

Christian Living

Letter of James

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Introduction

The ministry of Jesus of Jesus Christ shows clearly that Christianity is an intensely practical religion. The philosophies of men tend toward abstractions and subjectivity and every imaginable shade of grey. However, the teachings of our Lord make distinctions between right and wrong objectively and direct human beings into a life more abundant. The short epistle of James renews this commitment to practical and godly living, inserting the power of true faith into everyday events so that discipleship is a lifestyle. James helps to make all of that more practical. Solomon's book of Proverbs is an excellent companion.

James intensely, practically, and faithfully teaches the Christian how to live. Through all the topics he discusses, James teaches us to authentic and wise Christian lives. James tells us of the spiritual fruit that demonstrates the true faith {aul heavily discusses.

Lessons:

1. Introduction (1:1)
2. Proving the worth of your faith (1:2-18)
3. Living the Word (1:19-27)
4. Mercy triumphs over judgment (2:1-13)
5. Living faith (2:14-26)
6. Fiery tongue (3:1-12)
7. Meekness of heavenly wisdom (3:13-18)
8. Humble yourself before God (4:1-10)
9. Your life is a vapor (4:11-17)
10. Riches are limited (5:1-6)
11. So be patient (5:7-12)
12. Effective fervent prayer (5:13-18)
13. Restoring lost saints (5:19-20)

Christian Life -- James

- Converted (chapter 1)
- Faith (chapter 2)
- Disciplined (chapter 3)
- Humble (chapter 4)
- In this world (chapter 5)

The golden thread that runs throughout James' entire letter is this: You claim to wear Christ's name. That means nothing if you do not live it!

1. The writer of the letter of James is generally believed to be one of the bishops in the

Jerusalem church. How does Paul identify him (Gal. 1:19)?

- Only one Paul talked to during his three year sabbatical with Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
- The Jerusalem church in James' lifetime:
 - Ac 2 – witnessed and experienced the beginnings of the church
 - Ac 2ff – witnessed and experienced the church's growth
 - Ac 4-5 – witnessed and experienced the church benevolence
 - Ac 7-12 – witnessed and experienced persecution
 - Ac 15 – witnessed and experienced internal conflict over doctrine
 - 1 Cor 16:1-2 – experienced extensive famine hardship
- Experienced and witnessed and participated in the acts and spirit of love, faith, joy, and peace, and power of the gospel to convert us and the power of faith to move us.

2. How does James describe himself?

- “bondservant of our Lord Jesus Christ” – why a “bond” servant? Bought, paid for.
- “the Christian life is not mere theory; it is the life of a servant of God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- Being a servant implies:
 - a) obedience – knows no law but his master's word, no rights of his own, belongs only to his master, will not challenge his master's authority
 - b) humility -- do not murmur or complain, serve not because I am good but because I am thankful
 - c) loyalty – this is what I choose to do and I will not betray or give up my service
- How does his letter describe the life of God's servant?

3. Of this theme of service to God, consider Paul's message in Philippians 2:5-11.

How does he describe Christ's own example of bond service to God?

We humble ourselves; we accept that our lives are not our own to keep. Christ did what God needed him to do; Christ paid the cost to do whatever God needed him to do.

4. The Christian, as a disciple of Christ, is to be a bondservant.

What do the following passages teach us about our life as bondservant?

- 2 Cor. 4:5 – we do not live for ourselves to promote or proclaim ourselves; our purpose is to live for Christ's sake not our own to serve for the salvation of all men; our task in this service is for our own hearts to be filled with the light of the gospel and shine that forth from ourselves.
It is not about me but it is all about God.
- 1 Pet. 2:16 –
- Rom. 6:15-23 – our lifestyle or way of life is obedience to God; our lives are not our own

5. To whom did James write?

- “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (Ac. 8:1-3,13)
From the text, describe this persecution and its impact on them.

- James would have witnessed and experienced the persecution that caused the scattering.
 - While James has also stood face-to-face with this persecution and fully understands the situation and circumstances of their life, his message is to always a bondservant of God. “Don’t put off your life of faith until the times get better (2). Right now, in the midst of our suffering, is the very time to be putting your servanthood toward Christ into practice.”
6. You and me today
- When we encounter trials, what do we experience?
 - a) fear – what will become of me?
 - b) anger – how could they do that to me?
 - c) self-pity – won’t some body feel sorry for me?
 - d) envy – why aren’t they suffering like me?
 - e) confusion – why is this happening to me?
 - f) rationalization of self-indulgence -- doesn’t God want me to be happy?
 - The effect of this on even us today is what James addresses in his letter: jealousy, fear, anger, selfishness, judgmental and hurtful spirit, and bitter fighting among ourselves.
7. Key Idea -- Your trial and all the suffering it causes is not a time to rejoice less, pray less, love less. Rather, it is the very time to practice joy, peace, love, hope, and faith that we know to be the Christian life. But the Christian life is more than mere knowledge. The entire letter teaches us to live our Christianity!

