

MR. D'S NOTES ON JAMES



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Introduction

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AUTHOR:

There are a couple of theories relating to the person of James.

One suggests that there are two men named James. James the brother of John, and James the Less. James the Less is suggested to be the half-brother of Christ, but the word used can extend to a cousin as well as a brother.

Others suggest three men named James. James the brother of John, James the Less, and James the brother of Christ.

James the brother of John:

a. Brother of John Mark 3.17

- b. Son of Zebedee Mark 3.17
- c. Killed by Herod Acts 12.1-2
- d. Fisherman
- e. An apostle

James the Less:

- a. This man is identified as Clophas and Alphaeus, which are both taken from the same Hebrew word and seem to be the same man.
- b. Mark. 15.40 and John 19.25 in the same context show Mary as the mother of James the Less, and the wife of Clopas.
- c. He is also mentioned as brother of Joses and Salome in Mark 3.18.
- d. This is not Christ's brother for their mothers are both listed in John 19.25.
- e. He is last mentioned in Acts 1.13.

James, Christ's half-brother:

- a. Christ's half-brother is mentioned in Gal. 1.19 and Matt. 13.55 and he may have had other brothers and sisters Mark 6.3; Psalm 69.8 (John 2.13-17 shows Ps. 69.8 as being Messianic.)
- b. See Matt. 12.46-50 and Matt. 13.55.
- c. He was a pillar of the church Gal. 2.9.
- d. He was important in the church at Jerusalem. Acts 15.13 mentions him as one of the leaders at

the Council in Jerusalem.

e. A James was martyred in 62 A.D. Josephus says "And bringing before them James, the brother of him who is called Christ, and some others, he accused them as transgressor of the law, and had them stoned to death." James Belief in Action; Correspondence School; Moody Press; Chicago; 1962.

Hegeippus, an historian, relates some of the details of his death.

The Scribes and Pharisees, after placing James in a pinnacle of the temple, begged him to restrain the people, as large numbers were embracing Christianity." They asked him what door Christ would enter when He returned and He replied "Why ask ye me concerning Jesus the Son of Man? He sitteth at the right hand of power and will come again on the clouds of heaven: Many of his hearers then cried: Hosanna to the Son of David. This so infuriated the Pharisees that they threw him down headlong; then stoned him and beat him to death with a fullers club." James Faith in Action; G. Coleman Luck; pp. 12,13; Moody Press; Chicago; 1954.

Barnes Notes mentions: "He is described by Jewish historians of that day as a man eminent for his integrity of life, and as well meriting the appellation or surname which he bore among the Jews, of the Just. He is mentioned as one who set himself against the corruptions of the age, and who was thence termed the bulwark of the people. His manner of life is represented as strict and holy, and such as to command in an eminent degree the confidence of his countrymen, the Jews. He frequently prostrated himself on his knees in the temple, calling on God to forgive the sins of his people, praying that the divine judgments on the unbelievers might be averted, and that they might be led to repentance and faith, and thus to a participation of the kingdom of the glorified Messiah."

So, who was the author? There seems to be some confusion. Constable suggests that he was just a man at Jerusalem, not the James of the Gospels, not one of the twelve.

Most I've read view this writer as the apostle and the half-brother of Christ. Several make comment that just because he doesn't identify himself as an apostle does not mean he wasn't one.

A little about the author would be of interest. If we have the correct James, he was also brother to the Jude that wrote the epistle. Both introduce themselves as a servant of God in their books. Jude tells of his brother relationship to James in verse one of his epistle.

We don't know when he became a believer, but he was a believer shortly after the resurrection. Paul mentions in the context of Christ appearing to believers, that he appeared to James then to all of the apostles, thus also indicating that this James was the apostle James I Cor. 15.5-8. Note however, that there were two men named James that were apostles (Matt. 10.1-4).

It may be of note that James, an apostle, and the half-brother of Christ, does not call to either of these credentials to gain the readers attention. This might suggest that he knew his recipients quite well and knew that they knew who and what he was. This would enforce the theory that the recipients were from the Day of Pentecost or Acts eight.

Eusebius mentions that he lived as a Nazarite in the Old Testament fashion of Numbers 6.1-21. He also mentions that he was a prayer warrior of some great degree.

DATE: Since it seems that the James that was martyred wrote the letter, and since that James died in 62 A.D., it would seem that it was written prior to that date. Some suggest that James does not mention the Jerusalem council in 49 A.D. thus it must have been earlier than that, however there is no requirement for a writer to give a history lesson in a letter relating to other subjects, so this idea has little support.

RECIPIENTS:

Many suggest that it was to those Northwest of Israel between Israel and Greece, as does Jamison, Fausset and Brown, "Peter addresses the dispersed Jews of Pontus, Galatia, and Cappadocia; James, the Israelites of the twelve tribes scattered abroad"

Acts 2.8-11 tells of the day of Pentecost when Jews from all over the world gathered and heard Peter preach. Many were saved that day and went off across the world spreading the good news.

Some suggest that the letter was to twelve locations, but the text says tribes so I'm not sure what that is based on.

There is also the possibility that the letter was going out to people known to the apostle from the church in Jerusalem. In Acts eight we are told of the scattering of the church, thus he may have been trying to encourage and teach those that he knew.

Either of the Acts accounts could be the basis for the letter, and I think I would lean toward the latter in that the occasion to write would be stronger if the RECIPIENTS were to be people James knew personally.

Just a side note, no matter whom James was writing to, he introduces us to the thought of TWELVE tribes. Many have taught in the past that the ten northern tribes of Israel were lost into the masses of humanity, but James would differ with that teaching - he viewed the twelve tribes as existing in some manner in his time. A reading of Revelation seven will also show that the twelve tribes are a reality.

These are sometimes called the diaspora which comes from the Greek word used here. It relates to people living outside of Israel. I am a part of the Nebraska diaspora for I was born and raised in Nebraska, but am now one of the thousands that left Nebraska to dwell elsewhere.

This term is used of the scattering of the Old Testament Jews as well (Those that were taken captive after the fall of Israel.). It is properly used also of those Jews today living outside of Israel. They are scattered among the nations until God regathers them in the end time.

Barnes points out that there were two dispersions, one under the Babylonians to the east and one under Alexander the Great to the west. He also mentions that some suggest that James was writing to these Jews that were taken to the east, that it is a Jewish letter. I rather doubt, as does Barnes, that he would have introduced a letter to Jews that hated Christ as one coming from a servant of Christ. The Babylonian captivity was many years earlier and those people would have had little interest in Christ, if indeed, they had even heard of Him in their place of residence.

PURPOSE:

James was eminently qualified to write this book. He was a Jew saved by grace and highly respected among his peers.

James is a book that is close to works. It is the "show leather for your Christian walk," it is shoes for your faith. It will challenge your Christian couch potato syndrome quite heavily.

It was a battle cry to the dispersion to raise above the ways of the world and to set their spiritual

life in order and get to work for their Lord.

Matthew Henry mentions of the book, "This epistle of James is one of the most instructive writings in the New Testament. Being chiefly directed against particular errors at that time brought in among the Jewish Christians, it does not contain the same full doctrinal statements as the other epistles, but it presents an admirable summary of the practical duties of all believers."

We might mention that these Jewish Christians that were introducing error may have been doing it quite innocently. If, as we have surmised these are believers from Pentecost, and if they did leave fairly soon after the event was over, then they were leaving with little if any discipleship. Even if they had been at the church at Jerusalem and were the scattered of Acts eight, they would not have been fully disciplined and grounded in the Word.

They would have understood all that they had heard in light of their Jewishness and would naturally have not had the revelation that the apostles had from the Lord. Error was sure to creep in with this setting.

I once heard a translator state that they never gave the gospel while with a tribe translating; they just did their work and left without teaching them anything. The Indians were left with a Bible in their own language and that the Spirit would lead them.

What utter foolishness. Yes, the Spirit will lead them - if and when they get saved. Yes, the Spirit will lead them - if they happen to study the Spirit in the Word first and find out what is going on in their spiritual side - that they have never been in touch with.

The great commission tells us to disciple, not leave them to their own devices!

A possible application to this is that we ought to be sure we disciple those that we have opportunity to reach before they go out into the world. A further application might be that we are patient with those that are untaught in the Word. They may misspeak, but there is no need to pound them into the ground for their error - correct them in Christian love.

I have seen, many times, on the internet forums people that love to crush misstatements of others - usually people that are untaught. People that are there to learn, and speak of things they don't understand, and rather than take it as an opportunity to disciple, some take the opportunity to

grind them into the dust beneath their feet, showing them to be the ignorant idiot that they think them to be.

OVERVIEW:

The book is full of commands (there we go, lots of do's and don'ts for people to make fun of - but these are God's not some man's so this is NOT legalism)

There is a strong Jewish flavor to the book, many references to Old Testament books and people. A writer that is well versed in Judaism and its rich tradition.

There is also a strong emphasis on the Sermon on the Mount. Constable suggests some areas that James mentions Matt.5.20, 5.48, 6.1.

Mr. Unger has a good passage on the book that I would like to share at this point. "After a brief greeting he exhorts his readers to take the proper attitude toward testing and trials and warns them to react properly toward the Word of God. He rebukes a demonstration of carnal partiality. He expounds the uselessness of faith apart from works. He inveighs against the sin of an uncontrolled tongue. He expounds true and false wisdom. He advises them against quarrelsomeness, worldliness and pride. He inculcates brotherly consideration. He criticizes the spirit of their business activity. He calls them to patient endurance of life's misfortunes. He shows them what to do when afflicted and he stresses the need for restoring a person who has gone astray." Unger's Bible Dictionary

Consider that "to rally Christians from worldliness to the Privileges of their faith." What a book for our day and age in Christian society in the 2000s!

APPLICATION:

1. It crossed my mind that there was some import to the first writers of the New Testament times. They had the Old Testament or had heard its teachings, I don't know how prolific copies were at this time, but the apostles must have felt it important to get some of this information down for future generations. Those first writers, whom I believe to have been James and Mark, took that first step to set their remembrances down for others to read.

I have also wondered if hearing of their writings might have prompted some of the others to set to work on their own accounts.

Paul's letters were mostly just written for the edification of the local churches involved, but all the books contain valuable information for the believer. They all saw the need for the information to be given to others - it wasn't just for their own personal benefit.

The whole concept of discipleship in the great commission is the passing on of information. Paul had it right when he penned II Timothy 2.2 "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

We are to be in the business of passing on what we have in the spiritual realm. We ought not to keep a lid on it; we should take off the lid and teach others so that they can teach others. This cycle is critical to the church continuing to exist.

I do not endorse the "tradition" of the Roman church, but they certainly have it right in the idea of passing on their teaching to future generations. The writings since the canon was closed are not inspired, but they can be very valuable to the believer, even today.

Recently I discovered that my mother lived, for a time, in a town about two hundred miles from her hometown. I have no idea why she was there. My parents did not pass on the family stories and thus there are many blank spots in my knowledge of my own family. I don't know if my children will be interested in the family history, but they will certainly have it, since I have set it to the computer.

I would further guess these men had no idea that their writings would ever be set into a canon of Scripture for the use of the church.

The final thought might run along the lines that if God leads you to do something for Him, be sure to do it; you have no idea what He might decide to do with it in the future.

2. We have in James a standard, a standard to be met, not observed, considered and rejected as too difficult.

I was having chest pains so went to the emergency room for a quick check. They could find nothing wrong but before they let me go home I had a minor heart attach on the table. They rushed me into a procedure to correct the problem and I rested in the hospital for a couple days.

I tell you this because I would like to illustrate how some Christians might view James.

My cardiologist came in for his first visit. Now, remember, the prescribed action to avoid another heart attack is a low fat, low salt, low sugar diet to get the weight off and lower the cholesterol. Okay, with that background, my cardiologist showed up for his first visit -- He was about the heaviest doctor I have ever seen, and he was chewing delightfully on a chocolate he had picked up at the nurses station.

In my mind, I had to wonder about the common sense this man was lacking - dealing with heart attacks, and plugged arteries all day and allowing himself to be so overweight and eating all the wrong things. He certainly was not setting an example that my wife wanted me to follow to assure long life.

James sets a standard before us, and it is a standard to be adopted, not considered.

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Chapter one James 1.1-4

1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

James means supplanter. This book is written to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. It would seem logical since he writes to believers that he is writing to the many people that were present on the day of Pentecost and the same people that went home after receiving the words of Peter. These were the first believers, and most likely some of their converts. It is also quite probable that many that were scattered from the church in Jerusalem later were also scattered in this area.

James is one of the early books and he would have wanted to give these new converts some doctrine and training. It isn't like the Graham campaigns when there is an attempt to follow up on the new believers by phone or email. These were scattered all over the known world.

He identifies himself as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Serving both God and Christ is of interest. Why would he mention two members of the God head? He serves God, why list Christ as well? I wonder if it was a left over from his Jewish background. The Old Testament saint served God; Christ was not on the scene. When James converted, he would have had this strong "serving God" ideal, thus might be why he mentions both God and Christ. He may have served God, and now was serving Christ as well.

It should be noted that these doctrines of the Trinity were not refined until much later in the history of the church, they may not have grasped all the intricacies of theology that we are fortunate enough to have.

It is of note that he introduces himself as a servant - lists no qualifications, just that he is a servant. Paul on the other hand, at times, lists qualifications in his introductions. It isn't that James didn't have the qualifications; he just didn't feel he needed to list them.

James being an earlier book may not have had the problems of acceptance that Paul had later on. Paul also had the added problem of having been a persecutor of Christians.

He himself most likely wasn't all that well removed from Judaism, and he knew that most of his readers were going to be newly converted Jews, so He identifies the "God" that they all worshiped, and added Christ in that Christ was the Messiah, and He was an added item to the Judaic mindset, even though He was God, there was that distinction I would guess.

I say that they were mostly Jews in that he is writing to the "twelve tribes" a clear indication of his thinking at the time of writing.

The term "greetings" is related to the word that is translated "joy" in verse two. It is a word that can be used of a farewell, and it indicates a joyful greeting or farewell. He is pleased to be

writing to them, and to have an anticipation of them receiving his letter.

James use of the term servant may indicate that he is a humble person, one that does not like to draw attention to himself. I read on several online forums and it is of great interest to watch people as they post for the first time. Some are meek and slow to enter into the discussions; while others jump in with both feet to be sure everyone knows they are there.

One man posted a couple of very vague questions on a board and the regulars gave some very "safe" responses knowing that someone was laying a trap. This man had an arm load of degrees and knowledge and he wanted to hit everyone over the head with both so they would be sure that all knew he was there.

This is not uncommon on forums, but usually after the bold have been proven wrong they settle in to become a valued participant of the forum.

James greets the "brethren" or brothers in Christ. John 1.12 speaks to our brotherhood in Christ. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believe on his name:" And one further Scripture that shows the same relationship. Matthew 12.50 "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

He jumps right into the doctrine. Count it joy when the Devil attacks. It is a joyful occasion because you are saying no and defeating the Devil on his own grounds.

When you are walking down the mall and that really neat guy or gal struts by, you can be joyful knowing that you did not succumb to a lonnnnnng look that might lead to incorrect thoughts. When you find that billfold with two thousand dollars in it, you can be joyful as you attempt to return it to its rightful owner without those thoughts of pulling the cash and dumping the rest.

God would have us closing the door on the devil at every opportunity and that, not only should make us happy, it most assuredly pleases Him as well.

3 Knowing [this], that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

James may have been acquainted with Paul's teaching since this same concept is found in Rom. 5.3, or maybe more plausible would be that it was a common theme of the Lord's teaching. Paul mentions, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;"

Knowing that this process worketh patience. Hum, now he is meddling, telling us that patience is the end result that is desired when we are tested - so who says we need patience?

Patience is that quality that allows you to be steadfast in your walk, it relates to continuing on no matter what is put in your way - doing what is your appointed task. In our case, as believers, it is to walk with God and not the Devil. It is to stand against the Devil in all that he throws our way. Ephesians is clear that we are to stand against him with the armor of God on our person to allow our standing before him.

Trials are a body builder for the believer; they strengthen us to withstand the Devil.

Trials are a trying of our faith, as well. As we walk with God by faith, the Devil tests our commitment, he tests our beliefs, and he tests our faith in what God has said to us in the Word. All this stretches our faith so that we might have patience in our stand against the enemy of God.

4 But let patience have [her] perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

"Let" is of note, it indicates that we can stop our progress in patience. We are to allow patience to have its work done in us. In other words, don't stop the trials or avoid the trials so that patience can do what it wants with, and to you.

This is the only way that we can be perfect, entire and wanting nothing. Perfect relates to having matured to its final end. Entire relates to being complete - all parts present and functioning. This sounds like what God wants in the way of disciples, yet we cannot be this sort of person unless we go through the trials and gain the patience that we need.

Computers usually have a processor unit that makes the decisions and a memory unit that stores all the information. A university, years ago built a unit that combined these two sections into one. They fired up the monster and started working with it. The unit was taught to think on its own. It did not function as planned at first, but after awhile it began to function pretty much as designed.

One day a janitor was cleaning in the back of the unit and noticed some wires lying loose on the floor. He asked someone about it and upon inspection it was found that about twenty percent of the computer had not been hooked up.

The computer had learned around its deficiency. We, on the other hand are to be complete - ready to go - all hooked up - ready to serve our master and Lord.

APPLICATION:

1. This passage brings up the thought of why do the innocent suffer? It also raises the question; if trouble comes into our lives does it mean that we have done something wrong? Let's consider the first question. Anyone can suffer, not only the innocent, but suffering comes from sin. Sin entered the world and nothing has been the same since. God allowed man free choice and man picked sin and all its ramifications.

The second question relates to Hebrews twelve where the author tells us that God, being a good Father will chastise the erring saint. This chastisement is normally for sin that is not confessed nor stopped. If a believer falls into sin and confesses it, all will be right with God, however if the person fights the Spirit's working in their life and continues to walk in sin, chastisement should be expected. ("4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. 5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?")

2. Have you ever had one of those weeks? One of those weeks that seemed like a year? A week when everything goes wrong? A week when everybody comes over for a visit when you don't have time? A week when you never get any of your projects finished? A week when you have a headache or two every day? A week when the bills all come in at once? A week when there are a few extra bills coming in as well? A week when you'd like to end it all by moving to the top of a mountain for the rest of your life?

We have all had some of those weeks and some of them at the same time. James had something totally obnoxious to say to us - "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;" (Verse two) - "Be joyful in your trials." Now, I can't use my voice to show you how he said that, but I can almost guess that he said it very softly to make us take a special note of his encouragement.

Some might ask how James could say such a thing. He could say it because he knew what the people were going through. Remember, we decided that the recipients were probably from the scattering of Christians from Jerusalem in Acts eight? They scattered, not to go seeking their fortune, but they were scattered for fear of their lives. They were under great persecution.

James wants to bring them encouragement in their hard times, and he says "be joyful in your trials."

