to compromise your faith.

2) Jesus said, "Beware when all men speak well of you."

a) When we are just like the rest of the world, there is something wrong because we are to be set apart—holy—different.

b) It is spiritual adultery when Israel wanted to be just like the rest of the world asking for a king.

c) It is spiritual adultery when the Lord's church wants to become like the denominations around us who do not honor the Lordship of Christ.

d) It is spiritual adultery to view the church from a worldly point of view (remember 2 Corinthians 5:16).

e) A desire to be like the world is a spirit of compromise which comes from hedonism.

3) We are not to become comrades to the world nor to worldliness.

d. James tells us that when we deliberately make friends with the world compromising our faith it causes us to become "the enemy of God."

1) It causes "enmity" or "hatred" between us and God.

a) God views his relationship with us as a covenant like marriage. As the husband He will protect and provide for us. He expects devotion and faithfulness from us—loyalty.

b) God is angered when we consider Him so naïve as to allow us to enjoy all the privileges and blessings of our relationship with Him to continue as we flirt and give ourselves to hedonism (a pursuit of pleasure).

2) One who wears the name of Christ, but lives for Satan has angered God—do we want to make God mad? We may deceive ourselves ("del



LESSON ELEVEN

Faith Gossip and Secular Humanism

4:11-17

Southgate Church of Christ

Milt Langston

REVIEW

- What is the theme of James? (The necessity of wholeheartedness in our faith).
- In James 2:1ff James tells us that our faith should be void of what? (discrimination)
- What will win over judgment (2:13)? (Mercy)
- What is the breath of life to acceptable faith? (Works)
- What is the controlling member of our life? (tongue)
- If we want to control our life what must we try to control? (tongue)
- What characterizes worldly wisdom? (envy, divisions, etc.)
- What characterizes heavenly wisdom? (peace, meekness, a spiritual attitude)
- What is the source of arguments & fighting in the church? (hedonism)
- What will the practice of hedonism lead to in our faith? (compromise)

TEXT:

I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS (1:1-11).

II. OUR FAITH TESTED FROM WITHIN (1:12-18).

III. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR ATTITUDE TO THE WORD (1:19-2:26).

IV. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR SPEECH (3:1-18).

V. OUR FAITH TESTED BY WORLDLINESS (4:1-10).

4:7-10 REVIEW

(Overcoming Worldliness with Humility)

- Submit to God
- Draw Near to God
- Serve God Single-mindedly

VI. OUR FAITH TESTED BY GOSSIP (4:11-12).

A. PREVIEW:

1. In verses 1-10 James spoke about worldliness. He teaches that fights and arguments come from our pursuit of pleasure (which is hedonism—an American pastime).
2. Born of worldliness is gossip. Strife gives way to evil speech or gossip.
 - a. We know that fornication = sin; lying = sin; worldliness = sin; strife = sin. Now James gets specific: gossip is sin too! It is born of strife.
 - b. This is the third time James talks about our speech (1:26; 3:1ff; and now 4:11-12).

B. (4:11a) DO NOT SLANDER WITH YOUR SPEECH.

1. The command in the Greek comes from the word ἡσαόαἰεῖν (katalaleo) = “to speak evil of—slander.” James says, “**Stop slandering!**”

- a. It is obvious that as church conflicts existed among those to whom James is writing, so too was the evil of slandering—speaking evil of one another.
 - b. In this section James will show that, if a brother is sinning, to talk about it is as bad if not worse than the sin you are talking about.
2. Gossip defames the character of another, and it is expressly forbidden (2 Corinthians 12:20; 1 Peter 2:1; Proverbs 11:9).
 3. Why do we gossip and slander others?
 - a. It takes the spotlight off of us and our wrongs.
 - 1) I knew of a preacher who was slandered by gossipers for the unprofessional clothes he wore around his home.
 - 2) Why do you suppose someone would attack him for such a trivial reason?
 - 3) Gossipers are usually guilty of worse than what they talk about.
 - b. Jealousy is the reason some gossip.
 - 1) Why are we jealous? We feel threatened. We feel inferior.
 - 2) Romans 8:31 teaches that God is with us—there is never a reason to feel threatened unless we are trusting in self instead of trusting in God.
 - c. An attempt to manipulate is another reason why some gossip.
 - d. Gossiping is the rattlesnake mentality—strike first!
 - e. Gossip is as bad as any sin.
 4. Jesus warns of being intolerant of the faults of others while we excuse the same in ourselves and in our loved ones (Matthew 7:1ff).
 - a. Have you ever seen a mother of a father whose child is a true terror, and they think he can do no wrong?
 - b. Paul warns, **“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted”** (Galatians 6:1).

C. (4:11b) A GOSSIP PUTS HIMSELF UP AS A JUDGE OF THE LAW.

1. What does the Law say?
 - a. Remember that this is a Jewish audience—there are two or three different opinions as to what James means here.
 - b. Leviticus 19:16 states, **“You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD!”**
 - c. Do you remember how Jesus told us to keep the law?—LOVE (John 13:34).
2. A person who gossips has rejected and passed judgment upon the Law. Is that the same as passing judgment on God?
 - a. When we by our actions judge that we can hate and not love; that we can slander and we don’t have to cease; we have judged that God’s will is not necessary. Our will has overridden His will.

- b. A gossip has stopped obeying God's Law and has become a judge of it! A gossip sets himself above the law.

D. (4:12a) THERE IS ONLY ONE LAWGIVER AND JUDGE.

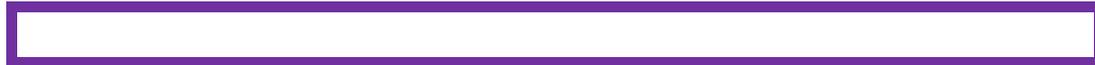
1. We are talking about Jesus here.
 - a. Who gave us the Law of Moses? Did Jesus have any part in it? (Some hold that James is referring to the Law of Moses when he talks about "law" here—no problem).
 - b. Did Jesus give us a new commandment that covers or takes in the Old Law?—Yes, John 13:34. (Some think that the "law" James was talking about it this one—they are probably right).
2. What is sure is this: Gossip puts us against Jesus—a Christian who gossips has blown it because he is against Christ!

E. (4:12b) JAMES ENDS BY SAYING, "DON'T PUT YOURSELF IN JESUS' PLACE BY GOSSIPING (remember the context)!"

1. Look at Paul's description of the man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2:4. He "...he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God!"
 - a. He sits in God's place of exaltation.
 - b. He even dares to claim to be God.
2. It all starts with gossip says James!