Proving the Worth of Your Faith

James 1:2-18

1. In your own words, how do your trials bring you joy?
- It is truly a grace of Christian virtues; not common among the unbelievers
 - Are these trials that are common to all or trials you incur because you live a good life and seek righteousness, pursue truth and goodness? (Matthew 5:10-12)
 - Does the text imply any trial that challenges faith?
 - This joy is a way for God to help you become what he wants you to be and that is better than you are now
 - Joy – you “do not sink into a sad and disconsolate frame [state] of mind which would make us faint of heart [faint hearted]” when under pressures, stresses, distresses.
 - Joy is more than just being calm. It is the ability of our spirits to make the best of it.
 - Sense that though pressured now it will be okay when it plays out.
 - Joy in trials is one way in which we are most like Christ; we bear forth the image of Christ when we suffer trial to do the good and right.

- That this grace born promotes or stimulates, feeds, or provokes the growth of faith
 - The Message: “Faith is forced out into the open and shows its true colors. So, don’t try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well developed – not deficient in any way.”
2. God will manifest himself! (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
 - More strength from God’s grace; under trials I live by God’s strength and not my own
 - Whatever God’s answer to my faith, God sends no evil. God has no ill will for us but only answers our faith with his will
 - God means to cheer our spirits and lift our hearts in the midst of our distresses; he will not hide us in a bubble.
 - So, when we see his good will – when we serve his will, it gives God the opportunity to manifest himself.
 - Manifest what?
 3. God will purge your faith (1 Peter 1:1-10)
 - God will not deny his mercy for you
 - God’s power to protect you and lift you. He is your shield and your rock.
 - From what will he shield you in the midst of trials?
 - For what will God be your rock in the midst of trials?
 - What will God do for your faith in the midst of trials?
Vindicate your faith and bring glory to his name because your faith endured
 - Of what will he purge your faith?
 4. How does wisdom help us to persevere our trials? (1:5-8)
 - To ask for wisdom means we know are weak and trust God
 - Stability -- Seek that wisdom without second thought or hesitation
 - Trials can bring fear, guilt, confusion, anger, bitterness, resentment
 - The faith to trust God brings stability and faith learns to endure
 5. Why can’t we afford to be skeptical about God’s character and intentions? (Matthew 14:22-33)
 - Trials will push us around when we do not know what to do
 - We will become focused on the trial and lose our way.
 - We must be focused on God’s work, or God’s will in our trials.
 6. How does James reassure the poor brother and warn the rich brother? (1:9-11)
 - Money can be a great test of our faith, for both those who have so little of it and those who have so much of it
 - Prosperity cannot be trusted because it will not stay – it is not faithful
 - God keeps his promises.
 - Contentment comes by trusting God with what I need and trusting what he wills for the situation.
 7. Two rewards from enduring trials:
 - Increasing strength to grow up (1:4)
 - Crown of life (1:12)

- What does this mean? What is it?
 - What is the condition of its giving?
One whose loyalty sticks it out and stays with it.
8. Trust the work of God's engagement in our trials: (1:13)
- God is not out to get us; he does not set out to trap us; he does not put evil in our path.
 - 1 Peter 5:6-10 – God's strong hand is with you, he has set the path and will see you through it if you have the faith to trust him; God gets the last word not Satan – so keep a firm grip on your faith.
 - 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 -- God will not fail you, he will not let you down; so, don't be naïve and self-confident
 - Cultivate your trust in God!
9. Do not allow temptation to take you in a trial. (1:14-15)
- Temptation is not God's work, trials are!
 - Where does it originate? Me
 - Where does it conclude? Me
 - What is the key to overcome temptation?
Trust in God -- not self
Love God – not life
 - Stay the course!
10. How does James define the character of God as it touches on temptation and trial?
- Don't be thrown off course by your trials and the temptations they will bring.
 - Why? God is faithful and good to you! God is not 2-faced or fickle. He will not deceive you

Living the Word 1:19-27

1. A Christian is distinct from the world.
- One who listens to what Christ teaches (19-22)
 - One who lives what Christ teaches (23-25)
 - One who separates himself from the world and to Christ (26-27)
2. Remove the anger and we can listen.
- Proverbs 10:19 – the more one talks the more he finds himself in trouble; “too much talk means very little truth”; the principle here is that just as we cannot move in opposite directions at the same time we cannot talk and listen at the same time. I will not hear God when I am not listening to him and I will not listen to God if I am always talking!!!!
 - Proverbs 17:27 – if a man controls his temper, he is in better control of his tongue; a wise man will not feel the need to say everything he thinks and feels. If he is control of his temper, he can think before he speaks and so he will be

quicker to listen than he will be to speak. What do we do when we are angry? I will not hear God when I am too busy telling what I think and feel and want. I will not listen to God when I am angry with him, when I get angry with him instead of listening to him.

- Why do we get angry with God?
- (Verses 19-21) – If I am going to be a doer of God’s Word, I am going to listen to God with a meek spirit that listens with the intent (desire) to obey; the character of meekness is to listen with the desire to obey and not with the disposition to argue with God.