Some of these folks had lost family members, some had lost their belongings, some may have been beaten, and James says "be joyful in your trials."

The Roman Empire was headed by Claudius, an inept ruler that made it to the throne because the Roman Senate could not decide on a new leader - since there was no one else, he was set in power. Caligula had preceded Claudius and he was known for his cruelty and madness. Nero was coming to bat and Christians were in deep trouble under his reign.

James in light of death, loss of homes, facing lions in the coliseum tells the Christians "be joyful in your trials." I trust that you can find some comfort in this when you next encounter hard times. Always remember, it can always get worse if you wait awhile, but in it all, be joyful.

I fear that this is one area where I did not do all that well in my life. Oh, we have had the trials,

we have had the hardships, but the joy was seldom there when I started with my many pity parties. I lost some of the "Joy" if you will, in not understanding this concept.

3. Take a moment and consider your hardest set of trials in your life thus far. What was the trial? How did you handle it? Were you frustrated? Were you joyful? How did you work out the details? How did you give Him the glory?

In looking back over many years I always seem to end up remembering a two-week period of great trial. This is one where joy should have been the norm, but I confess, it was not. I was nearing registration for my third year of Bible College. The day of registration came without the Lord's provision of the money that we did not have. I went to the school office and told them of our situation.

We decided to wait a semester then continue. We found out late that afternoon that the school had rented our apartment to another couple and that we had to be out of the apartment that weekend. We had nowhere to go, little money and seemingly not a friend in the world.

We rented a trailer, and packed up all we owned and started down the road to Denver to find an apartment. The big hill just east of the school proved to be way too much for our little Chevy two station wagon. I backed down the hill and turned around, and went back down the road to get a good run at the hill. We hit the bottom of the hill as fast as we could and as we neared the top of the hill we were barely moving. We did clear the top, but only with the assist of the Lord I am certain.

We finally were offered our pastor's garage to store our belongings in and I took my family to Nebraska to stay with our folks. I returned and looked for an apartment all week with little success. There was a rather serious shortage of apartments at the time. I went to Nebraska for the weekend and gathered my family and we returned to stay in a camping trailer that someone had offered us.

The next Friday we got up at five A.M. and left so that we could get warm. We found a couple of listings in the newspaper so as soon as we could call I stepped toward a phone booth. I noticed the coin return was full of coins. I started emptying it and then noticed there were coins and a bill lying on the ground outside. The find wasn't big bucks, but it was such a great encouragement. I made the first call and the apartment was still available, so off we went.

We moved in that weekend. A couple of weeks of great turmoil and trial, but the Lord was with us all the way through. I can't say that I was joyful through that time, but when you know how little patience I had at the time, it is obvious that God was just allowing that patience to grow and grow.

There were times when joy was the norm and it made me wonder why I hadn't allowed joy to enter into those other situations. We were on an interstate at two A.M. and the fuel pump failed

about ten miles from town. I caught a ride to town but could not find a part - called my father-in-law and he said he would be right out. I walked back to the car singing all the way knowing that blisters were forming on my feet.

It was a time of joy even though things were rather dark both literally and in our lives. Take time, when trials strike to realize what it is and bring joy to yourself so that you can go through this time as God would have you go through it.

4. Continuing on, in this line of thought - trials will come. II Timothy mentions in 3.12 "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." We in America have certainly not seen this persecution. We ought to be getting ready for it, for I think we can see it coming right now if we only open our clouded eyes. Eyes clouded with a phony piousness and self righteousness that has been turning our countrymen against us, rather than our strong witness turning them to Christ.

The persecution of Christians is becoming the common place around the world and the world does not care. It is of import that believers are now concerned and calling for protests against the persecution of Christians. There is a large flaw in that thought.

We ought to have been protesting the persecution of human beings years ago, not standing by until we are persecuted. We may get in on the trouble that our silence has allowed upon so many others around the world for so long.

If we live Godly we WILL suffer persecution. It may be that God is going to have to use the reverse order in America - bring persecution so that we will live Godly.

5. As I have talked to people over the years and as I have observed my own life, I have found that tests are like a long staircase.

Often you will go through a hard time, then a peaceful time, then along will come another trial. It is the joy that levels these out so that they don't seem to be so bumpy. This is not a guarantee either, for there are times when you must wonder if trials will ever cease.

I am sure that Job wondered at times if the world was totally against him. Trial upon trial upon trial and no let up for such a long time.

I have also noted that when you fail a trial you may shorten the agony, but another trial that will teach you what you didn't learn will be close behind - so, why not find some joy, work your way through the trial while you are there and be finished with it.

In a similar vein, if God is not testing you, what is going on?

Some possibles are: He may be done with you; you may be perfect and ready for anything. Small

trials may come along but some people seem to reach a point where they have learned what is not so obvious to the rest of us.

There is the possibility that you have failed so often that God has given up on you, but this isn't a possibility for He never gives up on His children. There is the possibility that He has stopped because you are no longer responding to His moving in your life. He may put you on the shelf like you have done to Him.

We do have a Biblical example of a man that must have tried the Lord, yet God just kept working until one day Peter was the one chosen to preach the sermon on the day of Pentecost. He stepped out and was walking on water, then doubted and sank (Matt. 14.29-30). He did not understand the teaching according to the Lord Himself (Matt. 15.14-16). Then there was the denial of the Lord (Matt. 26.74-75). This pictures the testing and maturing that goes on in a believer's life. If Peter made it through and became useful, then we can also.

Know that God is not a meany, He is our Father and He desires the very best for us. He is molding us as a potter molds the clay to fit the purpose that He has in mind for each one of us. He is preparing us for His purpose and His work, thus we can have joy in that fact, each and every time a trial comes our way.

There is also Joseph, sold into slavery, and raised through those trials to leadership in the land. When he spoke to his brothers, his comment was "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good." Gen. 50.20

6. In Jame's mind and in the minds of other believers of his day the term servant was not a title of derision, nor of humiliation. It was, rather a term of pride and joy. It was a joy to serve Christ as a bond slave. To serve God with your life was the utmost one could give.

Today, I fear, many view the ministry as a sentence rather than a privilege. I read on pastor internet forums and the men that post are so downtrodden, abused, and penniless that you would think they were slaves of the highest order being bought and sold without their consent.

I recently saw a discussion of how hard the pastors life was, that they were expected to do this and that, they were called away for church problems, they were underpaid etc. Yet, this same board listed a thread on pastoral pay, that disclosed that most of the same people were being paid fifty to a hundred thousand a year, and they are underpaid. I should be so underpaid - read that as "We could pay our entire debt in less than a year."

I realize the current church climate is not conducive to pastors, but the calling is from God, it is God we have the privilege to serve not the congregation.

My concept of ministry has always been, Christ went to the cross for me, so what can He call me to do that would be equal to or worse than that? Nothing, thus I ought to be pleased to serve Him

to my fullest extent without thought to the hard ships, the put down etc.

Many on the boards are bent out of shape if they aren't addressed with the respect that they expect, or if they aren't honored as they would honor themselves. It is God that needs to be honored not his children.

These same pastors view their volunteer staff as mediocre, untrained, untalented, and not worthy of serving, but since that is all we have we will struggle along - even though that staff is called and trained by God - hum.

Many of the threads that I have read over the years make it quite clear that the average pastor views their church as an us/them group. That congregation is the dumbest bunch of sheep that I have ever tried to work with, while "I" am the perfect shepherd that ought to be bowed down to. It is not uncommon to call church members "ignorant" or make fun of their "ignorance."

I don't see taught in the Scriptures, an elite leadership ruling over a subjected "flock." I do see a committed, knit together, group that is working together toward the same end - glorification of Christ. This we/them idea is not Biblical and is leading ultimately to what we see in the Roman church - a large hierarchy to rule the masses.

7. In verse two we are told to be joyful in trials. Life Application Bible properly agrees that this is the concept taught here but points out that it means that during trials we are to accept them with joy, but it does not mean that we are to joy in the anticipation of coming trials. In the book of Job we don't see him going out to the country side seeking trouble, nor being joyful in the trials he did not know were coming. He was perking along in his normal everyday rut knowing that one foot was going to be placed in front of the other for the day. He did not anticipate possible trials; he did not have a joyful smile on his face as he wondered if there would be trials that day.

It is rather like one session I had with my dentist, a man that I would describe as a torture expert. To start with, his hands were the size of a giant dog's paws. When he started working in the back of your mouth it felt like you were getting cosmetic surgery to enlarge the opening. He had been working on me for three hours and the machine he used to cut away gum material was not working quite right.

To start with most of this time he was working on me live. He could not deaden the nerve itself on four teeth he was working on. He was in the middle of doing root canals so could not stop, so forged on in spite of my condition.

There was a small metal plate hooked to a wire. This plate was placed under your leg to make contact so that electric current could pass through the tip of his machine into the gum and burn away unneeded flesh. Now, you know why I used the word torture. The plate, at one point, was not making good enough contact so he pulled it out and handed it to me to hold. I knew what it was and I refused to hold it. I might sit and suffer the torture and pain but I was absolutely not

going to participate in creating it for myself.

Don't go looking for trials; they will come when God has something to teach you. He has the time table and it is much better than ours even though we might think we know better.

8. Trials bring pressure to bear upon us to make us into the believers that God wants. Coal is coal unless it is subjected to great pressure for a long period of time. Without this process all you ladies that are engaged or married would not have the beautiful diamond that most of you have. Coal becomes diamonds. If there is no pressure, then there can be no diamond, you will only have coal.

So, it is with the believer, if there is no trial, there will be no good results. This is why we ought to have joy when trials come - the pressure will cause improvement of our beauty and value before the Lord.

If you run across a believer that is really on top of things and that has a good Christian nature about them, talk to them and see if there aren't some hard trials buried way down under the joy of living. I would guess that there is.

A very dear friend from years ago was the classic model of patience and godliness. One time when we were driving somewhere he shared his personal testimony with me. He knew I was under some hard trials and had been for quite some time. He told me of his time of telling God no to entering the ministry. God took him through trial after trial to train him and to increase his faith. He did not want to leave his business; he did not want to leave the money it was providing. Over a period of months the man ended up on his death bed where he finally told God that he was interested in doing His bidding.

His life from that point on was not peaches and cream, but it was on an upward slope that led to a very secure lifestyle and peace with God. He became one of the most influential and usable lay workers I have ever run into. His teaching was deeper than most of his age group. He was of great encouragement to me in that time of problems and hardship.

If you find yourself in trials, find an older, godly believer that has been there and you will find the shoulder to lean on that you need - work your way through those hard times, and watch your faith and trust in God grow to proportions that you could never believe of yourself.

Mr. D's Notes on James

Chapter two James 1.5-8

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all [men] liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

If you lack wisdom, ask for some. Ask God because He gives liberally. Don't refrain to ask, fearing reproach, because God does not reproach. Wisdom will be the result of your request.

Very simple terms and they are easy to understand. You can ask God freely because there will be no reproach from God. Ever have a parent or teacher or a boss that when you asked a question, they made you feel like a stupid dunce? This will not happen with God, He has all wisdom, and He loves to share that wisdom, so why would He look down on anyone that is asking for it. Indeed, is not asking, wisdom?

Reproach is not something a good boss uses, it is not a good teaching method and it is certainly not a good parenting method. We might even mention how husbands and wives relate to one another - if one doesn't know something it is not a reproach, it is that he or she does not know something. There is nothing wrong with not knowing, but it is wrong to not seek answers.

In the context we have just been speaking of being joyful in trials - if you don't know how to accomplish this then ask God for wisdom in how to deal with those trials.

Note, "if any of you" is the qualifier. Not all will need wisdom, some may and others may not - again being in either group does not make you better or worse than the other. Some of us are way too wise in how we speak. We need to curtail such "wisdom" and keep our spiritual life straight.

One thing you will learn if you study wisdom in the Bible is that wisdom is from God - true wisdom that is - there are all sorts of wisdom, but proper wisdom comes from God and His Word.

Let's look at wisdom for a moment so we can be sure we know what it is. There are a number of terms that will help us gain knowledge of what wisdom is.

PERCEPTION is that which allows us to recognize what is around us.

KNOWLEDGE is that perception of what is around you, and what exists. It is an awareness of all that the world is.

COMPREHENSION: Comprehension is the capacity of the mind to understand that information that our knowledge allows us.

UNDERSTANDING is comprehending what we perceive and apprehend.

INTELLIGENCE is that power of the mind to consider, and think and begin to use all this knowledge.

WISDOM is that ability to use all of these other things in a proper and judicious manner to come to conclusions about all that we perceive and know.

PERCEPTION is seeing a ten-dollar bill on the ground. COMPREHENSION is knowing it is a ten and not a one. Intelligence is knowing you'd better grab it before the man behind you UNDERSTANDS what you are doing. UNDERSTANDING is what the man behind you doesn't have when you pick it up for you see it belongs to him. KNOWLEDGE is when you know he is six foot five and two hundred and eighty pounds. WISDOM is returning the ten to the huge man that is towering over you.

Trials are self-equipped with an answer when God sends them our way. We have only to ask for His wisdom and act upon that answer. The Word tells us that there is no trial that God does not provide a way for us to survive. He will not overburden us to the point that we fail. We may feel like He has, but He will not do such a thing to one of His children. I Cor. 10.13 "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God [is] faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear [it]."

And in case you feel all alone in your trials, know that others have gone before you with terrible problems, so find some consolation in this passage. Hebrews 11.36 "And others had trial of [cruel] mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and [in] mountains, and [in] dens and caves of the earth."

I Peter 4.12-13 speaks to the context of joy in trials. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

The purpose of trials can be seen in I Peter 1.7 "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"

We were between colleges years ago and we had about half the needed money to register for the coming semester. We felt that we should go on a cash basis, and since the Lord had supplied the money we had through a generous gift we felt we should wait for the other half or not register. I stewed over it and prayed over the situation and one night as I slipped into bed I just ask the Lord

to give us the answer to what seemed to be an impossible question. Bingo, a few moments later it came to my mind to register for a half load that semester and see what came along the next semester.

This half semester turned out five years later to be credits that allowed me to take a partial load at a time when I was working full time and going to college full time would have been impossible.

It is not insignificant that anyone that believes can ask for wisdom. The pastor, nor the missionary, nor the board member has a corner on gaining God's wisdom. All believers have this freedom to ask and to receive the wisdom that they need for this life's journey.

We all know the wisdom of Solomon in deciding which of the mothers belonged to the live baby, and it is this same wisdom of God that is available to us if we only take a moment to ask of Him.

He will give it in abundance. The term used here means all that is needed, totally adequate to the need. You never need to worry that He won't send an adequate amount to get you through the problems.

Treat your wife, children or employees as God treats you in this area. God will not reproach you for asking. Can you ever imagine Him answering your request with a retort such as we give to others? "Act like a Christian stupid! I've never seen anybody so dumb in all my eternity. Even your brother isn't that dumb!" Not so - never will it be that He answers us as we probably have answered others.

One must wonder why so many pastors are spending so much time in counseling sessions with people involved in broken lives, messed up parenting situations and job problems. Most of it is that the people aren't seeking God for wisdom and they are running their lives off into problems.

I'm not saying you should not go to your pastor if you have problems, but asking God might be quicker and it will be totally based on the Word and not what the pastor thinks or has read in a self help book.

My wife has told me of some of the Christian counseling sessions that believers she works with go through. They sound like they are right out of O magazine, or the Oprah show. Flaky at best, downright unbiblical at worst.

God's wisdom is in keeping with His Word and it is perfect, why bother with the lesser of options?

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

Ask in faith without doubt might be the thought of the text. Wavering means to doubt or as a

wave of the arm, might indicate turning from one end of the spectrum to the other. This is not faith; this is totally with doubt. Asking with faith is asking with the steadfastness of the pointer hunting dog that varies not from his position once he has found the quarry.

Faith simply is that quality of our mind that allows us to believe without a doubt that God will do as He has said. If you ask for wisdom with a "hope" that you will get it, you are wavering. If you ask with little hope of getting it, you are also wavering. Ask with confidence, the confidence that Almighty God, the creator of all that there is has promised to give you wisdom.

The "driving" and the "tossing" are verbs that have action from without. The winds drive and toss the man that wavers in His request of the Lord. He is like a wave - this is a perfect tense, something that is and always will be this way. If you ask wavering, you are the type that is driven as a wave in the sea. You will be driven whatever way the wind desires, and you will have no control.

Faith is illustrated by the Lord in Matthew 17.20 "...if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, move from here to yonder place; and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Quite a mouthful even for the Lord Jesus. Move a mountain by faith! Some would scoff at such a principle. Indeed, some did when Christ said it. Luke gives the other side of the story when he tells of the other people's reaction. Luke 9.43 "And they were all astonished at the mighty power of God." One might observe that they were astonished, but the indication is that they believed in His power.

Faith is a powerful tool of the believer if we will only use it.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

The one that wavers will receive nothing from the Lord. This is a blanket statement of fact; if you waver, you are out of luck. Why? The faith is faulty.

It isn't that we all have complete and perfect faith; but that we use what faith we have in a complete manner.

8 A double minded man [is] unstable in all his ways.

The one that wavers is double minded. He has two minds when he asks. God won't do that for me. God will do that for me. No, God won't do that for me. Well, maybe God will do that for me. There is no stability in this sort of mind. When we ask, know that the answer is on the way and that God will do exactly what He has said.

This is just another type of man which wavers in his life. He says one thing and lives another.

You can't plan on his talk and actions being the same. This is one that is wayward either by personality or by choice.

This reminds me of a politician. While out getting votes he or she says one thing, but when they have gotten your vote and have been elected they begin doing the other thing - that thing they wanted to do in the first place, but had to make you think something else so they could get elected.

Peter resembles these thoughts. He was totally committed to the Lord, yet denied him when he had opportunity to stand for Him. Not unlike some of the rest of us, but then Peter found the more complete faith and ended up being one of the leaders of the church.

God has us in a growing pattern. Trials bring about growth in the area of our faith.

APPLICATION:

1. The Life Application Bible correctly notes that wisdom from God is the knowledge of what God wants us to do in a given situation. It does not mean that He is going to make the decision, it does not mean that He is going to provide the way (though He may) and it does not mean that you won't have to do some things to cure the situation.

If you ask for wisdom, He will give it, but then it is up to you to do the rest to bring the situation to a good conclusion.

We were asked to fill the pulpit in a little church that had just rid themselves of a shyster. I had prepared for an evening service as well as the morning, but they asked if they could have a devotional for after the noon potluck and that they were going to forgo the evening service. The study I had prepared was quite flexible so I just gave the information in a very informal way in the park after we had all pigged out.

The study was on the qualities of a pastor as opposed to the qualifications of a pastor that most churches usually look through when seeking a new man. The devotional time went well and the people seemed very responsive.