Summary:

- The sin of judging being rebuked here has nothing to do with our responsibility of rebuking sin, Titus 1:10,11, 13.
 - o A preacher is charged to preach the word and to rebuke (2 Timothy 4:1ff).
 - o We must make judgments...
- Speaking evil of another is the same as trying, judging and condemning another without ever speaking to him or knowing all the facts—it is gossip and it is sin!
- Someone said: "Great minds discuss ideas. Average minds discuss events. Little minds talk about other people."
- According to 1 Corinthians 13:5, Love "...keeps no record of wrongs."



VII. OUR FAITH TESTED BY SECULAR HUMANISM, 4:13-17.

A. INTRODUCTION.

1. This section is addressed to the same group that is addressed to in chapter 5:1-6, namely: the rich (by the world's standards that would include everyone here today).
 - a. In 4:14 James says, "Now listen, you who say..."
 - b. In 5:1 James says, "Now listen, you rich people..."
 - 1) In 4:13 those being addressed are secular or humanistic.
 - 2) In 5:1 they are rich.
 - 3) It very aptly describes the Jews living in the Roman Empire in that day.
 - 4) Remember that James is writing to Jewish Christians.
2. Jews were scattered all over the Roman Empire. They were traders. Their closely knit national awareness gave the traveling Jew instant contacts in the trading world through his countrymen.
3. The Romans had developed the best transportation system the world had known. Trade and communication was excellent. Just look at the letters which constitute the New Testament. They were sent via the civilized Roman communication system.
 - a. The dark ages after the fall of the Roman Empire almost erased from our minds the civilized order of Rome's time.
 - b. It is obvious that many of the Jewish Christians addressed to in this book were merchants who earned their living through trade—and they had become very rich.
4. Have you noticed that success almost always leads to pride and away from dependence on God?
 - a. In Daniel chapter 4 Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that told him through Daniel interpretation from God that God would humble him if he boasted. A year later he forgot about his dream and Daniel's interpretation and he said, "...the king answered and said, **"Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"**" (Daniel 4:30). After saying this God made him graze like an ox as "seven times passed over him." When he came to his senses he changed his tune.
 - b. As with Nebuchadnezzar we tend to think less of God when everything is going well and we are prospering.
5. America's #1 problem today is practical atheism.
 - a. What I mean by practical atheists is not those in America who claim to be atheists. Those who claim to be atheists are not our problem.
 - b. Our problem is that many call themselves "Christian." They have membership in a church, but God has absolutely or very little effect in their lives.
 - c. Claiming to be Christians practical atheists are really just atheists.
 - d. And there are practical atheists in the church of our Lord—in this text James says that it is a shame and it is evil. It will damn a soul to hell. By it Satan tests our faith yet in another way.
 - e. [Read 4:13-17](#). Humanism—leaving God out of your life will test your faith.

B. (4:13) LEAVING GOD OUT OF OUR PLANS IS VIEWING LIFE FROM A HUMANISTIC POINT OF VIEW.

1. “Come now” in the Greek is used both here and in 5:1. It could also mean, “Go to now.” It is an imperative command in the Greek, but it does not apply to travel. It is interjected to gain attention to what is going to be said. It is very much like our phrase—“come, come now!”
2. “Ye who say...” There were Christians James is addressing here who were leaving God out of their daily lives. They were making plans for the future without acknowledging God’s presence or will—they were humanistic in their approach.
 - a. Proverbs 27:1, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.”
 - b. Luke 12:16-20, Parable of the foolish farmer; Matthew 6:25-34.
3. Is it wrong to make money?—No!
4. But here they were evil—let’s look and see way!

C. (4:14) WE CANNOT KNOW WHAT TOMORROW BRINGS.

1. There is no “whereas” in the Greek: “Ye say ye who do not know a thing of tomorrow...” (The NIV is excellent here).
 - a. We don’t know if we will be alive tomorrow let alone next year.
 - b. Yet, we who know so little of tomorrow talk boldly of tomorrow without any regard for God’s will who knows what will be tomorrow.
2. Man does not know, but God does, we should trust Him, but there is a human tendency to disregard Him. No wonder God views us either as sheep who follow Him or goats who go their own way.
3. Our life is a fast disappearing vapor.
 - a. Biblical descriptions of our life...
 - 1) It is like a shadow.
 - 2) Like a flying shuttle—look at your pictorial directory and look how many are gone now.
 - 3) Like a hurrying messenger.
 - 4) Only a handbreadth in extent.
 - 5) Like a weaver’s web.
 - 6) Like a flower of the field.
 - 7) Like the grass of the field.
 - 8) David said it is like water spilled on the ground.
 - 9) Like a vanishing vapor.
 - b. From a human point of view life is void of hope—it is fatalistic.
 - c. You and I must have God’s view and God’s point of view of life to discover joy and hope.

D. (4:15) GOD WORKS IN OUR LIVES TO LEAD US; WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE GOD’S WILL IN THIS LIFE.

1. In the KJV and in the ASV this verse is a bit awkward (the NIV is much clearer). In the Greek it reads: “Instead of saying what they were saying (back in verse 13), they ought to be saying, ‘If the Lord wills...’”

2. The Christian ought to realize always that he lives and has his being in God (or in Christ), Acts 17:28—“**In him we live and move and have our being...**”
 - a. Nothing happens to us that God does not know—not even to sparrows (Matthew 10:29).
 - b. Notice the expression used by men aware of God’s presence in their lives...
 - 1) Acts 18:21, “**But on taking leave of them he said, ‘I will return to you if God wills,’ and he set sail from Ephesus.**”
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 4:19, “**But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills...**”
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 16:7, “**For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.**”
 - 4) Hebrews 6:3, “**And this we will do if God permits.**”
 - c. What does “**If the Lord wills**” mean? “It means that every plan we make should be made with the certainty that it depends upon the will of God. One may do this without use of this formula, while one might use this formula of words meaninglessly. God knows the meaning and motive behind our words and our deeds.”
3. Greeks said, “The god’s willing.” Christians died to change that to “The Lord willing.”

E. (4:16) DO NOT GLORY IN THE EVIL OF LEAVING GOD OUT OF YOUR LIFE.

1. Instead of relying on the will of God, these Christians were boasting and arrogant in their own abilities. This is shown by what they were saying back in verse 13.
2. It reminds me of Rabshakeh and his boast at the walls of Jerusalem given to Hezekiah king of Judah.
3. This verse indicates that these Christians had a serious attitude problem. They were saying “Tomorrow we are going to do this and this and this...” as if daring God to interfere with their plans.
4. “**All such glorying is evil.**” It is wrong to boast against God (It is also very foolish and very dangerous).
 - a. We are to boast in Jesus and His cross, Galatians 6:14-16.
 - b. To boast of self or to boast in self is evil.