3. We are to listen to the Word of God. (verses 19-22)

- What does James tell us God’s Word will do if we listen to Him?
- Why is God’s Word the implanted seed of salvation?
A seed cannot come to life and grow if it is not planted in the soil. Once the seed becomes rooted in that soil, it begins the growing process of changing and becoming the plant it made to become. Then it will bear the fruit it is made to produce. The seed is useless until it is planted and it must stay in the soil. An implanted thing is a firmly planted or fixed thing, it is meant to stay once planted. Christ’s teachings will do you no good (is useless) to you until it is firmly planted in you. Only then will it bears its fruit in you and in your life. Only then will it be able to save me.
- How are we to listen to it?
 (“However, living a Godly life does not mean a sacrifice of that power and cunning. James calls us to receive the Word in meekness: power under control. When all of the emotion, passion, and desires of the person are brought under the influence of the Holy Spirit, one’s power is not diminished, but refocused and harmonized with the power of God, producing far more strength and character, a character that is an appropriate demonstration of the working of the Word of God in the life of a believer. James also reminds us that it is the power of God that saves, not our own power. The things of this world have no ability to save us. Consequently, they are far less important than our willful submission to God’s Word”).
- How does God’s Word, the teachings of Christ, work? (Colossians 3:8-10, 12-14)

4. God’s Word brings me fact to face with God and myself and my relationship with God and the truth. (verses 22-25)

- The teaching – don’t just listen and do nothing! faithful living is active listening.
- The idea -- be willing to live the Word of God not just listen to it; I have the will, desire, determination, courage follow and become what I hear from our Lord and Savior. The Word of God, the teachings of Jesus Christ are given to look into Christ and God, the truth and righteousness, godliness and holiness and to look into ourselves with every intention, power to do something about what we see.
- What are the characteristics of a mirror, or a looking glass?

- The man who listens but does not do what he hears – you are not listening when do not act on what you hear; do not listen when Christ’s words go in one ear and out the other; the Word can’t become implanted!
 - The man who listens and without hesitation does what he hears – be “a man or woman of action”; God does not intend to waste his time by giving us the revelation of his truth, the Word, and it not require us to act on it; you are to take what you see, work with it, and stick with it to complete its work.
 - Why do we not listen? why do we refuse to do anything about what we see in the mirror? why do we get angry about what we see in the mirror?
5. How does Jesus describe man’s relationship with God’s Word? (Luke 6:46-49)
- The man who listens and obeys it
 - The man who listens but disobeys it
6. True religion religion of Christ’s disciple is one who actually does what he hears Christ teaching him (Verses 26-28)
- We cannot talk a good religion; God sees through our words. The world will see thorough our words when the test comes to bear.
 - Pure – clean and innocent; religion that has worth and value and is useful
 - undefiled – not corrupted, contaminated, dirty and filthy; religion that is not worthless
 - How do we do that?

Mercy Triumphs Over Judgment

James 2:1-13

1. Do not judge God’s people out of evil motives. (verses 1-4)
- How might we judge another favorably and another less favorably because of his appearance?
 - Other than wealth, what other considerations might cause us to exercise partiality in the fellowship of our church?
 - How would you describe pretentiousness?
 - Do not treat some better than others! How
 - James states that a true love and respect for all persons has a component of faith involved. We love because God loves, not because of the worthiness of the individual to be loved. This may be one of the most difficult battles for the Christian to deal with, as we regularly ignore the homeless, thinking only of our own wants and desires. We avoid contact with those who are not like ourselves, or in our own ignorance, think that any culture that is not found in our own back yards is somehow of lesser value
2. God does not think the same way of the world and unbeliever. (verse 5-7)

- We separate ourselves from one another by setting up our own set of standards. God has no standards that separate people from Himself except the Standard of the Cross. God sees the potential of all people to have faith in Him, and does not base their value on their worldly state as contrasted with others.
3. Jesus recognizes that although social/economic status does not condemn one to hell, wealth can be a great impediment to faith. The material riches come between you and God and damage your relationship with God, the only relationship that will save you. How?
- Mark 10:21-25 – Come between God and my obedience
 - 1 Timothy 6:9-10 – Love it more than God
 - 1 Timothy 6:17-19 – Trust them and not God
 - 1 John 3:16-18 – Come between the brethren and me
4. One law rules over all other laws (verses 8-11)
- Who is my neighbor? It is easy to love my neighbor when he looks, walks, talks, and smells like me. However, we pick our neighbors, befriending those of our own choosing. It is here that prejudice enters our lives. It there is any doubt as to the sinfulness of prejudice, James removes it here. If one demonstrates prejudice, or disrespect of other persons, they have committed a sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. If God put his law within us then His Spirit convinces us of our wrongdoing.
 - If we pay attention to those from whom we can get something while ignoring those from whom we cannot get anything or very little; if we pay attention to those who can give to us while ignoring those who seem to need help, we are condemned for sinning against both of them and God by breaking Christ's law and teaching to love your neighbor the same as you love yourself.
 - Matthew 22:34-40
 - Remember, if you violate this one command you are guilty of breaking God's entire law. If you sin by showing favoritism to one while ignoring another (not love your neighbor as you love yourself), you are as guilty as an adulterer or a murderer!
 - With liberty comes responsibility to remain sensitive to what constitutes righteous living. Any unrighteousness is sin. Not all sins are equal, but they all carry the same contempt of the authority of the Lawgiver. Consequently, it is ridiculous to think our good deeds may outweigh our bad. It is our bad deeds which condemn us, and a single bad deed is such an offense. If we were without the forgiveness of sin that Christ affords, we would be the most miserable of creatures. But God has demonstrated that He is faithful to forgive sins when we confess them and repent (turn from those sins.) We are all guilty and in need of repentance and forgiveness. Consequently, as stated earlier in this chapter, we must listen to the Word and respond in a Godly manner.
5. What are the many ways you can love your neighbor as you love yourself?
- who is your neighbor? (the good Samaritan story)
 - how do you love yourself?
 - what are some examples of loving your neighbor as yourself?