After finishing I prayed and relaxed in my chair. One of the women almost immediately blurted out, "But how can we find someone like that?" It was clear that their former pastor was not of this quality.

I talked with them at some length about selecting a pastor. They seemed to want a quality man in their church, but in a few weeks they had hired a man that was far from quality and they were regretting their double mindedness within months. They had heard the standard, they had decided to wait for a man that lived up to that standard, but then accepted the first man to come along, settling for a lesser standard than they had originally set. They had the talk but did not have the

walk. They said they wanted a quality man, but they were not willing to wait for him to be supplied by God in His time.

2. Another way of viewing the double minded person is that the person's allegiance is split between himself or herself and God the Spirit and His control.

They want to run their life, but they want God to run their life. This won't work. Kind of like the driver wanting to drive the car, and the passenger wanting to drive the car - both with hands on the wheel trying to make the car go the way they want to go.

We can't control our life when we have asked God to control it. If we ask for wisdom, we need to receive it and use it. If we don't want wisdom, we shouldn't ask. If we are going to do it ourselves, we shouldn't ask.

3. It is of import that James, the great man of prayer that he was, would open his book with such a requirement as faith. Prayer is based totally on faith, and it is faith that makes prayer work. No faith, no answered prayer.

Faith is a vital portion in the Christian life. Without it you can do little, and with a little faith you can do more, but you are still limited.

Imagine having a man like James as part of the church leadership in your church. A man that prays so much his knees are hard like a camel - a man that knows just what faith is in the believer's life. That is the kind of leader we need today in our churches, not the bunch that prays five or six minutes a day and watches several hours of television the same day.

4. The overall theme of James seems to center around believers getting their lives straight before God.

Is there a better place to start on this job than faith and how to live by that faith? How can a believer begin in the Christian life if they do not understand that we must be single-mindedly men and women of faith? Without faith we will not be able to do anything much for our God and Savior. Faith is the gas that our motors run on.

The Lord told the disciples that if they had a little faith, they could move mountains. I personally think we underestimate the power of faith and prayer in our materialistic world. We have so much we don't have to worry about faith; we can buy it, pay for it, or acquire it by ourselves without the need of taking time for prayer.

Years ago Trans-World Radio was building a new facility and they were pouring a large slab of concrete for some of the heavy equipment to rest on. The slab was very important to the site and the perfection of the slab was also highly critical. They knew that if it rained the slab would be ruined and they would have to tear it out and pour it again at great expense.

Much prayer had been made by people around the mission and around the world.

One of the mission leaders was to fly in to watch the work being done. As his plane took off they ran into rain storms immediately and the entire trip was the same. The official knew that the workmen were in deep trouble with this sort of weather.

As the plane approached the work site, the clouds cleared and for a mile or two around the site the sun was shining - as it did until the work was done and the cement was safe. God is able if we will only ask.

We need to understand that there are some prerequisites for this sort of prayer - you have to be on praying ground. God told Moses to take off his sandals before approaching, can we do any less. We need to be in holy array before we venture into His presence. We need to confess our sins and we need to know in our heart that God is in the venture about which we are about to pray. James mentions the prayer of faith that heals; this seems to be a prayer that is offered with a complete faith that the prayer will be answered.

Don't go before God with a lot of um's and ah's and if You will's and expect great things.

5. I Cor. 1.24 has an interesting fact relating to God's wisdom. "24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Since God is also wise and powerful we are left to assume that this passage suggests that the power and wisdom that we have available to us may come from Christ. Christ is the wisdom of God. When we ask God for wisdom, it isn't a great stretch to suggest that we are asking to be Christ like in our thinking.

6. James uses the tossing to and fro of the waves to illustrate this double mindedness. Have you ever seen an empty bottle in the ocean? It bobs and twists and goes this way and that way but never seems to have any sure direction, while if you have ever watched an ocean going ship as it sails and cuts its way through the sea. There is nothing that can deter it from its course, it is set on a course and it does not waver unless there is a course change that will take it to its destination.

When I was in the Navy, we entered into a Typhoon (a hurricane in the Pacific Ocean). The winds were strong; the waves were high. At one point in the night, had we gone over another degree we would have capsized, yet no matter how the storm blew, we remained on the course set. The winds were so strong that we were carried several miles back of where we began our journey, but we never missed our course.

So it is with the believer, we must have our course set and not waver from it.

As a side note to this thought, if we are committed to Christ, if we have committed to serve and

follow Him, then we will have that course set, we will be on target and nothing will keep us from it. On the other hand if we are with Christ in the morning after devotions, then decide to go our own way a few minutes later, then decide we are again on his side, then on the other then.... you get the picture - how can we hope to ask and receive? How can we hope to be on track, how can we hope to come to the final destination that God wants?

Walking in the Spirit is the only sure way of requesting wisdom and expecting to gain it from God. We must walk with Him in an ongoing manner lest we be like an empty bottle going nowhere.

7. Constable suggests that wisdom is seeing life in a proper perspective - from God's view point. I tend to like that, but I think it is more also. If Constable means all of the details of decisions and choices, I would tend to agree. However, if he means only an over view of life from Gods perspective - I think that thought is lacking what wisdom really is.

I can have a good overall view of life with God's perspective, but need wise mental faculties to work through the intricacies of the many decisions we face in life.

Constable is correct, in my mind, to picture this wisdom as relating to all of life, while some seem to relate it only to the specific context at hand - wisdom in a proper understanding of trials and how to be joyful. Contextually, yes that is the thought, but the thought of wisdom is much wider than that as well.

Barnes seems to agree "Probably this refers particularly to the kind of wisdom which they would need in their trials, to enable them to bear them in a proper manner; for there is nothing in which Christians more feel the need of heavenly wisdom than in regard to the manner in which they should bear trials, and what they should do in the perplexities, and disappointments, and bereavements that come upon them: but the language employed is so general, that what is here said maybe applied to the need of wisdom in all respects."

Mr. D's Notes on James

Chapter Three James 1.8-11

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: 10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. 11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

Here we go again, one of those obnoxious commands - hey, poor people rejoice you are exalted. Well there must be more to the text than that.

This is a strange assemblage of words in my mind. James contrasts the brother of low degree with the brother that is rich, but at the same time communicates their equality in brotherhood yet points out the rich man only in coming death. They are both changed from the normally viewed status to the other's. The rich man is then singled out for the gore - death, not that the lowly brother won't also die - all humans of any degree die, but the rich man is singled out in the text. Some questions to ponder as we study.

Why is only the rich man's end considered?

Why is the lowly's end not considered?

Why is only the lowly to rejoice in his degree, since both end in their proper place?

Why is the rich man given so much information?

Might it be that the rich man needs to be educated on the fact that he is not going to outdo death, that his end is coming, while the lowly man knows all too well his end cometh? The lowly, if they know the teaching of the Lord know that they will be in a far better place in their end when it cometh. OR, more precisely, is James not talking about the lowly and the rich believers coming to their realization that they are equals, and that James is singling out the rich man that has not been humbled - the one that is going to wither as the flower. I suspect that this is the more appropriate line of thought.

Let's consider the text and see where we find ourselves with these two examples.

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

There is nothing surprising in the text that the English doesn't bring out. The point is, the one that is of low degree will be raised up or exalted.

In short, this is a blanket statement that if you are of low degree, you will be exalted. This is

something you can go to the bank with - it is safe and secure. It is not unlike the Lord's words in Matthew five when He said, "5 Blessed [are] the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Christ related later to His listener that He was of the same position and mind set. Matthew 11.29 "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke [is] easy, and my burden is light."

It might do well for us to consider these verses in light of our own lives. Are we really meek, are we really lowly, are we really Christ like? This is part of Christ likeness. Sure we are to be spiritual, sure we are to be well versed in the Bible, and sure we are to be all those things we think Christ likeness is, but part of that is ALSO meekness and lowliness. Do we really measure down to His level of living? Something to consider for sure.

10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. When someone died and someone spoke of them as having passed away, you now know where the Biblical basis for that terminology comes from.

This is very clear that death is in view, that the rich man will die, just as the flower. Now, if you are a flower at my house you have a very short life. I kill just about everything I work with. We used to buy live Christmas trees, the very small ones, because we lived in small apartments. At times we would buy a small regular Christmas tree, but one year I called the family together and asked them if they wanted to get a dead tree or get a live Christmas tree and kill it. We ended up with death on our patio every single year we attempted to be environmentally conscious.

Not only does the rich man have death coming, there is also a leveling of sorts, in that he will be made low. I assume that this leveling is in death - the loss of all that one has achieved. Faith's grandfather always told people that he was taking it all with him because he had purchased an asbestos coffin - might take it with him but he was most likely going to get lung cancer as well.

On one of the last of our twenty-four moves we had loaded it all up into the truck and the car was on the dolly behind. As we pulled out of Cheyenne, WY I turned to my wife and said, "You know one of the great joys of death just has to be that you don't have to take it all with you!" The rich often are tied tightly to their belongings, and this great leveling of the rich to the level of the poor will be quick and sure.

11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

Here in Oregon the winter and spring are normally quite wet so the grass is lush and green and fast growing. When that summer sun starts to shine, you had better be getting the watering gear out lest you miss that very small window in which you must wet things down. If you wait a day or two that grass will be on its travel between green and brown and the picture is not very pretty. So, the rich man will dry up and wither away.

I am told that in Israel there is a wind that blows from the desert that can wither grass within an hour. A hot high wind can do real damage as does death to a rich person. It seems that this death is related to the rich that are not humbled in salvation, though it is rather true of all of us. It is not a pleasant thing to contemplate your own demise, but you really need to understand the coming death that awaits us all. The young seldom consider it, the middle aged often dwell on it, and the old face it. If you are a believer, the prospect is much easier to handle because we know there is something far better coming, while the lost person knows nothing of their impending demise, or have been taught things that will give them false hope.

Here I am at the end of this life and I have nothing unusually wise or profound to relate to you except that you are all going to get here also - there is nothing that can hold it back, except the rapture of course.

The only thing that has come to my mind in recent years is the fact that it isn't really "death" but a transition from this life to the next. It is an instant process and we will be far better off. Actually as I have considered it all over the years, the only part of death that bothers me is all the pain and trouble that oft times precedes it.

APPLICATION:

1. Just how are the lowly exalted? Aside from the fact of becoming a believer and all the joy and hope that gives, at the death process they are transformed from some lowly poor life to the rewards of an Almighty God that sent His Son to die for them - they are His brothers and the children of the Father. That alone is certainly exaltation enough, yet the believer knows that secondly they will have reward for those good works that have been done throughout life. Thirdly, we are as we have said, sons of the living God, and I am sure that has a lot of exaltation of its own over and above the sonship.

2. The rich man, on the other hand, is made low by the humbling of himself before an almighty God in salvation. He becomes aware of who he really is before God, prior to that he thought he was the ultimate.

The rich man that is not humbled by salvation, in death, is made low by the loss of who he was, he is made low by the loss of what he had gained, and he is made low by the loss of enjoying both of the other points, and finally, he is made low by the loss of his life and the reality of his final destination - the Lake of Fire.

3. This seems to be a passage of encouragement to the lowly, rather than a curse toward the rich. It seems to me, in this context that James is just saying that the lowly will be exalted in salvation and that the rich will be humbled in salvation, but on the other hand the rich, lost person, is really in for it - lowly folks, be at peace for you are going to enjoy gain that is ahead. These readers had suffered persecution and had seen the ugly side of mankind, and that having a large component of rich men that were involved in the persecution - the rich and the religiously pious of their day.

Can I prove that it was the rich that persecuted, no, but this text seems to imply that the lowly would be knowledgeable of the rich and know that their demise was sure. I have many times wondered at the rich - those that have it all - why I'm not one of them - not that I would know how to live Godly if I were one of them. I have wondered at the things the rich get away with, I have wondered at all the things they could do with their money and I have wondered at the things that they have acquired.

The answer to all of this is that God is in charge of all things and I don't have to worry about it. God will deal with the rich as they have need, I have only to live my life in His light and leave the rest to Him.

I have known few rich believers, but two of those that I have known have been as lowly as any lowly that I have known. They took their riches with a grain of salt and they have patterned their lives after the one that saved them. Being rich is not wrong, but being high and mighty with your riches is most assuredly wrong. All believers are held to the same standard - meekness and lowliness.

4. Other translations take a little different approach to verse nine, in that they show it that the lowly should rejoice in that they are exalted, not as being exalted in the future. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown tend this way as well. The view is that the lowly person that is in trials can take refuge in the fact that they have been made low because of Christ. This exaltation is their being lifted to this high position of persecution. I am not sure that washes with the context. This seems to detract from the thought that this passage is an integrated part of the entire context. They go on and add many of the things that I have already mentioned. They further point out that while the lowly are exalted and the rich are made low, that both end up on the same plain - children of God and all that goes with that inheritance. This points out something else. Their earthly riches seem to be much less important than what they will have in heaven.

We all knew that but it is good to be reminded of it.

They suggest that this passage was taken from Isa. 40.6-8 "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh [is] grass, and all the goodliness thereof [is] as the flower of the field: 7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people [is] grass. 8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

At the least it may have been in James' mind when he was writing, but it doesn't seem to be a quote.

As to whether the exaltation is future as the King James seems to indicate or present as others make it, I am not sure. It seems to me that there is nothing in the text to show either way. I am not sure that James shouldn't have explained that he was talking about present exaltation, because I'm not sure the reader would have related their lowly estate to being exalted at that time, and I

am not sure they would have made the connection.

5. Barnes suggests that this passage is divorced and separate from the previous context, but it seems to me that they are very closely related. It isn't impossible, but it seems rather awkward to find such an abrupt change of thought with no transition. He, in the next paragraph, seems to link the exaltation to the trials of the previous context.

6. Some suggest that this exaltation and lowering relates to the spiritual equalization when one is saved, which is true, but seems to relate closely to the outward attitude that should compliment that equalization. Others suggest that the rich man that is saved should have a change of attitude about his riches. This is true, but don't look for this change to be immediate. It may be, but it is like the man that is deep in sin when saved. He may clean up his life immediately, or he may do it in steps - both are correct if God is leading in the action.

7. There seems to be a need for the lowly to be satisfied with who and what they are. A friend once told me that one morning he got out of bed and his first thought was "Hey! I am a human being!" Now, my first thought was that he was nuts, but he was content with what he was. He was up and around to do the Lord's bidding and that was enough.

8. If the lowly and the rich are equal before God, and they are, and if the lowly are exalted, and they are, and if the rich are brought low, and they are, then is it not true that riches mean nothing to God and that to bring the rich man to the point that God wants them He has to lower them. This is an awesome reality to contemplate.

Not to say that God wants middle income Christians, but the riches that one might amass, mean nothing to God, because He will have to get rid of them to get you down to where you belong. What a thing for a rich believer to think about. Maybe part of this life for the rich is to bring themselves down by giving to the Lord's work and assuring that their spiritual life is right and proper and on a plain that is pleasing to God. Yes, if you are thinking it, I found it quite easy to say that since I am not rich.

9. Within the context it may be that James sought to encourage those lowly persecuted folks that might have been thinking that all was lost, that they were failures since they had lost all that they had when they fled Jerusalem. They may well have been surrounded by rich people and this would have only added to their possible guilt over being lowly.

It would have been hard for the parents to have children and to be trying to make it in a land that was not their own. I bring this up, because the younger generation living now, may well find themselves fleeing persecution. We have been seeing the beginnings of it in our own country and it has been going on for a number of years abroad.

Christians are being banned from normal everyday activities. We can no longer pray in the schools, and it is becoming doubtful in many other areas. We are being called the religious

zealots, we are being called the radical right and we are being made out to be identical to the likes of Hitler.

This is from the loving liberal left, for the most part - you know - those that are accepting of all peoples -- just not Christians.

Why are we being persecuted? Well, in my opinion, because God has brought a situation upon us that makes us look like the light of the world in spite of our taking on the worldly appearance. They see us as a threat to their sinful, worldly life and as such are reacting as we will react to the loss of our liberties - acting to counter what we perceive to be wrong.

Our sons and daughters may seek another country where they might be free to practice their beliefs. This is a radical thought, but anyone looking at the news can see that this could be coming if things don't change in our near future.

This may well relate to the double mindedness that he addresses. Those that had fled persecution may have been second guessing their decision to leave their homes so quickly. After all, they had moved to get away from the persecution and now they were in the middle of trials - even possibly similar persecution to what they had fled.

I'm not sure fleeing persecution is the key, though it may be in some cases. Persecution is rather a part of being a Christian. We are supposed to be on the outs with society.

I believe that is one reason persecution in America is going to be so bad. It will be persecution, but since believers are so much a part of the worldly society, it will not only be persecution, but separation from that which they know as life - the world.

10. The LITV translation translates verses nine and ten as follows: "9 But let the lowly brother rejoice in his lifting up; 10 and the rich one rejoice in his humiliation, because he will pass away like the flower of the grass."

Note that both the lowly AND the rich are to rejoice. This is indicated, though not clearly, in the King James Version. Both are to rejoice in their lowly estate, because the rich man, if not humbled, will be like the flower.

To me, it seems that James is telling the lowly to rejoice in the rich man being humbled, but at the same time I have to wonder if "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: 10 But the rich, in that he is made low:" isn't trying to say that all believers ought to be on a level playing field as believers. The lowly uplifted to believerdom, while the rich are humbled to believerhood.

It seems to be saying that the lowly realizes how low they are but that Christ lifts them up, while the rich, in realizing he is nothing special before God, humbles himself to the level of needing

Christ. Most rich are so high and mighty that they can never NEED God.

Not only are we all equal in our state before God, but we are both to rejoice in that we are equal to each other, or ought to be.

Mr. D's Notes on James

Chapter four James 1.12-15

12 Blessed [is] the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

I read an illustration once that fits well here. It related to a small boy with a sail boat. The boat was skimming along nicely and as it neared the middle of the pond the breeze stopped. The boat was just stranded out of reach and the boy was becoming quite disappointed about not being able to retrieve his boat.

Shortly a big boy started throwing rocks at the boat. This upset the little boy until he realized that each rock was landing just beside the boat and the ripples from the rocks were pushing the boat toward the little boy. Finally after all the rocks the boy was able to be reunited with his toy.

Sometimes we feel God is throwing rocks at us, but He isn't really, He is only keeping us, ever gently, on our path to serving Him.

When I was in the Navy, we had a saying when things started to pile up. "When in trouble, when in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout." It seemed to work in the Navy, but not in the spiritual life - JOY is the key according to James. (I might add that the saying in the Navy seemed to lighten the load, so even that was Biblical - it brought joy :-)

I would like to introduce you to the crowns that are mentioned in the New Testament that are available to the believer.

First of all, the crown would relate to a wreath around the neck or garland about the head for sports events, but this is probably more of a real crown. Some suggest the crowns are for now, while others state that they are for the afterlife. In the case of some both might be true.