F. (4:17) TO KNOW TO DO GOOD AND NOT TO DO IT IS SIN.

1. There is a principle here we have applied for years: The sin of omission.
2. But in this context it means: “The man who by knowledge is capable of living a morally acceptable life and who does not do so is sinning...”
 - a. John 15:22, “**If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin,ε but now they have no excuse for their**

LESSON TWELVE

Faith and Prosperity

5:1-6

Southgate Church of Christ

Milt Langston

REVIEW

- What is the theme of James? (The necessity of wholeheartedness in our faith).
- In James 2:1ff James tells us that our faith should be void of what? (discrimination)
- What will win over judgment (2:13)? (Mercy)
- What is the breath of life to acceptable faith? (Works)
- If we want to control our life what must we try to control? (tongue)
- What characterizes worldly wisdom? (envy, divisions, etc.)
- What characterizes heavenly wisdom? (peace, meekness, a spiritual attitude)
- What is the source of arguments & fighting in the church? (hedonism)
- What will the practice of hedonism lead to in our faith? (compromise)
- What three things do we need to do to overcome worldliness through humility? (Submit to God; Draw near to God; Serve God with a single mind)
- What turns making plans for the future a sin? (Leaving God's will out)

TEXT:

I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS (1:1-11).

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VI. OUR FAITH TESTED BY GOSSIP (4:11-12).

VII. OUR FAITH TESTED BY SECULAR HUMANISM (4:13-17).

VII. OUR FAITH TESTED BY AFFLUENCE, 5:1-6.

A. INTRODUCTION:

1. James is addressing the same group here as he did in chapter 4:13-17(compare 4:13 to 5:1). **“Now listen...”**NIV.
2. These are the rich who visited the church 2:2. They were opposed to Christianity and they blasphemed the Name for which Christians are called (Christ), 2:6-7.
 - a. They claimed to worship God through the Jewish religion.
 - b. They were humanistic and secular (4:13-17). They left God out of their everyday plans.
 - c. They are also rich through dishonest gain (5:1-6).
3. The Christian Jews were oppressed by the rich (2:6), and James like prophets of old before him is here comforting the oppressed, Psalm 73:1-20, 27-28.
4. In verse 6 James identifies these rich Jews with those who killed Jesus—the ruling Jews—the Sadducees.
 - a. In Josephus' works, Book xx, cp9, the first paragraph, he tells of James' death by this same group of people.
 - b. Albinus is made procurator over Judea.
 - c. Albinus' son Ananus is made the High Priest.
 - d. James and other Christians are tried by the Sanhedrin then stoned to death.
 - e. The populous of Judea cry out at the death of innocent men, and Labinus is recalled after only three months by King Agrippa when the Jews threaten to bring Albinus to trial for allowing James' death.

5. The Christian rich are addressed in 1:10, but here James is addressing the ruling Jews who were so opposed to Christianity.

B. (5:1) YOU REAP EXACTLY WHAT YOU SOW.

1. “Weep and howl” is the instruction given to these rich folks.

a. Isaiah 14:31 reads, “Wail, O gate; cry out, O city; melt in fear, O Philistia, all of you! For smoke comes out of the north, and there is no straggler in his ranks.” So we are talking about judgment!

b. “Weep” here is the same word used in 4:9 to instruct the backsliding Christian to repent in sorrow for his sin, but here it is a bitter prediction of the rich oppressor’s future. It is the same type of voice used in Revelation 6:16, and 18:15 indicative of judgment.

c. “Howl” = shriek; the howls of those condemned by God (Isaiah 16:7; 65:14; Amos 8:3). In Acts 24:25 Felix was terrified at Paul’s description of judgment to come, here James is describing the judgment to come to these Jews.

2. This instruction to the rich (“weep & wail”) was also given to comfort the poor who were oppressed (the brethren).

a. Paul speaks of the Thessalonians’ faith in 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4, then he says, “⁵This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—⁶since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. ¹¹To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ¹²so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 1:5-12).

b. The coming of the Lord in Judgment will vindicate Christians who have suffered at the hands of the wicked, and it will glorify and raise up Saints.

1) The same is true whether we talk of judgment at the last day, or judgment upon a wicked nation.

2) Therefore, judgment is not to be feared by believers.

3. James is showing that the poor Saints are in a better state or condition than the rich (look at the condition of the rich man and Lazarus to compare their conditions before and after death).

4. “The miseries that are coming upon you...” could refer to the coming destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70.

a. It does not change the meaning of this text whether it does or doesn’t.

b. What happened to the rich Jews in A.D.70?

1) First they lost control of their rule to the Zealots who slaughtered the ruling class.

2) Second the wrath of Rome was brought upon everyone by the hated enemy.

3) Rome wiped the Jews out—they have not recovered to this day—it made Hitler's extermination of 5,000,000 look like a pick nick in comparison.

C. (5:2-3) THE RICHES OF THE WEALTHY ARE CORRUPTED AND RUINED BY NON USE.

1. Money is like corn. It must be kept in circulation to do any good.
 - a. If a person grew crop after crop of corn year after year and never used it but stored it every year—it would rot.
 - b. The same is true of our money. If we hoard it, it will rot, but if we give of our means to do God's will; He will increase our money, 2 Corinthians 9:8-15.
 - c. Let's apply this to our own personal situation...We are richer than most in other countries. How should we use our money to fulfill God's will?
2. James uses three measuring sticks of earthly wealth—riches, clothing and silver & gold (or money). You can tell how well off a person is by the type of clothes he wears and the amount of money he has.
 - a. The **"riches"** of these Jews was corrupted.
 - 1) **"Riches"** = money in Greek, but also it could mean wealth of any kind.
 - 2) **"Corrupted"** = rotten, decayed, stinky (very much like a farmer who tried to store up too much grain which went bad). It could also refer to the way they obtained their wealth—evil.
 - b. **"Your garments are moth-eaten."**
 - 1) In Bible times a person's wealth was measured by the type of clothes he wore—purple and fine linen were clothing of the rich.
 - 2) Look again at 2:2, **"For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in..."**
 - 3) James uses the perfect tense verb for **"moth-eaten"** and **"corrupted"** which indicates that these conditions are not just for now, but were an on-going condition.
 - 4) Example: An old west Texas farmer who discovers oil on his land...
 - a) He may be the richest man in town now, but he'll still drive a pick-up and wear jeans and boots...he is not corrupted.
 - b) What about his sons and daughters?
 - c) There is a corruptive quality about riches.
 - c. Rusted **"gold and silver"** is another sign of wealth gone bad.
 - 1) These metals do not rust.
 - 2) Therefore, it is a figure of ill-gotten gain.
 - 3) James shows that God can see if our riches are tarnished or not. Tarnished gain stands as a witness to sin.
 - a) If you stand in front of a jewelry store with a broken glass front, and the police find jewels, watches and rings in your pockets—these things stand as a testimony to your guilt—the same is true of dirty money.