6. Therefore, mercy triumphs over judgment (verses 12-13)
 - God has little mercy for those who show little mercy to others. This statement should be of concern to all Christians. Christians who truly love others will have a heart of compassion and mercy for all people. This compassion and mercy cannot be contained, and will be evident in their lives. This is a first step to fulfilling the Law of Liberty. Let us all be sensitive to the Holy Spirit at all times, observant of His Word, intently listening to biblical teaching, and as clay in the potters hands, teachable and flexible so that we can mature in the faith, come closer to God, and experience more of the blessings of the faith.
 - Live as one who knows and accepts that he will be judged by that law.
 - Live as one who seeks his own needed mercy and knows that God will give him mercy as he gives mercy.

Living Faith James 2:14-26

1. Nothing Faith (verses 14-17)
 - How does James illustrate the nature of faith?
 - A faith that does nothing is nothing! It is a faith that is no good because “it does not make any sense to say you have faith and act in a way which denies that faith.”
2. Worthless Faith (verses 18-20)
 - How does James illustrate the value of faith?
 - If faith without works is useless, then a Christian without works is useless
 - This kind of faith cannot save you!! So, if I am saved by grace through faith, what does God’s grace require of me to be saved? (Ephesians 2:1-10)
3. Perfect Faith (verses 21-24)
 - How does James illustrate perfect faith?
 - What Abraham did is what made him right with God because he was expressing his faith in God;
 - It is not the works itself that makes me right with God but the faith that moves me to obey that makes me right with God
 - Works – the acts of obedience – are how we express our faith in Christ and our love for God. What are these works? They are the very nature what we are and the very expression of who we are. The Christian’s works define and identify who he is.
 - a) worship -- praise
 - b) obey – commands
 - c) serve – will
 - d) follow – teachings
4. Living faith (verses 25-26)
 - How does James illustrate faith that is alive?
 - Again: Faith without works is dead!

Firey Tongue

3:1-12

Open Discussion:

What are some of the sinful ways we use our words?

- to hurt others with our tone or speech – in what ways can we do that
- to deceive
- to teach falsehood
- to spread filth
- to manipulate and control

1. The tongue is Imperfect (verses 1-2)

- We never get it right! Every time we open our mouths, we are not qualified to speak because we are never in perfect or complete control of ourselves for we cannot have complete or perfect control of our tongues.
- So, why does it seem that James discourages Christians from becoming teachers of their faith? Would it be better if not one became a teacher? What is James trying to teach us?
- Why should teachers receive a stricter judgment than others?
 - a) Principle of a servant's accountability
 - b) Principle of a sinner's judgment
 - c) Principle of sound doctrine
 - d) Principle of spiritual purity
 - e) Principle of a leader's influence

- What is James point of his hyperbole?

2. The tongue is Raw Power (verses 3-5)

- The words of our tongue unleash a raw power of both accomplishment and destruction!
- What are the lessons of his three examples:
 - a) Bits in the mouth of a horse
 - b) Rudders of a ship
 - c) Spark of a fire

3. The tongue is Destructive (verses 5-6)

- That raw power in the tongue is unleashed by the wicked and evil power of hell! This is the greatest weakness of us all.
- Remember – spark of a fire is the force of the tongue
- What do the scriptures teach us about the wicked powers of Satan and Hell?
Satan is after us, preying on us, to take control of our hearts and tongues (1 Peter 5:6-10)

4. The tongue is Double-edged (verses 7-10)

- We can and we do curse and bless, praise God and hurt one another out of the same mouth and that needs to frighten us! It is a scary thing that we are not able to control or

restrain the tongue and yet we can control, retain, and redirect some of the rawest power on Earth.

- What kind of speech is condemned?
 - What kind of speech is fitting, commanded, for the saint in the following passages?
5. The tongue is Impure (verses 10-12)
- We cannot allow this to stand! It is unnatural and just should not be!
Why is this so?
 - How are we to judge human behavior?
 - a) principle of the seed
 - b) principle of identity
 - c) principle of lovebe in fellowship with God and not the world; Satan may rule the world but choose God to rule your heart. Among many things, this will enable and produce the spiritual control of the tongue.

Meekness Of Heavenly Wisdom 3:13-18

1. "Blaze a trail" for us (verse 13-14)
 - The question: "Are any of you wise and understanding?" Who is he talking about?
 - The reason: "Then you should show your wisdom by living right." Why did he ask this question? If I want to be a Christian, I must live like I mean it!
 - How are we to do that?
2. The kind of wisdom that the Christian is not to follow and live is not from God is a human wisdom (verses 15-16)
 - Human wisdom is not from God because its nature is earthy, demonic, sensual.
 - Its fruits are jealousy, selfish ambition, disorder, every vile practice.
 - Examples of these in the church today?
3. The wisdom that the Christian is to follow and live not of this world but of God.
 - The Christian must seek it from God.
 - Two minds (Ephesians 4:17-24) -- one mind is about self and one mind is only about God and about others
4. What is the nature of the wisdom from above the Christian is to follow and live? (verse 17)
 - Pure -- first; not defiled, not contaminated (Philippians 4:8-9)
 - peaceful – harmonious; peace making from the absence (or removal or preventing) of what disturbs and conflicts; heavenly wisdom wants no part of what disturbs the soul or causes conflict with self or others; it reconciles (with God and with man) because it seeks to get rid of what creates a conflict between them and you; it does not seek its own way but the right way (Romans 7:24-8:1, 12:18-21 and 14:19, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31)