Many relate this to the throwing of crowns before the throne in the book of Revelation, but note should be taken that there are a limited number that do this and there is little indication that all of us will follow suit. We may, but the Bible does not seem to state this is the case.

The Crown of Life: This is seen in our present passage. This is also seen in Revelation 2.10 "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." It seems that trials of great proportion were coming for all believers across the known world. This crown is to those that love Him. Easy enough to get this one I would think.

The Crown of the soulwinner: This crown is mentioned in Phil. 4.1 and the people of the church are Paul's crown. They are his reward for the service He has given to bring them to the Lord and

to bring them up spiritually. I Thess. 2.19 also mentions this thought and it is called the crown of rejoicing.

The Crown of Righteousness: II Tim. 4.8 mentions the crown that is available to all that love His appearing.

The Crown that is Incorruptible: I Cor. 9.25 mentions an incorruptible crown which the believer strives for. Paul mentions it in the context of the running the race and running it properly, for the proper reason. We live this life, but if we live it for God, the implication is we will gain an incorruptible crown.

The Crown of Glory: I Pet. 5.4 tells of this crown as going to the shepherd's that have been faithful.

It isn't that we should spend our lives working and hoping for our crowns, but that we should spend our lives working for the Lord in all the areas He desires, and the crowns will come if we have been faithful in the proper areas. Reward is not why we work; it is our love for the Lord that moves us to want to do the works that please Him.

In essence, if we just do as we should we will gain reward for it. What a deal!

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

And I would add that they shouldn't say that the Devil made me do it either. We will see this a little further into the book.

Years ago I read the following account from St. Augustine's life: "Soon after St. Augustine's conversion he was walking down a street in Milan, where he was a student, when a prostitute spoke to him by name. She called, 'Augustine.' The young man would not answer; he kept on walking. 'Augustine,' she called again, 'it is I.' Without slowing down, Augustine replied, 'yes, but it is no longer I.'"

He knew how to face (or not face, may be the better) temptation. Even if you may not hold him in high respect theologically, we would do well to face our lusts in the same manner.

NO man is to lay their temptation upon God's shoulders. The ultimate illustration of this is found in Gen. 3.12 where Adam blames the fall on Eve and God. "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest [to be] with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." No, God had nothing to do with this situation except for having been the one that set the limits. Man will try anything won't he?

There are a couple of truths here of interest. The plain one which we will cover in a moment and one that is kind of funny when you think about it. Let me point out something of note concerning

the phrase "for God cannot be tempted with evil." Let me read a passage for you that makes this very funny - in my mind at least.

Matt. 4.3 "And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. 5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, 6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in [their] hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Get the picture? The tempter, the Devil, that devious denizen of evil knows God, he knows the character of God, and he knows the Word of God, yet he is trying to tempt God - how wasteful of his time is that? God can't be tempted, so why would the Devil try - must be one frustrated being to stoop to that exercise in futility. Of course to his credit, James hadn't written this yet, but me thinks he probably knew it wasn't going to happen, but in his dire need to do something, grasped at this straw.

Let's look at the principles the text sets forth.

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God"

Everyone is tempted, and everyone is tempted more than once, but never suggest that your temptation is from God. It will not happen, it cannot happen, and in the long run, why would anyone even suggest that their Loving Heavenly Father would do such a thing?

"For God cannot be tempted with evil,"

Statement of fact. God cannot be tempted with evil. In the first place He does not allow evil in His presence, secondly there is no evil in His character and thirdly if there was evil in His presence His character would not be tempted, nor even if it could be, would He succumb to that evil.

"Neither tempteth he any man:"

Another clear statement of fact, He will never tempt a man - never.

"No man" really means no man, none, not, not a one. Never is there a man in all of history that should claim that his temptation is from God. Not that there hasn't been, but there shouldn't have been even one. Kind of seems that is telling us that to blame God for your temptation is sin. This is a good passage to take a lost person to if they are blaming God - it might bring them up short in their thoughts about God. (Some electronic Bibles list "Let" as Strong's number 3004, but as near as I can tell this is incorrect. Only the word translated "say" is 3004)

This phrase has quite a message to the lost person. It is a clear statement that God does not tempt them, it is a clear statement that He isn't out to get them - there must be a concern on His part for the lost person. Another verse to share with the lost - He is concerned about their lives, about their coming to Him, indeed He does love the world as John told his readers in chapter three and verse sixteen.

The verb "when he is tempted" is a passive indicating that the tempting is coming from without or from some outside force. He is tempted from outside, but we will soon see that from there he can do it all quite well by himself.

The terms "tempted" in the verse are all the same Greek word except the one relating to God and His inability to be tempted. The term relates to testing, to evaluation, to trying to see the quality of something. It relates to trying to get one to do incorrectly. It is of note that with man's bent toward sin, the Devil feels it his duty to help us along in our rebellion against God.

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

Ah, now we see where temptation comes from (This is the same Greek word that is translated tempted previously). The Devil may set traps, lay wait to trip us up, but it is our own mind and character that is the real culprit. He may dangle the carrot, but it is man that must start chasing it with a decision of the mind.

Every man - not most men, not a few men, not a lot of men, but "every" man is tempted. Every single one, the tall ones, the short ones, the rich ones, the poor ones, the handsome ones, the not so handsome ones, the educated ones, the uneducated ones - every single solitary man is in view.

How is he tempted; when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. The final and ultimate culprit is the man's lust and allowing himself to be enticed. Indeed, the construction seems to indicate that this enticement is coming from within him - it is his, it is his mind that responds to the lust and allows germination of thoughts that are improper.

Something of note - "tempted" and "drawn away" are both passive indicating that this process is going on within him, but it is a process that seems to be on automatic. Once lust is free it kind of does its own thing if it is not brought into check.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Here we see that next step in the lust that has been set free, it conceives and brings forth sin. Sin in turn is another of those automated systems that brings forth death if not brought to its knees.

Did you get that? Did you see how quick this process can be stated? It isn't a long drawn out process that takes days to come to pass; it is with the quickness of a jet, it is the quickness of a thought or two. Lust is where we must stop the process - before sin develops.

I trust that you catch the implication of these two verses. It is on our shoulders when we sin, because it our own decisions that cause our sin. We are the guilty one, not God, not the Devil, not the wife, not the lack of clothing, not the alcohol, not the alluring world, it is US. We do it to ourselves.

There is a Dr. Philism that I just love and it relates so well here. When someone has stepped off into adultery or some deep wrong, he often says, "You had to have seen that coming, it didn't just "HAPPEN" - it took your involvement, it wasn't a surprise. It wasn't like "Oh, I hate it when that happens."

I have mentioned in some of my studies that in past years when the mini skirt craze was in full swing, many people were condemning the young Christian ladies that were wearing them, even wearing them to church. This was a large problem for the speakers in churches; for they had to look out into the audience and assure that their glances weren't from eyes to legs.

The young ladies often caught the brunt, but I always suggested that there were two other problems. One was at home when their husbands allowed them to put them on, and the other was in the men's minds - this process of temptation to look, looking, lusting and fortunately for this problem most stopped at the lust stage, which if it went too far, according to the Lord was already sin in the case of mental adultery.

APPLICATION:

1. One commentary suggested that man in this situation is like a fish, taken with the hook, even though he swallowed the bait. He may have a morsel of food, but there will be a sharp pain and maybe even death.

I have known some good men that have, in a moment of lust, fallen from their calling as a result of their sin. They saw a woman that was desirable, they allowed lust a foothold and sin was the result, with all of its ugly consequences.

It is quick, it is sure, and it is quite detrimental, yet so many of us open ourselves up to the possibilities of this terrible process by our inappropriate decision making.

Beware that decision. Be very careful to consider the possible consequences of what you are going to do.

2. There is a related concept here. A friend's wife was caught in adultery with another church member, indeed three wives were involved with three husbands, not their own. Six couples and an entire church shook to the foundations due to very poor decisions.

The friend's wife would not admit that there was anything wrong with what she had been doing. She felt that it was normal and okay. Now, think for a moment, about what we have just studied. Is this even a possibility, that she did not know that this was wrong? She processed the

information, and she made the decision to go against all that she knew to be Godly in her many years of teaching in the church, and then in my mind added the lie to her arsenal of sin.

The individual is the one that allows lust, the individual is the one that allows temptation, it is the individual that allows enticement, and it is the individual that allows the sin.

No one outside the person, nothing outside the person, and no force outside the person causes any of this, it is all from within. God didn't do it, the Devil didn't do it, you did!

If this is true and it seems to be, then God has every right and duty to judge that one that allows these ugly items into their lives. Yet, He willingly suggests that He will forgive if we will only confess and seek forgiveness. What a God we serve, even when we are at the height of our rebellion against Him He awaits our turning to Him.

Might I suggest another concept that is foreign to much of the Biblical teaching today? Personal responsibility. Is this not the outcome of this text? You sin, you are responsible. Our society is so quick to blame everyone and everything under the sun for all that goes wrong, when it is actually the personal sin of people in the world.

When someone is deformed by a quack plastic surgeon, it is the government's fault for not controlling him. When someone totals your car it is the traffic lights, or the road, or the whatever. Recently a young man was driving his date to the prom when he lost control of his car and crashed. The young woman was killed and it was the counties fault for not straightening the road, it was the rail road's fault for not moving its trestle, it was the curves in the road fault, it was the fault of everything but the driver's actions which caused him to lose control of the car.

Personal responsibility is quite painful at times, but it is ours to accept and a burden we need to take upon ourselves instead of trying to shift it elsewhere.

3. We have laid some strong ground work for understanding the spiritual life. There are many that suggest that we sin because we have the old corrupt sin nature inside us warring against the new nature that is given to us at salvation. They see the one constantly struggling with the other for dominance.

Now, rethink our passage and try to fit that truth into this idea of warring natures. Does it fit easily? Does it fit at all? To my way of thinking the answer is no to both questions.

There are others, and I would concur, that believe that, yes, we have a lost sinful nature at birth, but at salvation we are given a new nature that replaces the old rather than coexists with it. The word nature means the very essence of what a thing is. If you have a glass of milk, you have a substance that has a certain nature to it. If you stir in a little poison, you don't have poison and milk coexisting in the glass, you have a new substance called poisoned milk.

Thus, when Christ enters our lives, we become new as the Word tells us. We are a completely

new nature, but we are still man. Man is and always has been a self-willed being. Point - Adam did his own thing rather than what God required. He did this, not because he had a sin nature that made him do it, he did it because he wanted to do what he wanted to do rather than do what God wanted him to do. So, we, as new creatures in Christ go through the same process as did Adam, to gratify our own sinful lusts - our responsibility not some figment of man's imagination called an old nature. It is our choice to sin and we do it, we need not try to blame anything or anyone.

No, I am not talking about sinless perfection, for we are, as I have said, self-willed beings. Christ lived this life perfectly; He was tempted as we in his manhood, and walked perfectly with God. He has made us, in salvation, as Adam was as if he had never sinned. We make that choice to soil our sin free life when we chose to walk against God.

To me, in a simplistic way, to say that man has a sin nature is a slap in the face of God. He has done all there is to be done to free us from all sin and all ramifications of sin that He possibly could. We still suffer from the ravages of sin in our physical beings and one day will die, but in our spiritual arena we are ready for heaven on a moment's notice because all has been done. To say that there is something lacking, that there is still a sin nature lurking that must be cared for is to slight what He has already done through Christ.

Think about it. If we have a sin nature and when we die, we are ushered into the presence of God - what? How can sinful beings be ushered into the presence of God? All is ready within us for that day when we are moved from this life to His presence. We don't go through some decontamination process to get into heaven; it is immediate and sure, not based on a clean up process of some theological folks that like to have an excuse for their sinful ways.

I wonder if those that believe in two distinct natures have considered that. I also wonder when they think this sin nature will be cared for so that we can have entrance into heaven. It is a spiritual nature in their minds, as is our new nature, just when is it cast off? It is an integrated part of our being before God, in their mind, just when is God going to get around to being able to do something about it? What process is yet needed for us to be rid of this scourge - questions that really add weight to the one new nature line of thought - to me anyway.

4. Barnes mentions that there are two aspects to temptation to sin. He submits there is that general aspect of the trying of ones religion, or faith. The other is the up front temptation to do wrong. Within this context he makes the following statement. "In each and every case, whether by affliction, or by direct allurements to do wrong, the question comes before the mind whether we have religion enough to keep us, or whether we will yield to murmuring, to rebellion, and to sin."

He brings up an interesting point. Do we have enough "religion" to stand up to the trying of our faith or to stand up to the trying of our will to say no? In essence the trying of our ability to say no to lust is, indeed an indication of our religion. It indicates how strong our faith in the Word is, it indicates how strong our faith in God is, and it indicates how strong our faith in what God has promised is. When we succumb to temptation, we automatically know the limits of our faith in

God.

If you succumb quite easily to sin, then your faith in God is weak. If you can withstand all comers of the family of temptation, you can be fairly assured that you have grown quite strong in your faith in God. If you are young you may not grasp the beauty of this, but if you are old and have survived the temptations of youth, you probably know that your number of sins is quite low when compared with your younger years. This, if true in your life, is proof that your faith in God has grown to great proportions.

Not that older believers are sinless, nor that they don't sin, but they sin much less because they desire the peace that comes with walking closely with their Father.

I will leave you to consider the implications of this in relation to some of the big name preachers that have fallen so deeply into sin. Men that have been "spiritual" for so long, falling so completely into the clutches of lust and sin, makes one wonder the depths of their faith all those years.

We need not stop at the big name preachers, we could consider the not so big names that have fallen just as completely. We could also mention the lay people, the men and women that have walked so closely with God for so long that suddenly turn into the vile hateful people we see in business meetings from time to time. One must wonder at their level of spirituality as well.

5. I find this thought of God tempting man to be of interest. Imagine, this holy and perfect God that desires to create companions for His own pleasure. He creates, he creates while giving free will, but he also sets a decree in place to redeem these for Himself. He creates within them a new nature to serve Him, He sets that person on a path to eternity with Him in heaven, but all of a sudden tries to tempt that one that he is preparing to try and trick them into sinning. How ludicrous, yet this is what some of mankind would suggest.

God loved the world and did all that was needed to bring the world to Himself, why in the world would he try to trip poor man up by tempting him to fall? Not too bright a line of thought to me.

6. Barnes points out that in his generation, as I observe in our own, "lust" is a very narrow term tied usually to sexual sin. The truth is that this word is a general term that relates to the desire for anything, be it gold, sexual gratification, more toys for the house, or more houses to fill with toys. The desire for more of anything that leads one away from God might be the meaning in our day.

When you see that new Hummer with its shiny coat of paint, G.P.S., video player in the rear and all those goodies, if you aren't satisfied with what God has given you, lust will be the result.

When you see that person of the opposite sex in its shiny coat of duds, neat shoes, and great hair, if you aren't satisfied with what God has given you, lust will be the result.

God has told us that He will give us all that we need, but when we feel He has not been true in this area, and we think we need more, then lust and sin will follow.

7. We see that this truth that James laid out about sin and that it is our own fault is to further emphasize the fact that God does not tempt us. We tempt our selves. We ARE our own worst enemy.

Not only do we allow our lust to conceive and produce sin, James reminds us that sin brings death. We need to consider this for a moment.

I don't for a minute believe that James is telling us if you sin, you die, nor is he telling us that if you sin you are going to hell. He is simply relating the reality that sin ends in death. Death of a relationship, death of a person, spiritual death, there are many forms of death, and all result from sin.

Our present creation is a result of sin. Nature has suffered dearly because of sin and will one day be gloriously transformed into life.

There is spiritual death, that which we are born into because of the fall, there is physical death, and some might suggest there is a sort of death when we fall into and remain in sin. Spiritual death is overcome by salvation, while physical death cannot be overcome - it is the lot of every man to die unless taken home in the rapture.

The ultimate problem for a believer in continuing sin is the possibility of physical death. John 15.1ff pictures the branch of the vine being taken away if it is not producing fruit - this lack of fruit would be the outworking of sin in that life.

Along with the John passage, you might consider Acts five and the couple that lied to the Holy Spirit and lost their lives as well as Lev. 10.1-2.

8. It is of interest that James carries through with this idea of conception in verse fifteen with the phrase "bringeth forth death" - the term translated bringeth forth can deal with birth or with the begetting of a father. Lust will conceive and birth is the natural and to be expected result.

You don't need to wander about what kind of child it will be - James tells us the offspring is death, there is no other option or outcome, death is the natural result of sin.

9. Constable notes correctly that the context of being joyful in trials is quite a contrast to the thought of trials and temptation. He suggests that the thought here is that when trials come, don't be tempted to avoid them, but to go through them for the growth that they will bring.

The reality is that many have mentioned that they failed or avoided a particular trial, only to be faced with something similar at a later date. God has certain things for us to learn, and we will learn them sooner or later. Why not get it over with?

10. I Cor. 9.24 shows a contrast between the lost and the believer. One labors for one thing while the other "ought" to labor for the other - not sure how true that is today, but that is the way it is supposed to be. "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."

While the world strains for the plaudits of men, the panacea of things, and the peace of having it all, the believer is to be looking to God for his recognition, and heaven for his peace. The world has little to offer, and what it does offer can only satisfy while you are in this world - that won't be too long when compared to eternity and all it has to offer.

11. Christ mentioned "Lead us not into temptation" in Matt. 6:13, indicating that God could lead the believer into temptation. How does this verse square with our passage in this chapter where it tells us that God does not tempt believers?

One commentary suggests that Christ did not imply that God could lead someone into temptation, but that God can help us avoid it. He further suggested that we should ask God to allow only the minimum amount of temptation possible, and concludes that James wasn't contradicting Christ's comments. First of all it is not James that made the statement, but the Holy Spirit, so we KNOW there is no contradiction. To me, the man does not answer the question.

First of all, the Matthew text uses aorist tenses, indicating a request that God not lead us once, into temptation, and to deliver us once, from evil (Matt. 6.13). Secondly this portion of Matthew is relating to Millennial Kingdom information which is quite another subject area. Thirdly the words were aimed at the disciples, not us.

The term translated "lead" in Matthew can be translated "bring" which might be the better way to view the verse. In fact the American Standard Version translates it as bring. God can and will bring us into situations where we might find temptation lurking, but it is not to say that He is tempting us. It is as a father that allows a child to enter situations where the child can learn to make good decisions, yet the father is not actually teaching the child. The father would not allow that child into a situation that they could not handle either, nor would the father endanger the child, nor would the father purposely lead them into a situation that would cause harm.

Nor, would God lead us into a situation that would cause harm, but in any situation where free will is in action, there is a possibility of the choice of harm or wrong. God allows temptation in the world, but He will not lead us or bring us to it.

God cannot and will not tempt a person, but He certainly does allow temptation in the world and some of it is bound to come along for the sake of maturing us into what He wants us to be.

The rest of the Matthew passage is of interest as well. "But deliver us from evil" is the other side of the prayer. The overall result of the prayer is to keep us safe from evil.