- b) The lesson is obvious—do not own dirty money—God knows if it is tarnished or not.
- 3. Ill gotten gain will eat up a person's flesh.
 - a. Paul says it will eat up your soul, Galatians 6:8, **“For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”**
 - b. It is not wrong to have the ability to make money, it is a gift, but James teaches that Satan can attack us where we are strong—through wealth.
- 4. **“In the last days”** = almost always refers to a time of judgment upon a nation in prophesy.
 - a. If God stood with Israel, Rome nor anyone else could have defeated her, but because God stands against Israel, nothing can save her.
 - b. If God stands with America, Russia, China, Iran nor anyone else can defeat her, but is God stands against America nothing can save her.
 - c. Here's the point: too many money hungry people who try to get rich by frauding others will destroy a nation.
 - 1) At the turn of last century in America rich people had more money (capital) than the government. Many became rich during the industrial revolution during a time when the common folks had to put their children to work in factories for almost nothing just to keep their jobs.
 - a) Then came WWI.
 - b) Then came the great depression.
 - c) Then came WWII.
 - d) How are we doing today?
 - 2) It is not wrong for the U.S. to give away our grain surplus to poor and needy nations.
 - 3) But we had better watch a government that is turning to lotteries and bingo gambling which rob poor people to raise revenue. It matters how one obtains riches.

D. (5:4-6) THE SINS OF THE WICKED RICH.

- 1. (5:4) It is wrong to gain money by frauding employees.
 - a. The wages a rich man holds back cries against him—what is cursing and condemning the wicked rich man's life? The very money he holds in his hands which he thinks is blessing his life!
 - b. We are talking about withholding wages, **“The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning”** (Leviticus 19:13; look also at Deuteronomy 23:14-15). In those days pay was day by day.
 - c. God expects the employer to respect the rights and needs of the employee.
 - 1) The employer is not to defraud the laborer, nor is the laborer to defraud by laziness his employer.
 - 2) How much should an employer pay?

- a) Too much pay causes all kinds of problems.
 - b) Too little pay cause a whole different set of problems including resentment and bitterness.
 - c) But to agree to pay a wage and then hold it back is a sin.
- d. **“The Lord of Sabbath”** (KJV & ASV) = “Lord of Hosts” in the Greek. It could mean “Lord of Armies.” In the Greek it does not mention Sabbath. But a Greek transliteration from a Hebrew word. The Greek word means “host.” It is sort of like baptize (in the Greek) being transliterated to baptism in English, when the word means “to dip.” For that reason you will not see “Lord of Sabbath” in more modern day translations.
2. (5:5a) The wicked rich sin by living a life of extravagance which squandered their money.
- a. They lived **“delicately”** reads the ASV. This conjures up pictures of finger bowls and pinky fingers in the air as the eat...
 - b. Someone has said, “Luxury and extravagance are the diseases of the rich.”
 - 1) The rich fool said to himself, **“Take thine ease...”** which illustrates an attitude of a person who is not going to try to do God’s will.
 - 2) In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul said, **“Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow ye die.”** This express this sinful attitude and practice of the rich.
 - 3) It is a life of **“luxury”** and **“self-indulgence”** as the ESV reads here.
3. (5:5b) The wicked rich are fattening themselves for slaughter.
- a. Does the wicked rich share his wealth? Where does he spend all his money? God warns that he will be judged and held accountable.
 - b. Josephus tells of the torture and sorrows of the rich when Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70.
 - c. In Nazi Germany if a poor Jew and a rich Jew both died in the gas chamber, which one suffered more?
 - d. If a person spends all he has on himself—he is being fattened for a day of judgment.
4. (5:6) The wicked rich are rich because they oppress the poor.
- a. **“Righteous one”** (ASV) could mean Christ, but in the context it indicates that the poor were the righteous here (but it could still refer to Christ—who is served when we serve the needy, Matthew 25).
 - 1) The rich pay less income tax because they can hire an accountant (this is not saying they do not pay more taxes; it means only they can discount what they would pay to a greater extent; they don’t use the short 1040 form).
 - 2) The rich can afford fancy lawyers—the poor can’t.
 - a) What punishment will a rich person pay if a lawyer can get him off?
 - b) But what about a poor person who writes a hot check?
 - 3) **“Righteous”** here refers to the position of right—not morality.
 - b. God will judge the wicked and rescue the righteous—it is just a matter of time.

SUMMARY

Carl Marx had a view that the rich capitalists abused the masses and religion was the opium of the masses.

This section of James says that Carl Marx was wrong: religion attacks the rich!

God does not advocate rebellion against injustice.

God advocates patience (5:7-11) because He is in control, and He will deal with injustice!

LESSON THIRTEEN

Faith Suffering and Lies

5:7-12

Southgate Church of Christ

Milt Langston

REVIEW

- What is the theme of James? (The necessity of wholeheartedness in our faith).
- What will win over judgment (2:13)? (Mercy)
- What is the breath of life to acceptable faith? (Works)
- If we want to control our life what must we try to control? (tongue)
- What characterizes heavenly wisdom? (peace, meekness, a spiritual attitude)
- What is the source of arguments & fighting in the church? (hedonism)
- What will the practice of hedonism lead to in our faith? (compromise)
- What three things do we need to do to overcome worldliness through humility? (Submit to God; Draw near to God; Serve God with a single mind)
- What turns making plans for the future into a sin? (Leaving God's will out)
- What stands as a witness against a sinful rich man as seen in 5:1-6? (his ill gotten riches)

TEXT:

- I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS (1:1-11).
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 - V. OUR FAITH TESTED BY WORLDLINESS (4:1-10).
 - VI. OUR FAITH TESTED BY GOSSIP (4:11-12).
 - VII. OUR FAITH TESTED BY SECULAR HUMANISM (4:13-17).
 - VIII. OUR FAITH TESTED BY AFFLUENCE, 5:1-6.
- IX . OUR FAITH TESTED BY SUFFERING, 5:7-11.**

A. INTRODUCTION: BE PATIENT AND TRUST IN THE LORD, 5:7-11.

1. This is a change of emphasis—the believers are being exhorted now, not the rich (“brethren” 5:7).
 - a. God is at work—He does not allow the rich to oppress the poor forever. Judgment is brewing for the wicked.
 - b. Only believers know (by faith) that God is systematic and just in His dealings with mankind.
 - 1) Christians submit to God’s working through patience even if they suffer for it.
 - 2) They trust that God will make things right.
2. This all fits into the context from 4:13-5:6 where James has been addressing the wicked rich who were persecuting the poorer Christians.
 - a. In the New Testament times there were more converts from the slave ranks than anywhere else.
 - b. Notice that the N.T. nowhere advocates rebellion or overthrow of oppressors....have you ever wondered why?
 - c. Because Christians are believers in a God who will make things right bringing the unrighteous to justice.
 - 1) In history what happened to the rich oppressive ruling class in England...in France...in Russia.
 - 2) Did God bring the oppressive people to judgment in various different ways?
 - 3) Will God bring baby killing forces in America to judgment?
 - 4) Will God bring governments that oppress their poor to judgment?
3. This section in James teaches the kind of attitude we should have toward those who persecute us.