- gentle – to be humane and reasonable, moderate and forbearing; not contentious, not a troublemaker, a patient quality of goodness. Consider all the ways Jesus handled the individuals and multitudes every time he was with them.
 - open to reason – reasonable because it is willing to learn and ready to obey; not stubborn, hardheaded, or proud
 - full of mercy and good fruits – seeks the good for anyone; does not want to do harm to another
 - impartial – not uncertain or indecisive, does not hesitate; not doubting or double-minded; not divided between two opposites – not divided between God and the world, not divided between following Christ and following the world; will not waver but hold its ground
 - sincere – not hypocritical, wears no mask or disguise; means what it says; has no hidden agenda; it is what it claims to be, is not two-faced and will not betray you because there is no pretense at being good for it is good
 - Idea – such a person is a right thinking person; he will not be selfish or self-serving; he is not arrogant or seeking attention to himself; such a person is, rather, humble and kind; serving and such a person wants to do the right thing, prefers the right thing, and will accept the right thing.
5. The harvest of this kind of wisdom we are to follow and live. (verse 18)
- What kind of harvest?
 - How is to be sown to get this kind of harvest?
 - a) “when” sown in peace by peacemakers – only when it is sown in peace;

Humble Yourself Before God

4:1-12

1. James begins by asking the question of the ages? (verse 1)
 - Where do wars and fights come from? Do you not know where your fighting and arguing and endless conflicts come from?
 - What are the common answers you usually hear given?
 - What are some examples of these?
 - Angry, selfish, pride disagreements, fussing, bickering, feuding, quarrelling
2. These conflicts are the result of our own internal fighting? (verse 1-3)
 - They come from the selfish desires that “make war you”. “Don’t you think that they originate in the constant pursuit of gratification that rages inside each of you...?” (The Voice)
 “They come about because you want your own way, and you fight for it deep inside yourselves.” (The Message)
 - In other words, the conflicts between the people of the world, and between church people who fight amongst themselves or are against one another, because that is their nature, that is how they think, that is the kind of person they; it is what they choose to do.

- So, why do they choose to be that way? They are being selfish; it rages within them and they are self-serving; they want things their own way and nothing else matters. Their lusts are fighting inside them for control and win! James point here is that this is the way of the world, that is their wisdom, and the church is no different/ better than the world when they do not subdue their lusts and selfish desires.
 - Why are they in control and not under control?
3. What are some examples of the brethren fighting amongst themselves?
- Consider quarrelling between: Lot and Abraham, David and Absalom, Jewish and Gentile Christians (Galatians 5:11-15, Acts 15), the Corinth church (1 Corinthians), Rome church (Romans 14)
 - What happens?
 - What is the outcome?
 - What should do? Follow these biblical principles:
 - a) Let faith work through love
 - b) Do not bind or loose where God has not
 - c) Do not judge one another that do not see things your way
 - d) Do not project your will and your desire on one another
 - e) Be humble with the brethren.
4. Principle: Do not become God's enemy (verses 4-6).
- This fighting spirit among the brethren is the spirit and way of the world
The pride and self that drives the world makes it a quarrelsome and fighting place; if we allow that same pride and self to drive even just one of us, the church will be a troubled place.
 - Being friends with God's enemy will make you hostile with God!
The world is in rebellion with God because the spirit that makes man fight with himself and in turn fight with each other makes him fight with God. Being friends with the world will only make me an enemy with God; it will make me resist, rebel, and fight with God.
 - So, God will oppose the proud but give grace to the humble.
If I am friendly with the world, I will become God's enemy! That relationship will by its very nature make me hostile with God because it is a relationship that drives me to rebel against God. A relationship with God is the relationship of a humble spirit.
 - What will a Christian do who is friends with the world?
5. Now, how does one make himself humble with God? How does the Christian get along with God and follow His wisdom? (verses 7-10)
- Submit to God (7) – “to rank yourself under God”; “let God work his will in you”; “give yourself to God”; put yourself into the lower rank, put yourself in the position to naturally obey God's truth and authority and serve his will; give God your heart, mind, and soul and you will not want any part of the heart, mind, and soul of the world; the world will have no influence over you.
 - Resist the Devil (7) – “to stand against, oppose, resist the devil”; stand against and fight against him and he will run away from you; stand and fight against him and his schemes and he will have to run away from you; the devil cannot you and stir up the fighting

against yourself that causes you to fight against, rebel against, to disobey God when he is running away from you and has left you. Satan cannot stand against God and he will not last in the presence of God!! This will give God a clear road in your life.