Don't bring us to temptation, but when we meet it, let us be joyful in it, is the thought of the James' text with Matthew included - in my mind at least.

12. The crown of life in verse twelve is said to be eternal life according to the Life Application Bible.

This is one example of why I encourage people to look to the Word for their interpretation and help. The verse plainly states, "for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life," so to say the crown of life is salvation we must change the Gospel to include, not only calling on the name of the Lord, but also the enduring of trials. If that sounds like a works salvation you are correct in my mind.

Actually, if you add the Revelation 2.10 passage and you might even understand the trials are to be unto death. So, to be assured of salvation according to the Life Application Bible you would have to call upon Christ and be martyred.

Yes, use these resources for your Bible study, but think about what they say before accepting it as useful.

13. One last point of application. We already know that when we sin we and we alone are the reason, but let's consider some of the excuses man uses.

1. We mentioned blaming someone else - Adam blamed Eve, the WOMAN GOD HAD GIVEN HIM.

2. The devil made me do it.

3. It was just my old nature that was just too strong for me today.

4. I couldn't help it; it was upon me before I could think.

5. It was a bad decision - YA THINK?

6. Well, everyone is doing it.

7. God tempted me and I wasn't strong enough yet.

8. Peer pressure made me do it.

9. I didn't know it was wrong.

Note these in your everyday conversation with believers and when they use one of these take them to this passage and say, "NO, you sinned because YOU chose to sin!"

Just a note relating, some suggest that II Sam. 24:1 contradicts this passage by showing that God tempted David to sin by numbering the people. "And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah."

When someone finds a passage such as this go deeper to see what the rest of God's word says. In this case you need to look at I Chron. 21.1 as well. "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."

The first passage is God allowing circumstances, while the last verse pictures the results - David succumbed to the Devil's temptation.

Mr. D's Notes on James

Chapter five James 1.16-20

16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.

Do not err is a passive indicating that some outside influence is causing the person to err. This influence would be the effects of the sin mentioned in the previous context.

James shows his great love for the brethren as well as his concern for their safety in truth. The love of James for these that he probably did not know all that well is of interest. What an example we have for ourselves in our own society.

I think this short verse actually relates to the last lesson, where we spoke of the mind taking us into sin. He does not want the believers to wander off into sin. The term translated err is the idea of wander or going astray. This added to the passive would indicate he didn't want the folks to fall into sin and wander away from the Lord, due to its appealing effects and appearance.

The term used for beloved is a form of the self-sacrificing love, agape. James has a real love for the brothers in Christ. It is not a phony, surface love that wishes them a good day, but a love that moves him to concern for their safety and well being.

Don't hold your breath for this sort of love in your church. If you find it among the brethren, see to it that you encourage them in it and don't let it falter. If you do not, maybe you are the seed that God has planted in that barren wasteland - you need to begin to grow and mature, go to seed and spread.

When I was a very new Christian sprouting my interpretive wings, I did a study on "outer darkness" and came to some grand conclusions all on my own. I mentioned them to our pastor and he turned red in the face and said, "Oh, that is just Catholicism!" and stormed off.

I mentioned this to an older man in our church and he suggested that we go over to his house and look at one of his commentaries. We went over and he let me read a couple paragraphs from the commentary which opened my foggy eyes to the fact that there was much more to consider than the few passages I had studied. While there, we had coffee, and a snack. Over time this couple became very dear to us in our spiritual lives as well as good friends.

This is the type of love that we need among the brethren, not the lack of love that the pastor showed to me. In the pastor's defense I must admit he was a great teacher, and he was one of the most consistent men that I have met in my spiritual walk with the Lord.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Both verse thirteen and verses seventeen are true because both are in the Word of God, however seventeen proves thirteen true. If seventeen is true, and it is, then thirteen must be true.

Every good gift and every perfect gift comes from God. The two terms translated "gift" are two different Greek terms. The first term has the thought of giving with it. Actually in Philippians 4.15 it is translated giving. "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only."

The other term has the thought of bounty as well as gift. It would be a bountiful gift. Reverting back to the couple I mentioned that took us under their wing, several years after meeting them, we were moving to Oregon. They asked us over for supper one evening before we left. We arrived and the man met us in a suit and tie, and his wife and daughter were dressed in fine long dresses. We sat and talked for a while, and finally supper was ready - well, read that as lavish dinner, rather than supper.

They ushered us down into their finished basement where a long table was set with silver, crystal, and flowers. At each of the children's places was a small wrapped present. The dinner was most lavish in comparison to our usual meager grocery shopping on a college student's part time income.

They had given us a grand gift, a bountiful gift, to say good-bye. Just further sign of their love for the brethren.

Barnes states of the two words, "The difference between good and perfect here, it is not easy to mark accurately. It may be that the former means that which is benevolent in its character and tendency; the latter that which is entire, where there is nothing even apparently wanting to complete it;"

Just what does "Father of lights" mean? The lexicon mentions the power of understanding of moral and spiritual truth. Not sure what that is based on but that is what they had to say on the subject. "Father" is the normal word for father and "lights" is the term that describes light, so the terms have little to tell us other than their plain meaning.

I would assume that it relates to the fact that truth comes from God, that any light in this world comes from God, and since we are to be the light of the world (Matt. 5.14), I assume that this relates to God's revealing His way upon the earth - He is the source of light. John 8.12, 9.5 pictures Christ as the light of the world, thus this may explain the translators plural "lights."

"With whom is no variableness" tells us that we will not see the God of love that we know turn into a God of hate or evil. He does not change; He has always been and always will be as He is on any particular day.

"Neither shadow of turning" tells us that God does not turn back from anything. What He has

declared, He will do - no question. The Greek word translated "turning" comes to us in our language as "trope" which is a usage that changes something to give description. To call a shrewd man a fox would be a trope. There is no sign of this turning in God, He is not variable, and he will not turn away from His character.

This summation of God seems to be included to amplify the statements of James concerning the goodness of God and the badness of man lest anyone try to blame any sin upon God when the blame rests squarely upon the individual themselves.

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

"Of his own will" is a verb. He willed this event; He brought it into being via His will. It is an Aorist tense, thus refers back to the decree, in my mind, when He decreed that some would be elected to son ship.

"Begat" is also an aorist verb, also referring back to the decree. Some might question whether this goes back to the decrees or if it is an individual begetting when one becomes a believer. The "us" would require it going back to the decree and not being an individual item. (The "us" and "we" are the same Greek word.)

What "word of truth" is speaking of is up for grabs. Some would suggest that it is the Word itself, the Scriptures. Others would suggest that it is something else, that the Scriptures were not in existence at this early date.

Personally, if we are speaking of events that occurred in eternity past, then this being the Scriptures would not be a real problem, though I suspect it relates more specifically to the word of truth spoken to us that brings us to the Lord in salvation.

The Word presumes to tell us how to live. It tells us what we should do, and it tells us what we should not do. Yet, we presume to set it aside and tell God that we don't need it. Many have little to no Bible study time in their lives unless it is the spoon feeding of Pabulum at church.

The Word controls our living, so if Christians are living primarily in sin, we must assume that there is little of the Word in their lives. A number of years ago there was a large gathering of missionaries in Japan. Many of the American ideas set forth were rejected out of hand due to their liberalness and lack of separation from sin.

The Word should be our basis and our guide to everyday living. If it is not then the world will be our basis and this is quite obvious in our world today. The phrase "word of truth" seems to have an authoritative ring to it. I trust that the Word is your only authority in life.

This was done so that we would be "a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." We need to determine just what that might mean.

Since this is an early book, it might relate to the early church believers - those that were converted from the day of Pentecost to the time of writing. They would be the firstfruits of the Gospel of Christ.

There may be a play on words here, as he speaks of firstfruits and the word creatures can be translated "thing founded" which seems to be descriptive of firstfruits. Those that James speaks of are the first bearing fruit of His creation.

Firstfruits relates to the first of a harvest, so they were the first of a large harvest of His creatures. This is the terminology of the Great Commission, that of a harvest, a large harvest that is in progress since the cross.

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

Keep your ears open, your mouth shut and your anger controlled might be the thought of the passage. Good advice to the believer today. We tend to get ourselves into a lot of trouble when we don't listen to people, and when we open our mouths to insert our foot.

In our context, it might relate to the idea that when trials come, we are to listen to the words of James, and hold our tongue, rather than blame God for things gone wrong, and to certainly not get angry with God for what is going on in the life.

Oh, the churches need to heed these phrases! "Let every man be swift to hear" - "Slow to speak"

- "Slow to wrath" - clean the wax out of your ears shut your trap and keep a lid on it! The church is being torn asunder with church fights and no one listens to James.

I read a lot on a board where there are a lot of pastors and congregants, and there is constant chatter relating to problems in the church. The reactions of the people are not Christian all and all too often the leaders are little better.

The introductory phrase of this verse tends to be the problem. "Beloved brethren" is not descriptive of the average believer today. Indeed, many of the leaders on the board that I just mentioned have not caught this vision of James. They talk of their congregation as if they were only means to the pastor's ends. When the congregation doesn't do right, it is an affront to everything he wants to do.

The attitude of love is quite lacking today. If you don't agree with me, if you don't do as I do, if you don't jump when I say jump, you are against everything that I want to do for God. There is little Christian love expressed these days. This is not only the pastors and leaders, but the congregations as well.

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

There is in this statement an unspoken truth. The wrath of man may not work righteousness, but the wrath of God does most certainly worketh righteousness. His wrath is based on righteousness and justice and so will work correctly.

Wrath is a strong word in my mind. To me it is the strongest outworking of anger possible. It is that action which one takes to exact the worst, the most, the fullest punishment for wrong that one can muster.

There is another thought here. Some men tend to think that their anger against evil will work to show the righteousness of God, yet it often shows them to be the fool they are. We should be careful how we show our anger against sin. We may or may not be an influence for good. Our feeble attempts to be indignant may not do anything for the cause of Christ.

As such, there is little of good that can come from this outworking of our anger.

APPLICATION:

1. We are told to not err. How might we be tempted in coming days? What are some of the daily temptations that are a problem to man?

Irritability

Pettiness

Self-pity

Jealousy

Covetousness

Criticism

Lust

Lie

Gossip

Materialism

And the list could go on.

Avoid these, when there is temptation flee them like Joseph fled before he would sin with his master's wife (Gen. 39.12). Get up and run like the wind before that sin knocks the wind out of

your spiritual sails.

Remember what a wise person once said, "The number of times a man says no before yielding to temptation is usually once weakly."

Remember also that God can only bless success, He will never bless failure.

2. Verse eighteen mentions that we are the firstfruits of His creatures, or creation. This calls into question a lot of theological concepts that have been set in stone. I have challenged some of these in my work on regeneration.

This is a passage that might well back up my line of thinking, that the New Testament believers were among the firstfruits of regeneration. I submit that it may be that the Old Testament saints were not regenerated until the work of Christ was completed. Indeed, logically they could not have been regenerated before the work of Christ was done. Regeneration is on the basis of the completed work of Christ, not the coming work of Christ as has been taught for so many years.

The Old Testament saints would have had their salvation completed upon the completion of Christ's work on the cross. Thus, the Old Testament saints would have found their salvation complete at the same time as those believing on Him from the day of Pentecost forward.

3. Verse nineteen tells us to be slow to speak and slow to wrath. How might we apply that in today's society?

a. The lack of this is why we have road rage today - the unbelievable tempers that flair on the highways and streets of our country. People react immediately with wrath, and word. They don't think; they automatically act upon their emotion.

b. When that person at the retail store is rude, wrong and obnoxious, walk away and sleep on the incident and then write a letter to the store manager, if you remain confident that the person was wrong and that you did nothing to bring about the reaction.

c. When the pastor makes a mistake, refrain from jumping on with both feet to grind him into the ground. Ask him if he meant to do what he did, he could possibly have made a mistake like you sometimes do.

Every person, man and woman, are under the terms set forth here and we ought to be teaching our children the same principles.

SWIFT TO HEAR SLOW TO SPEAK SLOW TO WRATH

God Don't argue Don't blame God (1.17)

Word	Be sure of your interpretation Be patient with others ideas
Criticism	Consider it well before speaking Wrath never works it seems
Advice	Consider it before rejecting Don't be upset if it doesn't fit

4. "Father of lights" in verse sixteen calls to remembrance the creation of the sun and moon and the stars. I have recently learned that there is another small intricacy to this creative act that man had not known about till recently.

In the past they have known of black holes, but they had very little understanding of them. As science advanced, they found that they weren't quite what they thought they were. In more recent days they have made the little discovery that every galaxy has a black hole in the center, thus the infrequency of their existence is slightly underexaggerated.

God created all that there is and we as believers need to understand this and marvel at the fact. (Gen.1.16 "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also." Psalm 136.7 "To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever :")

I watched an Atheist discussion recently. The two men were discussing how best to present themselves to believers without giving them a large target. One of the observations was that they HAD to be sure they expressed that they have no belief in God, not that they believe that there is no God. If they say there is no God, then the burden of proof is upon them. If they have no belief in God, then they have no burden of proof because their statement is enough.

They then discussed what the one real problem to their belief, or lack thereof, was - that thing that gave them problems about their position when they were alone. One of them stated that if there is no God, then there must be an explanation for all that we see in creation. He even spoke of the intricacies and vastness of creation.

Now, if you are thinking quickly enough you know why it is important to know the logical arguments for a God. These arguments may be rejected, but they have to bother them at night. Learn them and use them as you have opportunity. (See my theology (<http://www.mrdsnotes.com>) for more information on these thoughts - go to the index, under God, click on "proofs of")

5. One last look at verse nineteen. "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:" In our context we have made it clear that we are speaking of hearing the Word, and being slow to speak against God or be mad at Him. However, I think there are some other applications we might find.

a. So often I find people do not listen to what I say, whether it is technical support, a store where I am seeking information, a clerk that is waiting on me, or people in churches.

I once read an article by a man that had researched listening. One of his little research projects was to stand in a wedding line and tell people something terrible to see if anyone would react to his comments. When he was introduced, he told each person that his mother had died and that he was having a bad day. Not one person acknowledged his loss or even let on that they heard what he had said.

The church must be in the listening business. If we don't listen, we don't hear the problems, so we cannot help those in need.

b. Many there are in the church that loves to talk; they love to talk to the burden of others. Some in fact seem to not be able to control their talking. We have visited a church from time to time that has a man that, I am sure loves the Lord, but the man doesn't know when to stop talking. He is verbose in my estimation and because of this trait, he doesn't always think before doing his talking. Some of his statements are so illogical that one is left to wonder if he has had any schooling.

Speak when you have something to say and then have the wisdom to be quite.

c. Slow to anger is one of the keys to peaceful church meetings, though many do not rely on this particular passage for their guide. Anger should never be a part of the church. There are many ways of dealing with problems long before anger needs to be considered. At that, we ought not to consider it very long, for it really has no place in the church.

The emphasis should be on the listening and talking, rather than the non-verbal skill of anger - well verbal is not required, but often is.

6. Is there ever a time when anger is appropriate? Since we are to be slow to come to it, there must be times when anger is the appropriate response. Webster suggests that wrath is the outworking of anger so maybe we should use the correct term. What are some of the times when wrath is appropriate?

When sin is running wild in a church someone ought to be getting angry and take action. When false teaching is in the church it is time for anger and action. When false witness is in the church it is time for anger and action. When injustice is not being corrected, it is time for anger and action.

Or on the other hand should we be party to wrath in any manner? Yes, we should be upset if the above situations exist, but let's consider the term a little further.

The word translated wrath is Strong's number 3709. It is used of God's wrath against the unrighteousness of men. Specifically in Rom. 1.18 it is against those that hold the truth in unrighteousness. This would indicate people that know the truth that pervert and distort it into unrighteousness.

It is translated vengeance in Rom. 3.5 "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? [Is] God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)"

In Rom. 4.15 we see that the law is involved. "Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, [there is] no transgression." Seemingly because it existed, wrath was the result - not that the law is bad, it just put requirements on the people.

In the great "government" passage Romans thirteen we see that the civil authority is there to punish evil. 4 "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to [execute] wrath upon him that doeth evil."

We are called "children of wrath" in our pre-salvation state in Eph. 2.3 thus we might consider wrath an appropriate response to worldly living, but it is up to God to deliver that wrath.

In looking into the New Testaments use of the word, it seems clear that wrath is something that is from God, is from unregenerate man, or is given forth by civil authority. Believers are told to flee wrath.

From this one must surmise that the passage is not saying wrath is something that we should be involved in, but that wrath does not work. Verse twenty is clear on the evaluation of man's wrath.

In short, don't get involved in it - be so slow to it that you never get there might be the thought of the text.

7. Has it ever struck you when someone that is saved blames God for problems, trials or temptations - struck you with the utter stupidity of such a claim (and many of us have done this so selfrighteousness isn't needed)? God loved us in our fallen state, enough to send His Son to die in our place, He sent the Word to man so that we could know this truth, and in most cases He sent a person to share the truth with us, then He takes us in as sons, and gives us eternal life and the Spirit within to assist us in our walk and then we have the audacity to blame Him for bad things in our life. How dumb and arrogant of us!

He has done all for us and we turn to Him with a kick in the face. Not smart in my mind.

8. In closing, we mentioned the hearing and talking, but let's focus on one other aspect that is somewhat indicated. QUIETNESS is a thing of the past in America. We have no such thing today. In our neighborhood quiet is not known. There is some sort of noise almost constantly, even in the darkest night. It is so noisy that we run a background sound machine that masks the noise outside so that we can find sleep in our bedroom.

I was told by a missionary of a tribe in Alaska that honored quiet. It is one of their greatest joys to just sit in a large circle and be quiet together. To our mind set there could never be quiet, someone would have to talk or tap their finger or answer their cell phone.

Quiet is when we can meet ourselves in thought, it is when we can meet God in prayer. Why do we shun quiet?

When my father-in-law was in the hospital, we would drive down to see him. When it was my turn to go in often we had nothing to say to each other, so we would just sit quietly together enjoying one another's company.

Talk is not the answer to quiet; it is the interrupter of quiet. Quiet should be sought not avoided.

On a couple of other fronts relating to quietness, we might consider teachers/preachers/congregants and worship.

There are teachers/preachers that feel quiet between sections is terrible. They usually fill in the gaps with ramblings better left to the false teachers as much of it is off the cuff and off the wall. They babble about anything that comes to mind and often is off topic, off logic and off Scripture.

A pause to gather your thoughts is not incorrect nor abhorrent. If you feel you must have talk, ask a question while you gather your notes and prepare to move on.

As to the congregants, often when a question is asked they feel compelled to fill the remainder of the class time whether on topic or not. They drone on and on about little of anything, or a little of everything much to the teachers frustration.