B. (5:7a) BE PATIENT AND WAIT FOR GOD.

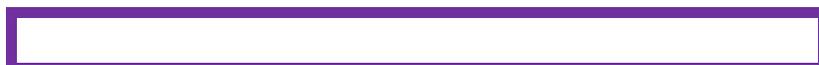
1. The word “**patient**” in the Greek means being “long tempered.” Peter said, “**The Lord is... patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance**” (2 Peter 3:9). Peter uses the same word as James uses here.
 - a. Why would God be long-tempered with the wicked rich? (So they could repent!).
 - b. So why should you and I be long tempered?
 - 1) So God’s will can be accomplished! So our will can be aligned to God’s will!
 - 2) So we can become like Jesus!
2. The word “**coming**” in the Greek = **parousia** (parousia) – “presence; being near; advent.”
 - a. It is true that Jesus is with us until the end (Matthew 28:19ff).
 - b. Paul says in Ephesians 2:21-22 that we have become the dwelling place of God’s Holy Spirit. That’s how Jesus remains with us. He has not left us alone in the world.
 - c. However, it is obvious that James as well as other New Testament writers were longingly looking forward to Christ’s return to the world—as should we! Wouldn’t it be wonderful if Jesus returned in our life time?
3. Here’s the point! Jesus will come to give us aid whether it be in person or providentially—He will not leave us destitute.
 - a. Isn’t that good news?
 - b. James advocates patience, not rebellion.
 - 1) His teaching here agrees with others in the N.T. (**1 Peter 2:13-17; Romans 12:19-21; 13:1-7; Matthew 5:43-47**).
 - 2) James advocates that Christians “stay out of it—don’t take the law into your own hands—because God will take care of it!”

C. (5:7b-8) GOD’S WORK IS LIKE THE WORK OF A HUSBANDMAN.

1. God does not act the way we sometimes think he should act.
 - a. Example of Elijah—God’s power was revealed to him not at Mt. Carmel, but in the wee still voice that told him what to do!—anoint three men, and then let God work!
 - 1) We get in too much of a hurry.
 - 2) We need to wait on the Lord—He works out His purpose without fail over generations of time, and He can care for us in the here and now.

NOTE

What we need is to have enough faith to conform to God’s will so that we become a part of that unfailing purpose of God!



b. Example of the Jews, “²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Corinthians 1:22-25).

2. What James is here saying as we view the warnings of judgment in 5:1-6, “God has already planted the seeds of the evil rich’s destruction—it is just a matter of time till it grows to maturity and reaps the desired fruit.”

a. We should not be angry with those who persecute—we should pity them for what is going to happen to them.

b. God’s wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:22-25) works on a higher plain than man’s wisdom.

1) I would rather have God’s wisdom which sometimes seems weak, and ineffectual than man’s wisdom.

2) Yet we sometimes give higher credence to the wisdom of men.

3. Jesus called the judgment of the world as a harvest time for God—this is no doubt what James is referring to here. Look at **Matthew 13:18-23 and 24-30**. (Can you think of some obvious lessons from these parables?).

a. God expects fruit from believers.

b. Not all produce—even among those who at first believe (thorny and rocky soils)—“**Faith without works is dead.**”

c. Deception and error are allowed by God to be tools of the devil (the wheat and the tares go together).

d. God does not destroy the tares so that the wheat will have a chance to grow to maturity (and bear fruit).

e. Deception is allowed, but its time is short.

4. The exhortation here is: Be longsuffering, and it will pay off—“Grain grows from a shoot, than a stalk, then it puts forth a head and then bears fruit.” God is waiting for us to ripen into the harvest.

5. What is a person’s fruit for God?

a. His children.

b. Those who are introduced to Jesus through him (his witness).

c. Those brought to Jesus and all those who will be brought to Jesus through those we bring (see the importance of one soul!).

d. Those who the church brings to Jesus—through mission work, etc.).

D. **(5:9) DON’T MURMUR (GRUMBLE).**

1. “**Grumble** or **complain**” = (Greek) stenazo (stenazo) = “To sigh or groan” as in 2 Corinthians 5:2 “**...in this body we groan...**”

2. The word “grumble” with “against” = (Greek) stenazo (stenazo) + kata (kata) = “to groan in complaint.”
 - a. Getting down on the elders and deacons will not make me a better Christian—it makes me a weaker one.
 - b. What should we do when we feel like griping?—we should fight the impulse down and get on with doing what God has told us to do.
 - 1) That will put you on God's side and make you a part of His purpose.
 - 2) It will teach us patience in letting God work out our problems, and it will keep us from becoming ineffective through worry and griping.
3. To groan against one another can bring us into judgment, “...that you may not be judged.”
4. Note: The judge is at the door watching us too!
 - a. “Standing” in the Greek is an imperfect verb. That means that it refers to uncompleted action—something that is in the process of being done.
 - 1) It is an ongoing process—something that goes on and on.
 - 2) The Judge is standing at the door, he has been standing there and he is going to keep on standing there.
 - b. He is standing before the door looking on—nothing you or I do escapes His attention.
5. James is not saying, “Be still, you can’t do anything.” He is saying, “Be still and let God do it!”

E. (5:10-11) EXAMPLES OF PATIENT SUFFERING.

1. Note the suffering and the patience of the prophets (v10).
 - a. They were persecuted for their message.
 - b. No one would listen to them, yet they preached on.
 - c. They entrusted their labors to God's purpose and they won through to final victory through God's working of His plan.
 - 1) Jesus did come when they predicted he would.
 - 2) He did establish His kingdom.
 - 3) Glory has been revealed to those who believe.
2. Note also the suffering of Job.
 - a. Job is a prime example of one who was successful because he endured.
 - b. He was impatient just like you and me, but he never gave up on God—he would not curse God and die.
 - c. From this we can see that God is full of mercy and pity, and in his won time he will rescue his own.
 - 1) Job received valuable insights—more knowledge.

- 2) In the end he received twice as many carnal blessings.