- Draw near to God (8-9) – it is the natural response or action when the above actions brings you into the position and state of being that can and will seek and accept God and turn the world away; Go and be at God’s side, go and be with God with and he will come and be with you (compare Luke 15:17-23)

What must we do to come and sit down right next to God, right at his side, after we have already put the devil out of the way and put ourselves at God’s feet?

a) Cleanse your hands – get yourself clean again; stop messing with sin; do not tolerate and accept in any way or to any measure the stench and filth and stain of the world -- and of sin – on you.

b) Purify your heart – stop contaminating yourself with the world; can’t have it both ways; cannot be two-faced about your Christianity – either you are or you are not!

c) Mourn your spirit – get serious about your Christianity!; be ashamed of our sin and disobedience and feel it and let that shame of your guilt drive you to repentance and conversion from any thing of the world’s influence in you; remove the shame I bring upon myself and the shame I dump on the name of my Lord and Savior! (consider 2 Samuel 12, Psalm 38 and 51)

- Humble yourselves before the Lord (10) – “stand face to face with God lower yourself before him; in a very personal sense, place God on the throne of your life and not yourself and place yourself at the foot of that throne; place yourself on the ground at God’s feet and he will lift you up to stand tall above the sinful world; the believer, the Christian, cannot seek the pleasures and approval of both God and the world at the same time.
- Matthew 11:28-30 and 6:24-34 now 16:24-28 and 7:24-27

6. So, Christianity means business.

- It is not just a name I wear but it is what I am.
- It is not just what I am inside, but what I do that defines me.
- The name is Christian and it is a way of life! Christianity identifies me and defines me!

7. Now, James gives us a stern and vital warning (verses 11-12):

- You are not the judge! “If you decide that your job is to “accuse and judge” your brother, then you are a self-appointed critic and judge of the law; if so, then you are no longer a doer of the law and subject to its rule; you stand over it as a judge.” “If you criticize your brother or sister in Christ, you are criticizing and judging the law they follow. And when you are judging the law, you are not a follower of the law. You have become a judge.”
- Only God is the judge and critic of his law that all of us believers are to follow! “Know this – there is One who stands supreme as Judge and Lawgiver. He alone is able to save and to destroy, so who are you to step in and try to judge another?” “God is the one who gave us the law, and he is the judge. He is the only one who can save and destroy. So it is not right for you to judge anyone.”

- God is the only one who gave the law and the only one who can judge it. God is the only one who can give the law and judge it. God is the only one who can save and condemn. To judge is to assume God's place. The very best I can only do is to submit to God and obey. And I struggle and fail to do that.

Your Life Is A Vapor 4:13-17

1. Did God ever have any plans?
 - Examples
 - Why did he make these plans?
 - What did he do about them?
2. Making plans is a fundamental human activity.
 - What are some examples of some things we make plans for?
 - Why do we make plans for some things and not for others?
Because we do not bother with what is not important to us. When something is important to us, we want it to be successful and will give it the effort and pay the cost to make it so.
3. "Listen carefully and think about this. Time is not in our control."
 - Can you control the future now?
 - Why not?
 - We will do specific things for a specific outcome, but how much control do we have over the outcome of our actions?
 - What really can you control?
 - a) what actions you take at that moment
 - b) how you use the time now
4. "Listen carefully and think about this. Your life is only a vapor, a mist."
 - What are the properties and behaviors of vapor or mist?
 - What qualities of your life does this describe?
 - What does this tell us about our relationship with time?
 - Psalms 90:10
5. Lessons learned:
 - Worry, stress, and anxiety over what you yourself cannot control is useless foolishness Matthew 6:25-34 – live each day you are given as it given! Make the most of each day you are given while you have that day; do not live any days you have not been given. Luke 12:13-21 -- No day is guaranteed to you. Faithfulness is lived now, not tomorrow. Use what you have today to do all the good you can do today. Do not miss any good you can do now because you are storing up for another day that you do not know will come.
 - Make our plans when we need to but do not trust in your ability to make them happen.

Make our plans when we need to but trust only in the power, will, and faithfulness of God.

Ephesians 5:15-17

- Never forget to be prepared for eternity, for the Lord's return and your resurrection. Live each day as though it could be the day you go home forever.

Matthew 6:19-23

- We cannot live our lives without God – at all!

6. Questions:

- What are we making plans for, what are we living for – the material and temporal or the spiritual and eternal? (2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Matthew 7:24-27)
- What does James imply in phrase, "If the Lord wills..."?
- What is the sin James describe in verse 17?

Riches Are Limited

5:1-6

1. The test:

- Who is James addressing in this passage?
Materially wealthy unbelievers – he does not refer to them as brothers or believers
- What is in store for these rich people? Their riches will be destroyed
- Why is God so angry at them? Because they allowed it to cause them to sin against the believers and mistreat, take advantage of, hurt, and abuse them.
- What applications can we draw from this passage?
No can depend on material wealth; they may give blessing, but it is only temporary – they cannot be trusted, they cannot save; that if we do not take hold of our riches they will take hold us and bring us to destruction; all riches will go the way of all garbage – decay and destruction.

2. The place of riches in a disciple's life:

- "There will come a day when it won't matter, come a day when you'll be gone" – we live for the success to gain wealth and the power we have given it but a power we cannot stop or control will take it away from us.
- Principle of the disciple's life -- Who has control of your life? Who rules your life? (Matthew 16:24-28)
- Foundation of the disciple's life (Matthew 22:34-40) -- what drives this devotion, is that he loves God with everything he is and he love his neighbor as much as he loves himself; he will not betray God and he will not hurt another person for his riches.
- Basic truth of the disciple's life (Matthew 6:24) -- he is devoted to live by it; no one can live for both God and the wealth of the world

3. God does not condemn the rich for being rich:

- Some of the most godly people in the Bible were rich.