In today's worship I often wonder where the quiet before the Lord has gone. Seems we want to add instruments, add speakers, add noise to our quiet time before God - not sure how much sense is to be seen in the current trends. Not only from the stage, but we often foster noise and commotion just after the hymns have quieted us down to meet God, the leader usually calls on us to "GREET ONE ANOTHER" - a time to bring the house down and embarrass all the new people.

I might mention for the pastors of America, that the beginning of the sermon is not the signal for bathroom call. Bathrooms are installed for BETWEEN services, not DURING services. While on this point PASTORS those that dutifully mind the above rule often are limited in time duration. An hour service is about tops for many people, so if you want the first rule attended to, be sure to attend to the second.

Chapter six

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 1.21-25

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

In light of what has been said, then you ought to follow these instructions. Just what we are to relate "wherefore" back to might be of note.

Chapter one verse seventeen and eighteen relate to us, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. 18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

Then verses nineteen and twenty-one lay out twin "wherefores" that are to be followed.

Because God is so good, because God gives us gifts, because God has begotten us, we then ought to follow His instructions to live a Godly life in the area of the mouth, of the ear, of the mind, and now in verse twenty-one we are to clean up our lives to match our position in life - a child of God. Then we must use the Word to our own benefit within our lives.

"Lay apart" does not need a lot of explanation, it is quite straightforward. We are to set aside, lay apart, put away or get rid of all the nastiness to follow. Have a garage sale in your life folks. Get rid of all that excess filth, you don't need it any longer. Sell off that naughtiness that you love. You are now a child of God and your life has no place for all that stuff.

We used to gather on Labor Day weekend with a friend or two for a huge garage sale. We would run it two or three days in the hot sun. We would sell all sorts of stuff, but seldom the bigger items that we wanted to pedal to make some money. After several years of this I was really full to the brim with garage sales.

Now, we have a garage give away now and then. We decide what must go and we call someone that can spread it around a church, or announce it at my wife's work and just give it away. The recipients are over joyed at the gift and I am relieved of the garage sale. Works well with us.

The point is, when we become believers, we are equipped with a new destination, a new purpose, a new direction and we don't need all that old stuff anymore, we need to get rid of it. When a pastor led me to the Lord, years ago, he did not make it a point to disciple me. I then went into the Navy and took with me all that extra baggage of my lost life. I had no idea of the truth James is setting forth here, so I went through four years in the Navy and a year or so after that with the old life still in place.

There was no putting away, no setting aside, just the continuance of sin. I felt there was something amiss, but did not know what it was. I tried reading the Bible but started in the Old Testament genealogies and the reading didn't last long.

I tried having a quiet time of sorts, but again, had no real idea why or how. I am to assume that the recipients of this letter may have been in a similar situation or James wouldn't have brought up the subject. He certainly wasn't just adding in a few comments to get the word count up in his research paper.

The term "filthiness" depicts dirty, foul or just nasty. This is the only occurrence of the word in Scripture. I recently watched a series on crabbers in the ocean off Alaska. One section was set as they were unloading their catch and the severe disappointment when the crew found that the hold was full of dead crab. They shoveled out hundreds of dead creatures and finally discovered a dead fish that was rotting. The rot of the fish had spread to the crab for many levels around. One rotting fish destroyed a large part of their catch.

This foulness of the fish is like the foulness of sin. The sin of a person spreads the foulness to all those around them. The remedy is to put away that foulness, to excise it and get rid of it. Our neighborhood has a lot of drug activity. The whole neighborhood is affected. The parents can't allow their children to play without constant attention, owners can't leave anything out for a moment or it will be gone. The neighbors aren't as open and friendly because they don't know if the new people in the rental next door are drug addicts or sellers. Most of the time it is one or the other. Of the seven houses on our block three are owned by responsible owners, and the rest are rentals that normally rent to drug related or crime related tenants.

Now and then there is a season when the rentals actually have decent people in them and the whole atmosphere of the area changes to one of trust, friendliness and decency.

If you happen to be the nasty influence in your area, why don't you follow the thoughts in this section. Clean up your life and be a positive influence rather than rotting those around you.

"Superfluity of naughtiness" is translated by some "all that remains of wickedness" but most likely a better thought would be "overflowing of wickedness." Indeed, "overabundance" might be a translation. The thought of wickedness is that of evil or malignancy. Terrible stuff and James suggests that they have an overabundance of it to lay aside.

"Superfluity" is a Greek term that the Greeks used of the wax in the ear. It is the excess of what is needed; it is that which is discarded by the body. So, the wickedness of the recipients of this letter is to figure out how to sluff off that which definitely is not needed - sin.

This seems to add to the thought that these are new believers, new in maturity, but not necessarily years. They are still living in filth and sin and James wants them to change their ways, to lay all this aside so that they can serve the Lord properly.

Barnes says this of the phrase, "And superfluity of naughtiness. Literally, "abounding of evil." It is rendered by Doddridge, "overflowing of malignity;" by Tindal, "superfluity of maliciousness;" by Benson, "superfluity of malice;" by Bloomfield, "petulance.""

"Receive with meekness the engrafted word" is the next step in the spiritual life after you have freed yourself from sin. Meekness or humility is that aspect of the Christian life that makes one quiet in demeanor and slow to verbalize, but does not mean one is to be walked on, or put aside as one having no opinion or truth. The lexicon suggests mildness of disposition, or gentleness of spirit.

I think if you think back to the last presidential election you would bring John Dean to mind as one that does not fit this description. He was one that was far from meek or humble, he was in the business of loudness, and attention gathering. The election is far over and he is now, as the head of the Democratic Party, doing the same thing, being boisterous, insulting to those that he disagrees with and condescending to the majority of America because they chose a Republican instead of his own party's offerings.

In my opinion had the Democrats set forward a candidate that was meek or humble, they might well have taken the election, but instead they chose egos that they thought would roll right over the top of America leaving their lasting imprint - well they did just that and the imprint was not accepted as right for America.

The people were to leave their sins and receive the Word. The context is to believers, but this passage almost seems as if he is directing his words to lost people. I must wonder if the recipients were living as the lost and James wanted to cover all bases - treat them as believers, but in case there was some that were not, so that he could bring them to the Lord.

"Which is able to save your souls" would indicate the thought of salvation, but not necessarily. It is general enough to indicate salvation while still indicating the general principle of cleaning up the life to save the soul from the filth of sin.

I am sure this passage may come to you in an argument for the idea that the believer can lose their salvation. We have always believed in eternal security and when one of my wife's Seventh Day Adventist relatives came to visit the subject came up briefly. I thought she was going to explode; she turned red and nearly shouted, "You don't believe in that damnable doctrine do you?" Faith responded in the positive and the discussion was over to save family unity.

I once read that a man that was employed in insurance was facing the possibility of a lay off or at least salary cuts. He had also been offered a great opportunity to make money from his great singing voice. He was trying to decide on what to do. He seated himself at the piano in church and found a note from his mother. The note was a poem and the man began to sing the poem. It began "I'd rather have Jesus" and that song became his testimony. He followed God and became one of the great Christian voices of our time, George Beverly Shea the soloist for the Billy Graham Crusades. We would not have heard of the insurance man Mr. Shea had he not made a

choice for God.

It was of interest to me recently (getting to the point of bringing up Mr. Shea) to see a portion of an interview with Mr. Shea. He was speaking of different highlights of his life and someone mentioned Elvis Presley. Mr. Shea beamed and began telling a story about one of the songs he had written and Elvis had recorded it. His comment was something like this. "And that is the one song of mine that Elvis sang!" You could tell he was so excited and happy that Elvis had selected one of his songs to sing - I think this illustrates the meekness or humility of our passage. One of the greatest talents of our day and he is excited that someone selected one of his songs.

Receive with meekness the Word - receive with humility the Word. Accept the Word and its truth as something that is meaningful to you. Don't accept it like you think you are doing it a favor - receive it as something that you know you need to navigate your coming life.

Years ago I had the misfortune to hear a man speak twice in a couple of weeks. He had mastered the ability to word his invitations so that everyone in the congregation would feel obligated to go forward. What impressive numbers he had to tell his friends about - my entire congregation came forward. In the early part of his invitation it was rather obvious that many of those going forward felt that they were super saints because as they walked slowly down the aisle they were looking from side to side to be sure everyone saw who they were. Then as they stood at the platform, they weren't intent on prayer or confession, but were rather intent on knowing who in the congregation was seeing them. Still, looking around for man's recognition.

There was little meekness involved in this even though I am sure God worked in some of the lives. Had I had the courage of my convictions as a young believer I would have risen and walked out of the services in protest against the shallowness of the proceedings.

When you deal with the Word, or when you are receiving the Word, do it with all humility of spirit lest you waste your and God's time. He is interested in honest response to His simple Word.

We might look at the term "engrafted" for a moment. It is only used here in this verse and it has the thought of implanted. I don't know that there is a large difference between implanted and engrafted. Graft is the placing of something living into something else that is living but of another sort. Grafting a sprout from one plant into the limb of another. The new limb will then draw nourishment from the host plant. "Implant" can relate to the same thing, but can also relate to something that is implanted or put into something else.

Now, that we know there is little difference, we can know that this is the placing in of the Word - it is the Word going inside us, to be within, to be something that will grow within us. It is there for a purpose - not to just be there in a dormant state.

Taking this a step further, the Word is implanted in us so that it can grow and draw nourishment from us and grow to produce fruit of like kind - sons of God. We are to be fruitful creatures. The Word, in all of its perfections is implanted into a worthless mess of humanness to be nourished

so that it can be productive. Rather like implanting a rose stem into a nonflowering bush. The rose will draw nourishment and produce roses because it is part of something else.

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

"Doers" is a word that is translated well, but there is an aspect of it that I really like. Doer of the Word is quite adequate, but there is the aspect of "perform" that is there as well. Be a doer, but also be a performer of the Word, not as in acting or faking, but as in perform the Word, put it across in your life as if it is the desire to do the very best that you can. To do something, you simply do it, while if you perform it you are really throwing yourself into the matter, giving it the best that you can.

James uses the imperative here so this is a command, not a suggestion. Be performers of the Word, not just hearers of the Word. Oh, the many in our churches today that are listeners, that are hearers that are taking in all there is to take in but few there are today that are doers of the Word.

Many listen to the word, many hear it, many may even take notes, but to put those ideas into action is another thing, something that only a few ever do. There are two basic reasons for a believer to be a hearer only. First there is the simple fact of not being interested in applying the Word to themselves, and secondly there is the fact that in many churches the leadership will not allow anyone but their pet people do anything in the church. Many leaders would rather work a few to death and leave the rest to sit and do little in the church.

The opposite is often true as well. There are leaders that will use anyone that comes along, whether they are qualified, whether they are living in sin or anything else - they just want workers and anyone will do. They allow people that are living in open sin to work in the church. We knew a man that was near criminal in his business dealings - a fact known to the entire congregation, yet this man led the singing, and led the services when the pastor was gone and was involved in many other areas of the church.

There is an inherent falsehood in those that hear only. They deceive themselves into thinking they are spiritual. The following verses make it plain that the person that hears only sees himself for what he really is spiritually and goes away thinking he is spiritual because he forgets immediately what he has seen in the Word.

When we hear or read the Word we see the standard set and automatically know we don't meet the standard, but as soon as we go about our business we forget that little detail and go on as we were. On the other hand, however, if we see the standard and realize we don't meet it, then go home and change our lives to be in conformity with the standard, then we have heard, and we have done, and we are more spiritual than before and most likely will be performing that Word in our everyday lives.

There is a dual problem, we do not correct our lives and we think we are spiritual. A double whammy in that if we think we are spiritual, we will tend to listen even less the next time the Word speaks to us in that area of our life.

There is an Old Testament account that illustrates this well. Cain brought of the fruit of the field, while Abel brought the first fruits. Abel brought what was commanded and Cain brought what he wanted to bring. Abel found himself right before God and Cain found himself in trouble with God. Both looked upon the truth given and one followed it while the other rejected it and did what he wanted to do.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

If you look into the Word and go away unchanged then you have not been a doer of the Word, but a listener only. I must wonder why people bother going to church if they aren't going to allow it to change them. There is no reason to waste your time going to hear, you could just as well go to the movies. There is no gain from listening only; the gain is in the doing of what you have heard.

If you aren't a doer you are "like unto a man beholding his..." -- the verb, "like" is a perfect tense. First of all it is a verb, it is an action - if you aren't a doer you are beholding yourself in a glass. You are not only doing it, there is a permanence of beholding to an expected end. Not that you can't change it, but as long as you are not a doer, you are a beholder and all that goes with that word which we will see in a moment.

There is consequence to the lack of doing and we should be warning people of such. They are setting themselves in opposition to that which God desires. This relates heavily to those that say that we shouldn't have lists of do's and don'ts. If we don't mark in our minds those things that we should not do as described in the Word then we set ourselves against God. If we don't mark in our minds those things which the Word speaks against and avoid them, we set ourselves against God.

When we look into the Word, we can know what sort of person we are; we can allow the Spirit to point out our pimples and flaws. If we allow this, then go get the Stridex or whatever miracle cream you use and work on the problem areas. If we don't do the remedy we have looked and ignored the problem and forgotten that it is there.

I don't know about you, or what defects you might find, but when I look into the Word and it points something out, I want to immediately take action to correct my image before my God.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth [therein], he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

The explanation of the text is shown here. If we look into the perfect law of liberty and follow it and do it we will be blessed. The opposite seems to be assumed, that if you don't follow it you won't be blessed.

Much has been said as to the meaning of "perfect law of liberty" but I'm not sure that is the point. The point is that we are to look into the Word and do it if we would be blessed.

It is obvious in the context that the law of liberty relates in some way to the Word itself. Verse twenty-two sets the context as the Word. I suspect that James is using a flourish of words to embellish his idea of the Word as introduced in the preceding context but let's look into it to be sure.

Perfect is the word that relates to completeness and readiness to do the job. A Drag racing car that pulls up to the starting line has been gone over, it has been tuned, it has been babied and it is complete and ready for that blast down the track. This is the thought of "perfect."

"Liberty" simply has the idea that we are free to do or not do. The authority has given us the choice to do what we want to do. The law of liberty speaks of set standards that are placed to insure freedom to act as we will and that is just what has been set forth. Anyone that looks into the Word is free to do as he or she will, but know there is consequence to both the positive and the negative.

Barnes said that this was the law of God in the thought that it is His will. It is the overall will of God for mankind. Constable relates it to the revealed Word of God, which is the will of God. I won't attempt to describe the twisting and twirling of Gill in his attempt to define the law of liberty, but I think somewhere in there He would agree with what has been presented - the revealed will of God in the Word. I will include it if you would like to read it.

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty,... By which is meant, not the moral law, but the Gospel; for only of that is the apostle speaking in the context: this is no other than the word of truth, with which God begets men of his own will; and is the ingrafted word which is able to save, and of which men should be doers, as well as hearers, James 1:18, and this is compared to a glass by the Apostle Paul, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and the word here used for looking into it is the same word the Apostle Peter uses of the angels, who desired to look into the mysteries of the Gospel, 1 Peter 1:12 all which serve to strengthen this sense; now the Gospel is called a law; not that it is a law, strictly speaking, consisting precepts, and established and enforced by sanctions penalties; for it is a declaration of righteousness and salvation by Christ; a publication of peace and pardon by him; and a free promise of eternal life, through him; but as it is an instruction, or doctrine: the law with the Jews is called hrwt, because it is teaching and instructive; and everything that is so is by them called by this name: hence we find the doctrine of the Messiah, which is no other than the Gospel, is in the Old Testament called the law of the Lord, and his law, Isaiah 2:2 and in the New Testament it is called the law, or doctrine of faith, Romans 3:27 and this doctrine is perfect, as in Psalm 19:7, it being a perfect plan of truths, containing in it all truth, as it is in Jesus, even all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and because it is a

revelation of things perfect; of the perfect righteousness of Christ, and of perfect justification by it, and of free and full pardon of sins through him, and of complete salvation by him; and because it directs to Christ, in whom perfection is: and it is a law or doctrine of liberty;" There is more, but I think you get the idea.

APPLICATION:

1. Let's consider the one that hears but does nothing. One must wonder at the coldness, the callousness, and the deadness of one that is able to see the Word attempting to change them and walking away with no change.

This is like the person that feels that God has called them to the mission field and instead they go into banking. They turn their back on the call of God for the call of money. It is like the person that is stealing and when they see in the Word, "thou shalt not steal" they turn and go to the store and steal even more. It is like the liar when confronted with the Word continues to lie and cover up the truth with falsehood. It is like the gossip that continues with the verbiage even though they know that it is an improper use of the tongue.

In essence, these call God's Word incorrect. They see the Word but judge it as not meaningful to them. They usurp the Word's place in their life. They say no to God and His will for their life.

How can this be if the person is a true believer? What mental process goes on in their mind to justify saying no to God. In the family there is something seriously wrong when a child says no to their parent, and so it is in the Family of God. When one of your congregation is saying no to the Father, they are causing disruption in the family.

This disruption should not be allowed to continue. The church leadership should step in and intervene if the other believers can't have the desired effect upon the erring person.

We tend, in today's church, to be isolationists - probably due to all the sin - and we tend to cut ourselves off from everyone else in the church. This allows us to get away with those pet sins that we like to keep in backup to make ourselves feel good.

This separation of one from the other is key to worldly Christians. If we were fellowshiping as we ought we would see those little hints of sin creeping out now and then and we could challenge one another to clean up our acts. If there isn't some change then the church leaders should be called in to assist.

Some of my greatest growth was in a little Bible church where there was a lot of fellowship. The Word was being taught and the prayer times were long. The confrontation with the Word was constant and the accountability was present. A time of hearing the Word and the doing just kind of was an automatic response.

This thought of an automatic response is something we should practice. When you hear, begin to

plan as to how you are going to change your life to comply. Not putting it off till Thursday, but while in the service, taking time to contemplate and lay out a plan of action. Take Sunday afternoon to study further on the topic to set it in your mind with a good imprint.

2. Another aspect of this hearing/doing might be seen in current thinking on Foreign Missions. Many are seeing that the fad of "short term mission trips" is becoming a hindrance to Missions in general. The person goes for a brief time and returns home with a true high, but soon gets involved in the mundane to the detriment of anything that the mission trip might have stirred up spiritually.

It is easy also to feel that "I have fulfilled my obligation." I do not question the sincerity of these folks, nor the validity of what they have done, but do wonder at the lasting effects of this expenditure of the Lord's money.

3. In verse twenty-one the verbs that are aimed at us are aorist or a one time act. "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word,"

We aren't to put aside all that sin, and then pick it up and play with it now and then to pleasure ourselves, we are to lay it aside, get rid of it permanently. One of the things the pastor that led me to the Lord asked me when we were still praying, was "Stan, do you have any sin problems that you need to ask God to help you with.

He knew that a clean life was the goal of the Gospel of Christ.

This passage also points to the fact that we ought to be able to live a relatively sin free life from the moment of salvation on. Get rid of the filth, and walk in purity.