X. OUR FAITH TESTED BY LIES, 5:12.

A. (5:12a) DON'T DECEIVE WITH YOUR SPEECH.

1. Remember this is a Jewish audience who used oaths or "swearing" in their every day speech.
 - a. Jews were taught not to lie with their oaths.
 - 1) Leviticus 19:12.
 - 2) Numbers 30:2.
 - b. But the Jews had perverted the word of God by falsely assuming that you could not lie if you swore by God's Name, but you could as long as God's Name was not used.
 - 1) They swore by Jerusalem or the temple or the altar then lied like a rug.
 - 2) Jesus addressed this same issue in Matthew 5:33-37.
2. This passage here and in Matthew 5:33-37 do not teach against making civil oaths, they teach against lying by gimmicks to get people to believe what you say.
 - a. In 1 Thessalonians 5:27 Paul says, "I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers." That's the same thing as saying, "Swear to me that you'll have this epistle read to all the brothers."
 - b. In Matthew 26:63-64 when Jesus was asked to swear under oath that He was the Son of God, He did so.
 - c. Paul swore he was telling the truth in Romans 9:1.
3. Notice the following areas where we make oaths today.
 - a. Business contracts are nothing but oaths.
 - b. Financial (loans) contracts are oaths.
 - c. Marriage vows are oaths.
 - d. Can you think of any others?
4. Christians are not to say one thing and do something else.

B. (5:12b) TO DECEIVE WITH SPEECH BRINGS GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON YOU.

1. James says it this way, "Speak the truth or else you will be condemned."
2. Don't use an oath to tell a lie!
 - a. What about promises to our children?
 - b. What about our daily speech?

Children of Truth Don't Lie!

LESSON FOURTEEN

Faith and Sickness

5:13-15

Southgate Church of Christ

Milt Langston

REVIEW

- What is the theme of James? (The necessity of wholeheartedness in our faith).
- What characterizes heavenly wisdom? (peace, meekness, a spiritual attitude)
- What is the source of arguments & fighting in the church? (hedonism)
- What will the practice of hedonism lead to in our faith? (compromise)
- What turns making plans for the future into a sin? (Leaving God's will out)
- What stands as a witness against a sinful rich man as seen in 5:1-6? (his ill gotten riches)
- What is God encouraging us to do when we suffer? (Trust Him—be patient)
- If it is not wrong to make an oath, what is wrong which will bring judgment? (Lying)

TEXT:

I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS (1:1-11).

II. OUR FAITH TESTED FROM WITHIN (1:12-18).

III. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR ATTITUDE TO THE WORD (1:19-2:26).

IV. OUR FAITH TESTED BY OUR SPEECH (3:1-18).

V. OUR FAITH TESTED BY WORLDLINESS (4:1-10).

VI. OUR FAITH TESTED BY GOSSIP (4:11-12).

VII. OUR FAITH TESTED BY SECULAR HUMANISM (4:13-17).

VIII. OUR FAITH TESTED BY AFFLUENCE, 5:1-6.

IX. OUR FAITH TESTED BY SUFFERING, 5:7-11.

X. OUR FAITH TESTED BY LIES, 5:12.

XI. OUR FAITH TESTED BY SICKNESS, 5:13-15.

A. (5:13a) WHAT TO DO WHEN TROUBLED (AFFLICTED) , “IS ANY ONE OF YOU IN TROUBLE? HE SHOULD PRAY” (NIV).

1. Praying denotes where our trust lies.
 - a. Praying is a proof of our faith.
 - b. Praying only when in bad times is a proof of our lack of faith.
 - c. For that reason, why does God allow trials, pain and suffering?—so we will trust Him!
2. When should we pray?—When we are afflicted.
 - a. What did King Hezekiah do when he was afflicted? He discussed his problem with the Lord.
 - b. Are you having difficulties with your children?—what should you do?—discuss it with the Lord.
3. An aspect of prayer that we overlook—prayer is our counseling session with God.
 - a. Goals of a counselor:
 - 1) Relieve the pressure—let the sufferer get it off his chest.
 - 2) Help the person suffering see the situation better.
 - 3) Show alternatives.
 - b. Prayer gets our problems off our chest—just putting it into words helps, not to mention that God is your audience.
 - c. Prayer gives us insights into our problem. In just talking to God about our problem we see the situation better and from a different perspective (not our own, but from God’s view. This brings God’s will and purpose into consideration). Prayer will make you think of things you did not think of.
 - d. Alternatives of our choices will become clearer because of prayer, and we will be able to see the best things we ought to do avoiding emotional and poor decisions.
 - e. Never underestimate God’s ability to help us in our daily living.
 - f. One warning: when you begin to pray honest and daily prayers to God, you will become more and more aware of God’s will and God’s desires. It may change you.

4. If your wife beats you up every morning—you have a problem and you need to pray—because you need to know what to do.
5. If you have a teenage daughter or granddaughter who is being lured into the world—pray—God will counsel you as to what you need to do!
6. Prayer changes things, prayer works because God works.
 - a. There is a psychological side to prayer, but there is far more than that.
 - b. As we become prepared spiritually and psychologically, then God is free to do more things for us. Everything that happens to us (our afflictions) is worked by God for our good (Romans 8:28). Prayer helps us conform to His good will.
 - 1) Prayer is not a means of escape from trouble.
 - 2) Prayer is a means of guidance through the trouble which makes us better servants and followers of God.
 - a) Trouble befalls one man and he does not pray—eventually the trouble ceases, but now he is bitter because of it.
 - b) Trouble befalls a believer and he prays—the trouble passes and he has more insight in God’s purpose and more faith in God’s working—he is happy with a good memory in spite of the troubles he has endured.
 - c) So trouble falls on all of us—what should we do? James say, “Pray!”
 - 1] The carnal man will curse God.
 - 2] The spiritual man will call out to God.

B. (5:13b) WHAT TO DO WHEN THING GO RIGHT, “IS ANYONE HAPPY? LET HIM SING SONGS OF PRAISE” (NIV).

1. Praise God in an intelligible manner. Put your praise into words. Speak your mind out.
 - a. We need to give God glory and honor—all the rest of God’s creation glorifies God.
 - b. We need to say thank you more often. Have you ever listened to a child’s prayer?
 - c. What do we most usually say in our prayers?
2. Notice God did not instruct us here...
 - a. To get drunk and celebrate.
 - b. To put our mind into neural and become emotional losing control of our senses.
3. We are to maintain control of our emotional senses and turn it into intelligible praise in the form of a song that instructs and uplifts others.

C. (5:14a) “IS ANYONE AMONG YOU SICK?”

1. What is physical sickness?
 - a. It is a breakdown of normal function. The body was intended to work. When the body ceases to function normally—it is sick.
 - b. What about some who think they are sick?

- 1) If the body still functions he or she has a neuroses—we all have these from time to time.
 - 2) But if his or her mental condition affects the body's normal junction, he or she is mentally ill. So sickness includes mental sickness. This occurs when a narcosis becomes a psychosis.
2. What causes breakdown in bodily function?
 - a. Psychological—caused mentally.
 - 1) Tension is good for you—it keeps you alert.
 - 2) This includes the guy who lets tension create too many juices which leads to ulcers...
 - b. Germs can cause sickness.
 - c. Negligence toward the body causes it.
 - d. Accidents can cause it.