4. However, Christ does speak of the trouble for the rich being saved:
 - The truth of following Christ (Matthew 19:16-26) – rich man can be so full of his riches that they hold him and he cannot let go of them, they could hinder him from following Christ; he becomes so full of them that there is no room for God; they become such a part who he is and what he wants of life that he cannot let go of them; you cannot balance the cost of the soul you have lost when you are under the power of gold; when you invest too much into the wealth of the world, you humble yourself to its influence.
 - The love for God (1 John 2:15-17) -- he cannot love God because he loves his riches
 - The golden rule of life (James 5:1-6) – oppressing others
 - The trap of riches to steal your soul and its salvation (1 Timothy 6)
5. Then what is the trouble with riches (1 Timothy 6):
 - When you love the material wealth, it prevents you from loving God (1 Timothy 6:10) – when you love riches, it causes the Christian to betray God and betray Christ; that love leads you to forsake your only savior trying to save yourself with what your wealth can buy for you and all you get is the sorrow and tragedy of a sinful life.
 - When you love money and yourself, you care for no one but yourself and care nothing for God (2 Timothy 3:2) – your only interest is in pleasing your lust and pride no matter who it hurts
 - Principle: When you love the world and what it offers you, you cannot love God and his kingdom (1 John 2:15)
 - When you trust in the world's wealth, you cannot, you will not, enter Heaven. (Mark 10:24-25) – When you trust your riches, you cannot trust God and so he can do nothing for you; when you trust your riches, you cannot trust God and so he cannot save you.
 - Warning and blessing (Luke 6:24) – material success to measure one's failure or success by the worldly measure of material gain, physical pleasure, or human pride is only frail and will fail you (21-23). However, TRUST God (20-22)
6. Jesus taught a pursuit of the riches of a righteous life:
 - Feast on the bread of life and drink up the living waters (Matthew 5:6) – your soul will crave after what you feed it for life.
 - Give your heart to the treasures of Heaven (Matthew 6:19-21) – your heart will pursue what it wants.
 - Give your life to the pursuit of the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:31-33) – God will take care of the cares of your life if you will give him your life in pursuit of his way.
7. The true wealth of righteousness is more precious than gold:
 - The Worth of your faith (1 Peter 1:1-9)
 - The Worth of your soul (Mark 8:24-28)
8. James makes a reference to the serious problem of the day that many of the Christians were poorly treated and abused by their masters and employers (verses 4-6).
 - God's principle for employee/employer relationship (Colossians 3:22-4:1)
 - God's comfort for the disciple who is oppressed by the ungodly rich or is struggling with his own envy and covetousness (Luke 16:16-25) –
9. The wise man feared both riches and poverty (Proverbs 30:7-9).

10. Paul's command for the wealth Christian:

- 1 Timothy 6:17-19
- To take hold of true life, do not become proud of your riches and do not then trust them to save you; devotion to a life of the treasures of good works is your only hope
-

So Be Patient

5:7-12

1. James encourages us to be faithful in living our Christian life in the midst of trials by being patient (verse 7).

- to have an enduring spirit; the capacity of your spirit to endure – in this case, trial; in essence, you will hold on and keep on going until you do not need to anymore – in this case, until the trial is no more.
- Why? Because the Lord is coming (verse 7) – whether he comes in time or to end time, the Lord will come to your side in judgment! One day the Lord will make it right, one day he will vindicate your faithfulness.
- Consider these examples:

2. Three models of patience (verses 7-11):

- Why must each of these endure?
- We must learn to be patient (7)
- We must learn to establish our heart (8)
- We must learn not grumble (9)
- We must learn to just trust God, he will reward us.

3. So, how do we that? How do we endure? How do Christians follow Christ in the midst of oppression?

- Give place to wrath (Romans 12:18-21) – trials, mistreatments, injustices, sufferings, being wronged repeatedly when all you are trying to do is serve God and live a holy life can be a great force to anger in your soul; stop yourself and do not let that anger take control of you and replace it with God's wrath; move your anger out of the way and let God's wrath have its way; trust God to make things right and your spirit will be free of the anger and free to do good to even those who hurt you or wronged you.
- Do not shrink back (Hebrews 10:32-39) –
- Do not be ashamed (1 Peter 4:12-19) – expect the trials and troubles for serving God: understand that it is because you are faithfully serving God and so he will make it right one day; put it in his hands and keep on going.
- Be humble under God's mighty hand (1 Peter 5:6-10) – decide for yourself that you will serve God, that you will trust him to take care of you, and then you will rise above the trial by the hand of God; know and trust that God will make you fit for his service as you are tried

- Do not hate the ones who hate you (Matthew 5:38-48) – no you do not like what they are doing and that it is hurting you, but in spite of that you seek God’s blessing for their spiritual well being for their salvation; you cannot hate one who you are praying for.
5. Benefits from enduring these sufferings, trials, persecutions:
 - God will manifest in you his strength (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
 - God will purge your faith of its weakness (1 Peter 1:6-10)
 - God will give mercy for temptations (1 Corinthians 10:13)
 6. The danger of swearing casual oaths and conversations (verses 11-12)