This passage also points up to the error of the struggling natures within the believer. If there was a struggle to go back into sin, we should see James telling the believers to put away the filth every night before they go to bed. You are living in it and you ought to continually be putting it away.

Some wrongly connect this accepting of the word to the salvation message. Remember that James is speaking to believers, not the lost. There might be some that hear the book read that are lost and they might understand this as an invitation, but in the context it is not. The Life Application Bible in one section tells us as believers to set aside the sin and listen to the Word that is within, and in another section tells us this is the Gospel message. Clue. It can't be both, maybe this is a classic example of the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing.

This same thought of laying aside is found in I Pe. 2.1 where the one time act is also in view. "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,"

4. In the idea of looking into a mirror and walking away and not remembering what you saw, I think older people can visualize this concept, and maybe those that have a serious illness. When we look into the mirror, we see the aged person that we are or the ailing person that we are. When we turn to life we almost immediately revert to that image of what we once were when we were eighteen or so, young, vibrant, smooth skinned, full head of hair and ready for the world.

We seldom think of ourselves as anything but that youthful image. We don't think of that old person that we really are. One day I went to pick up something in the yard, something that I could have lifted with little effort five years ago, but on this day I had to nearly empty the container of its contents before I could lift it off the ground. As I bent down to lift that item in the first place, I was remembering myself as an able-bodied person, but when I couldn't budge it I remembered the truth, I am a man in my sixties that hasn't the strength of the past.

So, as we look into the Word, we must refrain from seeing what we want to see. We must refrain from seeing what we really are, sinful, and then forgetting as we turn away to the false image of ourselves that says we are spiritual.

The best part of this process is that we have the Holy Spirit within us to convict us of our false image. I don't remember of a time in my life when I have been confronted with the Word with a wrong in my life, that I didn't immediately know it. Not that I immediately responded, but when I turned from the Word, I knew just what I was and could not put that image out of my mind due to the Spirit's working within.

If we are being controlled by the spirit this will be the course of things, but if we are controlling ourselves we will naturally turn from what we really are and trick ourselves into thinking we are spiritual.

Chapter seven

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 1.26-27

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion [is] vain.

Wow, that first phrase screams for comment today. "If any man among you seem to be religious" is just where many in the church are today. Seemingly religious, but far from religious in reality.

Yes, the context is the tongue, and that is one of the major areas of problems in Christianity. In business, in church, in family, in all areas of life some believers have a tendency to show themselves liars. They go against their word in business; they lie when in church and often lie even to their own families.

The lie usually is not even needed today; the truth would be easier to follow and would not require the person to keep track of all his/her falsehood.

I recently opened a backup for my website. The server offered to register a domain name for me very inexpensively so I had them register one for me. About six months later I could not get support from them so I told them I would not be continuing to do business with them. In the process I found that the man that set my site up registered my domain name in his name. I paid for it but he is shown as the owner. The result is that I have no control over that domain, and have no control over what he might decide to put on that website.

The domain name is related to my other website so I am stuck with him doing as he pleases - he being a Christian and part of a "Christian" business. Not only that, I was brought to their business by an ad in a Christian magazine. I further discovered that the man that had stolen my domain name was also on the staff of the "Christian" magazine.

After contacting the magazine, the server, and the man that register my domain under his name, I have heard nothing from any of them. Ultimately this issue was resolved but why would Christians act this way to other Christians?

"If any man seem to be religious" seems to be the war chant of many believers today. They feel that being religious is correct and moral living.

Years ago I was a janitor in a printing business. I would go in to clean as the workers were winding down from a long day. Twice in my time working there people said "Stan, you are religious, aren't you?" to which I responded, "I try not to be." then explain that being religious

isn't enough. The sad part of it is that both were "Christians" of one sort or another.

Being religious in name only does not cut it in life, in business, in the family and certainly not at the judgment. Many there will be at the judgment that thought they were all right because they followed some moral code that they dreamed up to make themselves religious.

The term translated "seem" can be translated "think" or "suppose" which indicates that this seeming, may relate to the person themselves, not a seeming to be religious outwardly. Both ideas are valid in application, but the fact of the text seems to follow the idea that if anyone think themselves religious. All of the translations I checked follow that idea rather than the idea of a seeming to be religious to others.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, [and] to keep himself unspotted from the world.

All right, all you folks that want to know what God wants you to do in life, here it is. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this," He is about to tell you directly just what He wants you to do, this is the undefiled truth of the matter directly from God.

"To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, [and] to keep himself unspotted from the world." Two things you are to do, visit the fatherless, or the orphans, and to visit the widows and keep yourself unspotted or pure.

Simple enough, visit the kids and widows and not sin. And just how many of us do the first two, won't ask about the last one because we don't do too well there either.

Many of us visit the widow when she is first grieving her loss but how many of us get around to visiting them six months after? One of the joys for my wife while ministering in the last church where we were interim pastor was to visit one of the widow ladies. The woman had been a widow for many years, and was kind of an old snip, but after visiting a few times, my wife and the widow became great friends and we fellowshipped with her many times over a few years before she died.

This could be a great blessing for any of you if you would just seek out one that could use some company. The same would probably go for an orphan. Orphans may not be as readily available to us in our society, but there are many single parent families around that aren't far from being without parents. Big Brother/Sister agencies could match you up with someone I'd guess. It might even be a chance to share the Gospel with a child. I'm not sure you should go with that being the goal, but it couldn't hurt to have it as a minor goal of your ministry to the child.

From our text one might assume, and probably correctly so, that the fatherless and the widows might well be widowed mothers with children rather than two separate groups. I think in the area of application viewing them individually is quite appropriate, but I think James most likely meant the two as a group.

If you have an orphanage around, then you have a great opportunity to visit and maybe assist in the work of the institution.

Yes, this will take time, and yes, God would be interested in you doing it. Time and maybe a little cash now and then.

One of the fun times of the widow just mentioned is that one time she mentioned she and her husband always walked to the burger place near their home for a burger on Friday night. The wife and I were in the habit of having a burger now and then so we started picking up an extra and she would go to the widow's place and have a burger with her on Friday night.

I don't really know the reality of a widow or orphan in Biblical days, but I'm sure it was much worse then than now. The widow and orphans were probably about on the same social ladder and poorly thought of and even if thought of, less cared for. The family was to take care of the widow, but if there is no family, then there was no one to care for them.

The New Testament is clear that the church is to care for the widow that is in need. Again, something that we seldom do in the church today.

I Tim. 5.3 Speaks to the care of the widow. Even in Paul's day he did not expect the church to care for widows that had family, nor would I imagine from the text widows that had property or money. If they were widows indeed, widows that had no one to care for them and no way to care for themselves, then the church should step in and provide her needs. "Honour widows that are widows indeed. 4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. 5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and days."

I might add that "needs" probably had in thought the meaning of the word - needs. Today Americans expect everything. A recent letter to the editor was from a woman that was receiving housing, food and tuition from the state and it was clear that she thought she ought to get it as well. There was no indication of work in the letter and I doubt that the state requires it. This is not what Scripture teaches, it teaches caring for needs.

In the area of orphans, we might expect that maybe if there is need we ought to meet it. Needs, as has been indicated, has a liberal meaning today. With all of the social agencies I doubt that many widows or orphans are in need today though it may occur.

When pastoring many years ago we had four widows in our group. One was well to do, had property and money enough for her life and plenty to leave to her children.

The other three ladies were in very slim finances. They were on social security but at the lowest amount in their day. They also gained a little help for their heat/lights. They were getting along with their needs being met so there was nothing the church was "required" to do. I suspect had

the church grown out of its infancy we would have attempted to do some for them. I did tell them all that if they had a need to let me know and the church would help.

No, they didn't go to Arizona for the winter, they didn't go to the big city to shop, but they had adequate to live on. This is not to say that the church should not assist them as much as they can in the area of company/fellowship and any other way possible.

Some ways that we might assist this segment of our church:

1. Assure that they have transportation if needed and don't wait for them to ask you for assistance, the church should find out if there is need.
2. Possibly make special times for them to gather for a potluck now and then with the church providing the pot.
3. Find help for them if they need transportation to the store, the doctor or the dentist.
4. Be inventive. They have to do all the things you do, so be sure they can get it all done. If they can't, give them help.

This all really comes back to the fact that there is a general concern for the welfare of all believers. We ought to be giving our concern to all believers, and being sure the widows and orphans are included, then on top we are to go and visit them.

Actually the term translated "visit" has the thought of looking to see, inspection or checking out. What a better time to see if they have need than when you go to visit them.

One of the things I have observed of the Mormon Church is the great care that they give to their people. Each person is watched over by someone in the church. There is contact from time to time to see how things are going. If there is a material need it is met, if there is a social need it is met, if there is any need, the church attempts to assist as needed.

This is something that we in American churches fail to do, all too often. Yes, there is a chance that we will be taken advantage of, but we shouldn't stop doing it. Be careful and have more than one person in the mix making the decisions about assisting members. Care should be one of the hallmarks of the church!

Note that they are in affliction. They are having difficulties. Burden is another way to translate the word or a pressing together between. Between a rock and a hard place in other words. The life of a widow with children is a hard life; it is trying to keep both ends connected. Keeping the kids on track, keeping the job on track, and keeping the home on track. Not a job for the faint hearted for sure.

In New Testament times it would have been even harder for a widow, just to get along in society

as a woman. Then to add the fact that there is no man in the house to assist and provide income. James sets this pressing situation and its alleviation as the epitome of true religion.

James adds a second item of "true religion" when he adds the phrase "[and] to keep himself unspotted from the world." The scope of this statement is quite far reaching in our day. Just how does the world tend to spot us or deface our character?

We have pressure to lie, to lust, to covet, to shirk, to sidestep responsibility, to fail our faith, to walk against God, to do anything and everything that is bad when God wants us to be good.

Our world is so full of the wrong of the Devil, and the sadder part is that Christians are often right in the middle of this wrong with the lost people that don't know any better. The lost are depraved and don't understand the requirements of God, but God's people certainly do and yet many live as the world. They aren't spotted by the world; they are indistinguishable from the world.

The world's universities are now teaching ethics as a class that is for today's businessman. In my early days ethics were taught in the public school system. Cheating was wrong in high school, the lie was not tolerated, yet today the lie is normal conversation.

The topics of television used to be set and all knew what the limits were; now we have directors/producers that proudly proclaim that they are pushing the limits, they are pushing decency out of our society and they are doing a very good job of it, sad to say.

We used to "not watch" certain programs because of the content, but you can't watch commercials any more due to the same content. You can't trust the rating systems that are in place because the standards have eroded since they were set up. G is supposedly for anyone, but there is now content that has no business in "G" rated shows.

Our society has taught our children that there is little that is out of bounds, little they can't enjoy, and little that anyone should tell them as to right and wrong. You see, there is no wrong unless you feel it is wrong. Whatever you want as long as you feel it is okay.

APPLICATION:

1. If you consider these two verses together you might find that it is "Verbs, not Words" that please God. Doing rather than telling of what you are doing or telling of what you plan to do. Do that which God has led you to do, don't just talk about it.

I suppose doing while telling about it is better than either or, but I don't think we have to tell others about our deeds, God is watching and it is He that we should be working for rather than the praises of men.

2. "Bridleth not his tongue" seems to be a fairly straightforward idea. Stick a bridle on yourself,

and direct your tongue as you ought, don't let it run wild in the meadow frolicking from one corner of the fence to the other. Be controlled in all that you say.

One of the definitions of a bridle, aside from the usual type that is used on a horse, is a cable that is anchored to the sea floor and is drawn up into the ship to tie it in place while moored in the harbor. This sort of bridle allows free swing of the ship with tides and currents, but holds it steadily in place.

So the bridled tongue, it is free to go to work as long as it works in that limited area of freedom. Keep your tongue in the proper area and it will do no harm, but allow it freedom to go where it will and trouble is to be found.

We will see a larger section on the tongue in chapter three, where James really gets busy talking about the damage that the tongue can cause.

We all know that the gossip should be dealt with due to the tongue's misuse, but what about the pastor/teacher that turns his loose on the people? How about the parent that tongue lashes his/her child? How about the spouse that verbally abuses their partner?

All of these should be dealt with as well in the church. All of these are deluding themselves if they think their actions are spiritual.

When I speak of spouses I am not speaking only to husbands, for wives can swing a very sharp tongue as well. It doesn't have to be cutting remarks, because the little comments that indicate the man's shortcomings over time can be devastating as well.

The media is constantly tearing down man. Watch the commercials and you will find that man is that dummy that can do nothing right and has an ego that won't let him ask for assistance. He is always the one that is lost, dumb for buying something, or because he bought the wrong item. He is the buffoon that messes up all that he attempts to do.

Many wives share little tidbits of a similar nature to their husbands on a constant, unceasing, incessant basis.

All of us need to bridle our tongues for other people's sake as well as our own. If you need further proof, give a little study to Gal. 5.15 "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

3. "Deceiveth his own heart" is often illustrated by the one that is not walking with God. The person will constantly try to convince other believers of his/her spirituality. On internet boards I find people that are in this area of ungodliness. One such woman had the sharpest tongue ever and used it as if she never tired. Yet, she harped on the "love" of God and that nobody, but you know who, ever showed God's love on the board.

Many there were that attempted to show her the lack of love she was showing by the use of her keyboard, but she insisted that it was she that was spiritual and that all others were unspiritual because they weren't coming up to her standard of love on the board.

Actually, anyone that emphasizes the "love" of God and ignores His "judgment" is in full blown deception. God is both and both must be understood to really know God.

4. "This man's religion [is] vain." What is a vain religion? Do Christians get into a vain religious mode?

Some of the thoughts from the Lexicon are devoid of force, truth, success, result - useless, of no purpose. Do you get the thought that vain religion is rather totally worthless to the man as well as to others around him? The strict context here is keeping the tongue, but aren't many believers caught up in a vanity religion, one that feeds the vanity that is already overworked in the life. A church that preaches a feel good message, that has feel good music, that has feel good works - seems it might well be a vain religion, one that is meant to feed the person's vanity rather than their soul.

I especially like the thought of no force. How can this type of religion be a force for good in the lost world, it can't - it can only confuse and mislead a lost person away from Christ and to himself and his self-interest. We certainly don't need to get the self interest message out to the world; most lost people are already doing that very nicely by themselves.

It has been my observation, especially in the beginning of this century that the self help, the self involved; the self-absorbed churches are the ones that are growing while those few that are preaching the Word and Christ centeredness of life are dwindling. Yesterday my wife and I drove by a once large and thriving church and found that there were only three cars parked, only a handful interested in a good Bible lesson and message.

The self-sacrificing life, the committed life, the take me I'm yours life are to be derided as over zealotry by many today. While in college I read a little book that shook me to the foundations, it was about commitment to Christ, it was about giving your all to Christ, and it was about totally living for Him and not yourself.

Later in life I wrote a little book on zeal and felt that this book from my college days would be a good twin to my volume so contacted the author about quoting his book online as a resource for those reading my own. I was referred to the copyright holder and was told no. The buck was worth more than moving believers into a commitment to Christ.

The publisher offered to allow me to quote a portion of the book with mine with a note of where to buy the complete book. Yes, we will assist Christians, but only for a price. Books today are published on cost effectiveness criteria, not based on the content. If the content is good, then that is fine, but the work must produce bucks to be useable today.

This is partly the publisher's fault and partly the reader's fault. If either were committed to Christ in a self-sacrificing way, the content would improve, because the publisher would see where the bucks were to be made.

5. We find the qualities of a true man of God in this chapter. Thirty-two qualities found in twenty-seven verses.

1.1 Servant

1.2 Joy

Tested

1.3 Tried

Faith

Patience

1.4 Patient

Complete

Satisfied

1.5 Wise

1.6 Faithful

Steadfast

1.8 Stable

1.9 Humble

1.12 Blessed

endureth temptation

1.14 Not lustful

1.16 Errorless

1.18 Begotten of God

1.19 Swift to hear

Slow to speak

Slow to wrath

1.21 Pure

Meek

1.22 Doer of the Word

[not self deceptive]

1.23 Hearer of the Word

1.24 Remembereth what he is

1.25 Doer of the work

1.26 Controls the tongue

1.27 Visit orphans and widows

Unspotted

6. James seems go call back to the Sermon on the Mount for some of his comments here in this book.

James 1.2 "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;"

Matt. 5.10-12 "Blessed [are] they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great [is] your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

James 1.4 "But let patience have [her] perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Matt. 5.48 "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

James 1.9 "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:"

Matt. 5.3 "Blessed [are] the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

It seems lowliness of spirit, patience in testing and purity are three very important issues with God. Testing tends to produce humility in the person, and then we must add purity and we have a pleasing combination to God.

One must wonder if believers know this. Humility and purity are not the hallmarks of the present church membership and if they fell into testing they would flee the church.

7. Verse twenty-seven speaks of visiting. Missionaries rely on visitation of different sorts for the contacts they desire when attempting to plant a church in the land of their calling. Without visitation they have little to no contact with the people they would reach.

This is true in many of our churches as well. If you have contacts at work or in your neighborhood that is great, but if you don't you might give some thought to calling in your area. You don't have to knock on the door and give the gospel though there is some fruit in that. You can simply just knock and say hello, state who you are and leave a tract or church bulletin with the people. It is a contact. Invite them to a church service, or special service you are having. This simple contact can bring a person/family into the church for a visit.

You can take a moment or two weekly to knock on the same doors and say hi again and ask if they have any questions about your church or the Lord. If they are standoffish don't worry, in our society many are. If they become rude or ask you to stop calling be sure to honor their wishes. You have made contact and if they reject, it is their lose. It is not you they are rejecting, it is the Lord.

8. Barnes says aptly, "If any man among you seem to be religious. Pious, or devout. That is, if he does not restrain his tongue, his other evidences of religion are worthless. A man may undoubtedly have many things in his character which seem to be evidences of the existence of religion in his heart, and yet there may be someone thing that shall show that all those evidences are false. Religion is designed to produce an effect on our whole conduct; and if there is anyone thing in reference to which it does not bring us under its control, that one thing may show that all other appearances of piety are worthless."

No matter how great your Christian life is, there may be one little fault that will show that you are less than you appear to be. Years ago, one of our pastors was the outward saint, good preacher, good leader in the church and seemed pious to all that would meet him, unless you were a store clerk that did him wrong, then you would see the outworking of an uncontrolled anger and tongue.

This was always a problem to the man and I'm sure it hindered his ministry at times.

Another leader, that again, was the good preacher of the Word, outwardly pious and always the correct Christian unless you disagreed with him on the sports field. This would show him to be

the typical jock that can't possibly be wrong and he didn't mind telling you so.

Many there are of this sort on the Christian sports field. Some of the Christian softball leagues can't be distinguished from the worldly leagues except by name.