D. (5:14b) PRAYER IS HELPFUL FOR THE SICK, “LET HIM CALL FOR THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH, AND LET THEM PRAY OVER HIM...”

1. Read the book of Job, God permits us to get sick sometimes. God allows us to get hurt.
 - A. This is true because we live in a cursed world.
 - B. But God is still in control and He will not let anything happen to us that cannot be worked for our own good.
 - 1) It may not work out to our good, but if it does it will be our own fault—not His.
 - 2) We do not always do what God wants us to do—that is our problem.
2. Prayer opens up a person's heart.
3. God can reveal Himself to a sick person—that's why we get sick sometimes maybe.
4. We need to trust God when we get sick or hurt, because His will can be worked out in everything that happens to us.
5. “Let him call for the elders of the church...”
 - A. Why call for the elders?
 - 1) Note: The elders can mean the bishops or shepherds of the church.
 - 2) But “elders” can also mean “older” of the church.
 - 3) If it means the “older” of the church, this would certainly include the shepherds or elders of the church since they're by nature older.
 - b. Elder are those who are strong in the faith—they can teach you and build up your faith. “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”
 - c. What if you are so sick you cannot talk?

E. (5:14c) “...ANOINTING HIM WITH OIL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.”

1. There were three common uses of anointing with oil. Only the first one was medicinal.

- a. In 2 Kings 20:7 Isaiah prepared a poultice of fig cakes or fig oil for the healing of a boil. In Luke 10:34 the good Samaritan put wine and oil in the wounded man's wounds. Look at Isaiah 1:6 where Isaiah describes Israel's condition: **"From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness—only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil."**
 - b. There were no doctors in that day for the common folks—only for the very rich and famous. There was no such thing as a hospital!
 - c. Both Jews and Gentiles alike used the anointing of oil to bring down the fever and to soften the skin. This is a practical action that the older (elder) knew to do.
2. The second use of anointing with oil was cosmetic.
- a. In 2 Samuel 12:20 David had been fasting because his son was ill, after hearing that the child died it says, **"So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes..."**
 - b. Naomi said to Ruth as they were attempting to get Boaz's attention, **"Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes..."** (Ruth 3:3).
 - c. It was the natural action of a healthy person, therefore; some say this anointing was a sign of their faith that God would answer their prayers affirmatively.
3. The third use of anointing with oil in the N.T. times was ceremonially.
- a. Kings, priests and prophets were anointed with oil ceremonially to induct them into office.
 - b. Mark 6:13 shows us that this ceremony was used in miraculous healings also, **"And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them."**
 - c. We must remember that this epistle was written during this time of the confirmation of God's word when miracles were being actively used.
4. The important thing is that we do not get bogged down trying to figure out if this anointing with oil was custom or for healing—the emphasis is in faith and in prayer.

F. (5:15a) THE PRAYER OF FAITH SHOULD HEAL THE SICK PERSON.

1. The word **"save"** used in the KJV & ASV = heal. The NIV, NASB and ESV gets it right by translating it, **"And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well."**
2. Faith in prayer is the point here, 1:6, **"But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind."**
3. Questions about miracles:
 - a. Were miracles to alleviate suffering?—No, We learn from Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4, Acts 14:3 and 1 Corinthians 14:22 otherwise.
 - b. Here's the point: Since miracles were signs pointing to the word of salvation, will that word alleviate suffering?—Yes!
 - c. Sin = suffering. How do we alleviate sin? Answer that and you know how to alleviate suffering.
4. Is the promise of healing here invariable?
 - a. Some really stumble at some things.

- b. God refused to heal Paul, “**7To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’**” (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).
- c. Paul was an apostle of Jesus with the ability to heal the sick, yet in 2 Timothy 4:20 he states, “**I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.**”
- d. Let’s not forget the purpose of God is at work in all things—can it be worked out in the death of one who is sick?
- 1) I knew an out of duty brother—let’s call him Jessie—who had cancer and he was dying.
 - 2) He had a friend who was an elder in Brownwood who asked me to go visit him.
 - 3) Jessie and his wife were restored to active faith.
 - 4) Jessie died, and after his death one of his three children who was married with three children was restored to active faith.
 - 5) Was God’s will worked out in Jessie’s death? Could God have healed him?
 - 6) Even Jessie told me that cancer saved his soul.

G. (5:15b) IF THE SICK PERSON HAS COMMITTED SIN.

1. “**If**” is a big word. It shows that sin is not necessarily the cause of an illness, but it can be.
 - a. Some sickness is cause by sin, V.D., AIDS, Etc.
 - b. Even many of our trials and tabulations we bring upon ourselves.
2. The Jews held that all sickness was a result of sin.
 - a. Remember the disciples question to Jesus about the blind man?
 - b. Job’s friends felt this way too—they tried to convince Job that he had some secret sin.
 - c. But the book of Job shows that this is not always the case.
3. If sin is present—prayer will bring God’s forgiveness.

What is needed when praying for the sick? Wholeheartedness of faith!

LESSON FIFTEEN

Faith Sin and Failure

5:16-18

Southgate Church of Christ

Milt Langston

REVIEW

- What is the theme of James? (The necessity of wholeheartedness in our faith).
- What characterizes heavenly wisdom? (peace, meekness, a spiritual attitude)
- What is the source of arguments & fighting in the church? (hedonism)
- What will the practice of hedonism lead to in our faith? (compromise)
- What turns making plans for the future into a sin? (Leaving God's will out)
- What stands as a witness against a sinful rich man as seen in 5:1-6? (his ill gotten riches)
- What is God encouraging us to do when we suffer? (Trust Him—be patient)
- If it is not wrong to make an oath, what is wrong which will bring judgment? (Lying)
- What does God promise the person who deceives with his speech? (Condemnation)
- When we pray for the sick how should we pray? (with faith)

TEXT:

I. OUR FAITH TESTED BY TRIALS (1:1-11).

II. OUR FAITH TESTED FROM WITHIN (1:12-18).

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VIII. OUR FAITH TESTED BY AFFLUENCE, 5:1-6.