Effective Fervent Prayer 5:13-18

1. Question 1: Is anyone suffering, what are they to do?
 - Let him pray
 - “suffering” indicates any kind of badness such as any mistreatment, hard trouble, illness, misfortune
 - How can praying help you endure your troubles?
The suffering may cause you to feel you are not in control but helpless, hopeless, afraid.
 - Pray for ourselves: Scriptures give us examples of prayer for removal of the suffering or the capacity and ability to endure it; what he wills for our spiritual good, our ministry in his work/will, the glory of his name – he will always be with us, engaged with us to help us
 - Pray for those who maybe causing the suffering (Matthew 5:43-48) – may not pray specifically for their prosperity but we do pray for their well being; you cannot hate whom you are praying for, especially if you are praying for their forgiveness and salvation.
 - The comfort that prayer brings to your mind, heart, and soul, a peaceful spirit (Philippians 4:6-7) – prayer can remove the anxiety from your heart and replace it with a calm and quiet spirit; the peace of mind that Christ gives will guard your heart and soul, your mind and spirit, against anxiety like a sentinel; he is our Redeemer and Lord!
2. Question 2: Is anyone cheerful, what are they to do?
 - Let him sing praises
 - “Cheerful” indicates good spirits or an agreeable, pleasant state of mind; rests in the thought and attitude and not in the physical or material circumstances or conditions; it is spiritual not physical.
 - Idea -- your mind free of trouble even if your life is not.
 - Singing praises lifts the soul -- David was a man whose heart was devoted to God and whose spirit was free to sing its praises to God; he was “a man after God’s own heart”.
 - God’s glory and goodness abounds every day to us and for us, even when we are troubled; God’s blessings to us is independent of the circumstances and conditions of

our lives, even when some of those blessings are given in some of the circumstances and conditions of our lives.

3. Question 3: Is anyone sick, what are they to do?
 - Let him call for the elders who will anoint him with oil and pray for him both in the name of the Lord
 - Is the sickness physical or spiritual? Is the anointing with oil medicinal or symbolic? Is the healing through providential means or miraculous? Is the healing spiritual or physical? Then, considering that James is referring to providential healing of a physical illness
 - The example for the elders – and all of us – in caring for the sick is the Good Samaritan (Luke 10)
 - The faith of God’s children to trust him will always evoke the faithfulness of God to take care of you when you ask
 - The prayers of righteous people God will always answer; who is a righteous person?
4. James also encourages us to confess our sins to one another.
 - Why? What are the benefits of confessing our sins to one another?
 - Worship (Matthew 55:21-26)
 - Make peace (Matthew 18:15-20)
 - Deliverance (Matthew 8:23-24)
5. Character of effective prayer.
 - Fervent prayer
 - Of a righteous man
 - The righteous man person is the one who believes the gospel and obeys.
 - That in that faith you trust God (James 1:5-8, Luke 11:7-11)
6. Singing and prayer are two of the great privileges that every Christian has!

Restoring An Erring Brother 5:19-20

1. The danger that faces every Christian every day is that he could lose his salvation.
 - Do not get caught in the trap or grip of the world’s alluring presentation of sin and evil things (1 John 2:15-17) – you will want it and it will pull you away from God and His kingdom! --- What are the signs that you love the world and its things and have lost your love for God?
 - Do not forfeit your salvation, do not give it away, do not let the world choke it out, for the pleasure and pride of the world (2 Peter 2:20-22) How does the world attempt to pull a Christian away from Christ? What are the contents of the vomit we eat when we do go back?

- Do not forsake the life and protection of the flock (Hebrews 10:24-39) – the believer cannot stand alone in the world and survive because he will be overcome by its temptations and will not return to the flock!
- What are the signs that a Christian is struggling with the world and its sin?
2. This will happen when the Christian wanders from God.
 - “Wander off”, “strays from”, “wanders away”, “loses his way and rebels against God”, “wanders from the truth”, “err from the truth” – to be made to wander off or wander away; to be made to roam; to be seduced.
 - James is describing the Christian who is in danger of reaching the point that he is so caught in the world that it will steal him away from the church and away from Christ.
 3. The duty and desire of every one and all of the flock is “convert them”.
 - “Pursue and bring back”, “pursue him in love and bring him back to the truth”, “someone helps that person come back”, “one turns him back”, -- do not write them off but go after them!
 - Question: Have we followed this exhortation and way of God is we do not “pursue” the erring brother until he has already reached the when they will not repent, or the point of no return?
 4. What will be the result if he returns or comes back, turns back from the sin and turns back to God and his righteous way?
 - You have found and rescued that which was lost to God – and to you!!!!
 - It is not our task to go to the wandering brother (the lost sheep) and judge or condemn but to go to him to rescue and save him (Luke 15:1-7, 17-22) – if he comes to himself and sees his sin and lost state, if he repents and confesses it and comes home, we forgive him because God has forgiven him;
 5. How do we go after them and bring them back? How do we pursue them?
 - Meek and humbler spirit (2 Timothy 2:24-26)
 - Be Spiritual (Galatians 6:1-5) – he who has a gentle and humble spirit
 - Be Attentive (1 Thessalonians 5:14) – be there, be caring, roll up your sleeves and get on your knees and patiently cry and sweat with them to make their way back to God.
 - Be Ready (2 Timothy 4:2) – “Tell everyone God’s message. Be ready at all times to do whatever is needed. Tell people what they need to do, tell them when they are doing wrong, and encourage them. Do this with great patience and careful teaching.” (ERV)
 6. The encouragement:
 - Always be about doing good for the flock. Never stop doing good (Galatians 6:6-10)
 - Always look to the fellowship of the flock. Never neglect one another (Philippians 2:1-4)
 - Always actively love them. Never stop caring for them and about them (1 John 4:7-10)