IX. OUR FAITH TESTED BY SUFFERING, 5:7-11.

X. OUR FAITH TESTED BY LIES, 5:12.

XI. OUR FAITH TESTED BY SICKNESS, 5:13-15.

XII. OUR FAITH TESTED BY SIN AND FAILURE, 5:16-18.

A. (5:16a) CONFESSING OUR SINS AND PRAYING TOGETHER IS AN ACT OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

1. The context here is the sick Christian who has asked the elder to pray for and with him, but the same can and will apply to anyone who is trying to carry the weight of his own sins.
2. Sin is a fact of life. Christians sin but they do not practice sin. A Christian who is growing spiritually will sin less and less as they grow to maturity.
 - a. This is a process that eliminates sin (the practice of sinning).
 - b. Listen to John's commentary here: "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin..." (John 2:1a). "7Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. 8Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 9No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God."(1 John 3:7-9).
 - c. This maturing process as we grow eliminates sin gradually, and it is the work of God in us.
3. Guilt is a result of trying to hide sin—it is the world's #1 problem. We have devised clever ways to hide our sins, but this only creates a problem instead of solving it.
 - a. John says, "8If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10).
 - b. Solomon says, "13Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. 14Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity" (Proverbs 28:13-14).
4. James gives one remedy consisting of two parts to help us overcome sin and guilt: confession and prayer.
 - a. Confess = "to say the same thing."
 - 1) God said of Jesus, "This is my beloved Son..." when we confess Christ we say the same thing, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God."

- 2) So confession is an agreement with God.
 - 3) God has witnessed our sins, and He named them as sin, when we confess we agree with Him concerning our sin.
 - a) This is good emotionally for us—it gets it off our chest.
 - b) It sets our frame of mind—an alcoholic cannot stop his drunkenness till he stops deceiving himself and admits that he is a drunk—the same is true of a sinner.
 - b. James tells us to tell others of our sins so there can be fellowship (fellowship is sharing) in prayer to be healed.
 - c. This indicates that our fellowship needs to be closer in the church—we need to trust one another.
5. **“Healed” – iaomai** (iaomai) = to be made whole; to restore to a normal condition; to heal.
- a. Prayer to God invokes immediate forgiveness.
 - b. Prayers together with others help the sinner get back to his normal condition (the healing is spiritual more importantly).
 - c. It heals the pain of guilt.
6. Notice that this confession here is not the public confession of a sinner in church. We get our example for that from Acts 8 when Peter rebuked Simon the Sorcerer and Simon said, **“Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me”** (Acts 8:24).
- a. If we have hurt a brother we need to go to him and make it right.
 - b. If we have hurt the church by Godless living or absence from worship, we need to make it right by public confession.
7. But this text is talking about private confessions—I don’t think we have restored this practice!
- a. That is why we lose members to the Pentecostals who have a religion of emotion, yet they help their members with the emotional strain of guilt by confessing sins together...
 - b. The cultic movement called “crossroads” and the “Boston movement” practices this concept described here—of course the also practice control tactics which are unscriptural also.
8. We need to become the kind of people that can be trusted to keep our mouths shut so we can confess our sins to one another.
- a. We should not stand aloof of others.
 - b. We should not condemn, but pray with those who confess a fault or weakness.
 - c. We should become sympathetic and helpful.
9. Satan tests our faith with guilt, we can remedy this through confession and praying for one another.
- B. (5:16b) NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF PRAYER.**
1. When we do not pray, we have held prayer in low esteem—our faith can be measured by our prayer life.
 2. Prayer goes hand in hand with confession.
 3. We need to pray more and those of us who are more mature in prayer habits need to teach others how to pray.
 - a. The lessons for us here is not as much to the sinner as it is to all of us in the church.
 - b. Sinners need some release from their guilt—we need to become loving enough to fulfill this need. We need to become Christians that someone in trouble will not be afraid to come to with their problems and prayer requests.
 - 1) The greatest gift we will give others will be to teach them how to pray.
 - 2) It will heal the church’s woes!
 4. If we are searching for someone to pray for us, we need to look for the righteous man.
- C. (5:17-18) THE EXAMPLE AND ILLUSTRATION OF THE INFLUENCE A PRAYER CAN HAVE.**
1. The prayer of one man (Elijah) caused a famine and his prayer caused it to rain at its end.

- a. If one man's prayer can do so much think how much the prayer of many can do!
- b. This shows us the power prayer can have.
 - 1) We can change the world with our prayers...(discussion)...
 - 2) If we have enough faith to pray that faith will not go unrewarded.
- 2. Note this about prayer.
 - a. When we are young in the faith we do not know how to pray properly.
 - b. As we grow in faith, we begin to know more and more of God's will. As we strive to conform to that will becoming a part of God's purpose, our prayers become like Jesus', "This is what I want, but let your will be done!"

XIII. OUR FAITH TESTED BY DISPAIR AND APOSTASY, 5:19-20.

A. EVERY CHRISTIAN WILL BE TEMPTED TO QUIT; SOME WILL QUIT; BUT SOME WILL BE WON BACK TO REDEMPTION AGAIN! THIS IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS SECTION.

- 1. This section is an exhortation to the church concerning those whose faith Satan has conquered.
- 2. They will not come back to eternal life because they are now cut off from the source—no spiritual food—no prayers—no fellowship—they are where Satan wants them to be.
- 3. Because they will not come back, we must go after them—remember the parable of the one lost sheep!

B. (5:19) WANDERING FROM THE TRUTH.

- 1. The word "err" or "wander" comes from the Greek word **plano** (plano) = planet = "the wanderer."
- 2. Solomon said, "Like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home" (Proverbs 27:8).

C. (5:20) WHEN WE CONVERT (Convert = to bring back) THE OUTER PLANETS OF THE CHURCH (those who have wandered off) WE DO TWO THINGS.

- 1. We save a soul from death—we snatch a soul from death.
 - a. The word "to turn" or "convert" ASV comes from (epistrepho) **epistrepho** = "to turn, to return, to revert."
 - b. The word "from" death here comes from the Greek word **ek** (ek) = "out of" death! A wandering Christian outside of fellowship dwells in death!
 - c. There is a denominational idea that Christians are safe even if they do not regularly attend worship and other services.
 - 1) 78% of Americans claim to be Christians.
 - 2) But 6 out of 10 do not attend worship or belong to a church.
 - d. One who stays away from church is dead! (discussion).
 - e. Are wayward Christians as important to our responsibilities as faithful Christians as non believers?—Yes! Both dwell in death!

2. When we bring them back we “cover a multitude of sins!”
 - a. “Cover” comes from the Greek word **kalupto** (kalupto) = to hide; remember that the word apocalypse is our word for Revelation which means to uncover (same root word here).
 - b. This is stopping sin’s progress.
 - 1) When we save a soul we do more than influence one soul—we influence those yet unborn for good.
 - 2) When we save a soul we eliminate human suffering because it removes sin from the world. A Christian sins less which not only affects the Christian, but his family, and everyone who’s life touches his life.
 - 3) The saving of one soul is our fellowship with eternity—God’s work—the work of God’s eternal kingdom—the church of Christ is a lot more than buildings and grounds, schools and programs.
 - 4) An endless chain reaction of sin’s consequences leading to eternal hell are ultimately stopped when Christians start acting like Christians and lead the lost to salvation!

SUMMARY

James ends his book on an evangelistic note—what do you think will be the activity of a faithful church who's faith has stood the test?

The salvation of Souls!

Evangelism!