Barnes further mentions that he does not know of any reason that James would have singled out this particular sin, but I think the Holy Spirit moved him to include it for our society. Well, not really though it relates well to us, I'm sure that James had a good reason for setting it up this way.

Barnes ends his comment by saying that "Whatever love, or zeal, or orthodoxy, or gift in preaching or in prayer he may have, this one evil propensity will neutralize it all, and show that there is no true religion at heart."

He seems to say that the person that does not control the tongue is one that is not really spiritual. Not that they are lost, but that they are not living the life that God would have them lead.

I might apply this one step further. The preacher/teacher must control his tongue in the pulpit. He must guard against offending people by his terminology, he must guard against false doctrine, and he must guard against anything that might distract from the Lord Jesus Christ.

9. Unspotted seems to be the criteria. Not a little smeared, not a little faded, not a little dirty, but unspotted. I know about unspotted. When we eat meals at home it is often in the easy chairs, which is more convenient than trying to sit at our small kitchen table. Invariably when I am finished I am most spotted. A nice clean shirt can magically turn into a dirty napkin in a moment when it is part of my attire.

Now, think of me coming to church with that napkin/shirt on - not something I would ever do, yet so many believers come to the Lord with spots on their spiritual clothes as if they were freshly dressed from the clean clothes closet. I might remind you that one of his attributes is not blindness - come only in unspotted condition, or seek forgiveness first so that you are in the appropriate attire.

Isa. 1.16 seems to relate well to our study in this section. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

10. I wish Gill could have been more forthcoming with his comments - NOT - he really blasts the man under discussion here. "But deceiveth his own heart; with his show of religion, and external performances; on which he builds his hopes of salvation; of which he is confident; and so gives himself to a loose way of talking what he pleases: this man's religion is vain; useless, and unprofitable to himself and others; all his preaching, praying, hearing, and attendance on the ordinances will be of no avail to him; and he, notwithstanding these, by his evil tongue, brings a scandal and reproach upon the ways of God, and doctrines of Christ."

I have to wonder what our church in this country would be like if pastors/teachers were more forthcoming in their messages. So many are so afraid of hurting feelings, or stepping on toes, and of making waves that they seldom get specific about sin, about wrong living, and about doctrine.

While in college, a fancy speaker came for a chapel session. He read a verse as a "springboard" to his message and that is all it was. Something to make it seem like a message from the Word rather than what it was, a bunch of fuzzy tales strung together on a wish and a promise that they related.

After chapel the school was abuzz over the great speaker. I got to my next class and the talk was about how great a preacher he was, the place was filled with excitement. I simply asked what the message was about, what text he used and what relationship it had to God. The classroom became very quiet and no one had an answer - they realized that it was a bunch of fluff, and they were calling it great preaching.

All too often in our churches we call fluff preaching, we call boring platitudes the Word, we call many things preaching when they are not. We need the Word preached clearly in the church today, not just the feel good stuff that won't help our spiritual walks one bit.

We were recently in a service and the sermon was a good five or six-point message that was quite appropriate to a new convert that had never been in church before. This was from a guest speaker and I am not saying he was wrong, for he might have thought that is the level he was preaching to, but the kicker was the interim pastor, a friend of the speaker, got up and declared what a great message of meat the congregation had been served. Milk, yes, meat, never.

11. I would like to help you consider how special helping widows and their children might be. Trust me, I have never been a widow, or an orphan, but I think I know a little bit about how they might feel about being helped by the church.

We were living in the Midwest for awhile and I was working for a man that could not give any benefits. One Sunday morning I came down with a kidney stone and in those days it was operation time. I was off work for six weeks and no income. My wife was working, but her income was far from what we needed to make ends meet. We had no medical insurance so the costs were going up quickly.

Our church was very small, but out of that tiny group came some cash, a lot of groceries, and a lot of little things that saved us spending money. They came to our rescue without knowing of our real situation. What a joy it was to see God working in peoples lives as they assisted us in our time of need.

The giver as well as the given to, miss out on great joy from the giver not doing what God would have them do. I trust that you will watch for opportunity to serve your Lord in this manner in the future. He will certainly bless you for your efforts.

12. Deut 14.29 makes it clear that God was interested in the widow and fatherless even in the Old Testament. James calls us to the same standard as the Jews of old - to care for those that can't care for themselves. "And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest."

We have mentioned how difficult this can be in our society, but difficulty does not negate our need to do it.

I will include below a deacon's fund policy I developed for a small church. You might find some items you could use for your churches deacon fund, to bring it into the day in which we live.

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PROPOSED DEACON'S FUND POLICY

In that the Scripture is very clear that we are to be in the custom of assisting other believers in need, and in that the Scripture is very clear that we are to be in the custom of assisting widows and orphans, and in that the Scripture is clear that we are to be in the custom of assisting strangers, we hereby institute this policy to assist us in this ministry to those in need. (See footnote at end of policy for references.)

Each person seeking assistance will be interviewed by two of our deacons/elders and their concurrence will result in help. There is no need to INVESTIGATE a request for help other than to talk with the person involved to gain a sense that the need is valid. (We will trust God to guide us in our decisions and allow Him to deal with those that misuse our ministry.)

1. The fund shall be financed by an offering taken in the missions bowl after the Lord's Table service each month.
2. The fund shall be dispersed under the guidance of the deacons.
3. The funds will be distributed by gift certificate as much as possible or by cash/check if the need is not available via certificates.
4. A grocery closet will be maintained at the church via the donations of the membership. It will contain sealed goods that can be stored for extended periods of time.
5. If the fund is depleted, and a seemingly valid case exists, the deacon and pastor may go before the church for special offering/general fund expenditure for the assistance.
6. A list of social service agencies will be maintained and a copy of that list shall be given to each person requesting assistance. (It is assumed by this policy that much of our tax money goes

to support social services, so we should make use of those services for the assistance of those in need.)

7. A total value for each assistance shall not exceed \$50. (Groceries need only be approximated.)

8. The above is not to say that every person that requests assistance is to be helped. It shall be at the discretion of those talking with the person that may or may not determine to extend help from the church family.

9. If there is a choice between church family members and those outside the church, then the church family's needs should be met first.

10. In keeping with James 2:15, I Jo. 3:17-18, and II Thess 3:6-15 we feel that there is a different relationship between the church and the church member that is in need than between the church and a nonmember. We therefore set forth the following guidelines for the church member in need.

a. It is assumed that most of the needs will be met via the church membership before there is need to go to the deacons' fund. All should feel a responsibility to voluntarily assist in any manner that they can. (Some possible examples: Repair people assist in repairing items needed by the family, doctors/ dentists /other professionals giving minor services, etc.)

b. If there are needs over and above that which is forthcoming from the membership the deacons' fund should assist as possible. Within II Thes. 3:6-15 is the responsibility for the church to assure that the need is real. This is usually quite obvious, but if the obvious dims into a habit, there should be intervention by the pastor/deacons. The person that is failing to do all that they can to resolve their situation should be counseled. If there is no change then the pastor should be brought in to institute steps toward church discipline.

c. If the need is real and the deacons' fund cannot relieve the need, then it should be considered by the pastor and deacons whether the need should be brought before the church for action by the congregation. This step might be eliminated if the congregation were to vote a sum of money be set aside to be given at the discretion and unanimous agreement of the pastor and deacons.

(II Thess 3:6-15 "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. 13 But ye, brethren, be not

weary in well doing. 14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet count [him] not as an enemy, but admonish [him] as a brother.")

FOOTNOTE:

Heb 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Acts 6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

I Tim 5:3 Honour widows that are widows indeed. 4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.

James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, [and] to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Matt 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed [thee]? or thirsty, and gave [thee] drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took [thee] in? or naked, and clothed [thee]? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done [it] unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done [it] unto me.

RESOURCE LIST FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE:

Insert here any nearby social service centers. Most communities have federal, state, county and city services that are funded by tax payers and they should be a resource for the needy. Many cities have centers that have representatives of all these services under one roof.

Nave's topical Bible references for further study: De 15:7-18; Le 25:35-43; Ps 41:1, 112:9; Pr 3:27,28, 11:25, 22:9, 25:21,22, 28:27; Isa 58:6,7,10,11; Eze 18:5,7-9; Mt 5:42, 19:21, 25:35-45; Mr 9:41, 10:21; Lu 3:11, 11:41; Ac 6:1-4, 11:29,30; Ro 15:25-27; 1Co 13:3, 16:1-3; 2Co 8:1-15,24, 9:1-15; Ga 2:10; Php 4:10-18; 1Ti 5:8,16, 6:18; Heb 6:10, 13:16; Jas 2:15,16; 1Jo 3:17.

Chapter eight

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 2.1-4

Constable calls this section "hypocritical religiosity." Sounds about right to me as well.

2:1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, [the Lord] of glory, with respect of persons.

The Net Bible translates this as follows: "My brothers and sisters, do not show prejudice if you possess faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ." Other modern translations read along this line as well.

The thought of respect of persons seems to be an added thought in the newer translations, though the thought is similar. If you are a person of faith do not have prejudice. Wow what a comment for our day as well as the American past. Let's think about prejudice among Christians for a moment.

In Politics: Christian liberals use rhetoric that is fit for the most worldly of persons when talking about conservative Christians as well as conservative lost. This, if not prejudice, is something that will certainly foster prejudice. In my mind they practice what they decry only they use divisive caustic rhetoric with their speech.

We expect this type of rhetoric from the lost, like a recent comment on the news. Ted Kennedy, not a Christian in my estimation by life or tongue, spoke of the COMING Supreme Court judge nominee - none had been made and his rhetoric had already reached the divisive caustic level when he demanded that Bush was going to abuse his power if he nominated anyone but someone that was okay with Kennedy. "Abuse of power" to nominate someone he wants to nominate - a right and requirement of the presidency - not an abuse of power, but quite plain to see is Kennedy's own abuse of power and position in using such terminology for his own political gain.

To speak of the racial prejudice in the church one only has to look at the congregation make up in most churches. Are there any blacks in white churches; are there any whites in black churches? I'd guess the later is a better percentage than the former, and true, a lot of this can be worship preference as well as doctrinal differences, but I have seen blacks in white churches that are separated from the masses or held forth as if trophies of the church's acceptance of all people.

In our checkered past as a nation we saw the church at the forefront of both sides, there were some churches teaching that segregation was Biblical while others that taught that it was not, both believing themselves the more correct and Biblical.

In the more to the point prejudice there is the social ladder status that James will soon get to, or

there is the financial status which is often tied to the social. The poor of the church keep to themselves because they feel inferior to the rich and the rich allow this to continue because they have a hint of the idea that this is true.

I have met some Christians that were from financially secure to rich, which were as common as the poor of their church, even though their homes were quite different. We met a couple in the Midwest years ago that seemed as run of the mill as anyone else in the church. They invited us to dinner after church at their home. When we pulled into the drive we were impressed with the house as it was a little larger than we had expected. That was the front - when we entered the home we found that it was huge and very well appointed. They were just as common in their home, nothing of an air about them. They lived their money well.

As the meal went forward, we were talking about a problem that an organization was having with the tax people in the state. He asked me a lot of questions about the problem and then gave me a slip of paper and told me to have the organization contact him. It turned out that he was head of the state tax department that was giving the people problems.

One phone call on Monday and the problem was dealt with. He was well to do, powerful and yet quite unassuming in his character and manner. What an example of the believers attitude and life in the church whether rich or poor, whether powerful or powerless, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.

Believers seem to have developed another area of prejudice. In the area of education we see in many churches and organizations a bias toward or against certain types of education, against certain schools, or certain doctrinal positions. The bias often leads to hurtful comments and rhetoric which are not needed nor called for.

There are some that believe that the educational system is rotten and corrupt and that Christians should have nothing to do with it. Others feel that the Christian educational system is the best and the lower levels of Christian education are just that - low. Both look up or down their respective noses at each other while filling their own egos with rhetoric fit for the world.

Personally there are times, especially when I am writing that I feel both systems fail their students. I barely passed freshman English in high school and the education I received in Bible college/seminary was quite lacking in the same area. I have struggled with spelling and grammar for many years. I go over my material many times and try and get the spelling/ grammar right. My theology went through several grammar checkers (which had about the same level of efficiency as my own mind) and still I find errors.

I must admit that all of this reading, rereading, grammar checking etc. has given me a greater knowledge of the language, but still I am quite lacking. Our Christian educational system should hold the student to a proper standard so that the education given is truly a proper education. Guess I'm a little prejudiced aren't I?

When teaching I attempted to hold students to a decent standard, but it was not well received. Students balked and complained because they were required to do some work. Some just rejected the thought and scraped by as they could with little effort - to them the system worked, they did not.

There was one particular class that I could not get the students to do the work in, so ultimately I made the requirement that if they did not turn in their assignments by the specified deadline they would receive a zero. Several decided they didn't need the credit so opted for the zeros and failed the class. This was not popular. After I resigned, I was called by the school asking why they had failed. I told the caller and before he was finished it sounded like the students were going to get a passing grade for the class. That is a real education - cry in your milk and someone will feel sorry for you and give into your little tantrum. Guess I might be very prejudice - no, just frustrated with a system that promises an education and settles for something less at times.

There is a real doctrinal prejudice as well. I frequent internet discussion boards and find the rhetoric there quite like the political end of the spectrum. Many have "THE TRUTH" while others can't possibly have the truth because the truth holders have it. The condescension and arrogance spill forth like a tsunami at times. Nothing said is thought out, nor is it ever based on good logic or the Bible - it couldn't possibly because it does not agree with what they hold as truth.

There is a very serious application to this type of prejudice. I find that many people are unable to find churches to attend because, unless they agree 100 percent with the pastor's position, they are treated as lesser people - they do not hold to the truth which pastor holds to, thus I cannot associate with them. The same is true, not only of doctrine, but also of music. If a person likes contemporary music and they are in leadership positions, they seldom allow nor condone any other type of music. The hymn lover is already labeled divisive and against change and thus worthless in the church.

In years past I have had doctrinal differences as well as differences of opinion in music and method, yet all knew that there were differences and the differences did not become divisive. We worked together in the other multitude of areas and furthered the Lord's work greatly. Today, many believers are unchurched due to these problems.

One of the churches where I felt the Lord used me most was a church that had a wide difference in the membership. There was acceptance of one another as a brother or sister and the work of the Lord went forth. Some were doing their thing while others were doing their thing. Separately they were doing as the Lord was leading them. No differences that were cause for problem, just differences that didn't matter.

If we have the same faith, we have the same ultimate goal - reaching the lost for God and worshiping Him. The church today is so splintered that even these two most basic items are often lost in the divisiveness and power brokering in the assembly.

James continues with an illustration of what he is speaking about. The putting of one above another based on dress.

2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

This principle of seating is a Jewish thing from the looks of Prov. 26.6-7 "Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great [men]: 7 For better [it is] that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen."

Now, I know something about this one. In my early college days we were very poor. We had children to cloth, tuition to pay and a junk car to maintain. We were on the barest of menu at the dinner table. We were not starving, but we were not doing well either.

In the area of dress, I had a nice knit sweater that I always wore over a white shirt and tie at church. With the nice dress slacks I thought I was passable. I did wear nice cowboy boots because that is all that I had. I had neither shoes nor even another pair of boots. Barefooted would have been my alternative and I didn't think it would look good with dress slacks. I did not own a suit nor a sport jacket and would have had to stop buying food for several weeks to purchase one so had opted to eat instead.

One day I received a call from one of the men in the church. He explained to me that I had some spiritual problems that he and the pastor wanted to talk to me about. I felt there was something really fishy coming, so questioned him. He would not answer any of my questions, just kept wanting to make an appointment with me to talk about the problems.

Finally since he wasn't going to tell me what the problems were I drove down to the church area and called the pastor from a pay phone and asked to meet him at the church. It was late in the evening, but he agreed to meet.

Now, this pastor is one that seldom wore a suit, and had breath that would derail a freight train. We sat down, not that close together, and began to talk. I told him of my call and asked what my SPIRITUAL problems were.

He beat around the bush awhile then suggested that my dress was lacking for church. He told me that this was the city and that cowboy boots were not appropriate for church wear. He continued that I should wear a suit and that the sweater was totally inadequate if I really wanted to be proper.

I sat there and smiled at him trying to contain my laughter. He was so serious and so smug about

his reporting to me of my spiritual problems. I asked him if that was all, and when he said it was I left the church.

That was the last that was said on the subject and we continued to attend the church, sweater, boots and all. I suppose he did not appreciate it, but I had no choice at the time and we felt the church is where the Lord wanted us to attend. Naturally I was soon asked to teach children in Sunday school rather than the adults. The children met downstairs and I wouldn't be seen - it was so that I could gain more experience however when I talked to the Sunday school superintendent. Again, I thought something was fishy and I quietly asked the pastor if there was a problem with my teaching and off he went again, telling me of my many errors of content in my class.

I had made a comment that the Roman Catholic was a powerful force in many public school systems, which is true and was verifiable at the time. One of the deacons had brought a Roman Catholic to Sunday school with him. I did not know it, nor was the comment offensive to the woman since she joined into the discussion of the class and told me after the class how much she had enjoyed being there. Anyway "class distinctions" do exist in our local churches.

Later on I was given a sport jacket and I wore it most of the time, though I did notice that if I wore it I was asked to assist in gathering the offering, but if I went back to my sweater, I was not asked. Yes, I tried it a number of times just to test my theory. Now, that might be a spiritual problem.

Now, that I finally have had some good years of income I have amassed three suits and some nice shirts and ties and you know what has happened. When I go to church in my suit and tie I am looked down upon as overdressing. Go figure. In fact one day the assistant pastor approached me and said that I was really dressed up. This is after a year or two of seeing me in a suit every Sunday. He said that I looked nice and that I made him feel like a bum. I didn't think any comment was necessary. Yep, that may be another spiritual problem.

James would have made some hay with these people in his illustration database if he were living today. They might well have been his illustration for this principle of not being prejudiced as a believer.

The comparison here is about as drastic as you can get. At one end the finest of fine and at the other end the dirtiest of dirty - even vile. Now, that comparison might relate well to the thought of close Christian fellowship. How do you have a close relationship with a person that is in vile clothing? It is not the easiest thing to do but we should.

It was interesting; recently I saw a news report about a unit in Iraq that had been on patrol for several weeks. The news man mentioned that they did not have a closeness that he had seen in other units. Later in the report he mentioned that they had not washed their clothes in weeks and that they had not been able to shower in over a week. Now, I wonder why they aren't as close a unit as others. How could they be? Their clothing would have been doing the marching for them. They must have been well rested.

It is rather natural to place the better dressed above the rest, for they are usually the higher income people and in some churches the people with money are the leaders. It is the people with money that do the giving, so it is they that often do the decision making as to how the finances are spent. It is also rather natural for the poor to be in the background. Not only might they be pushed there, but often they feel inferior and tend to migrate into the background to stay out of the way.

Both ought to feel just as comfortable in the church as the other. This should be a priority with the church today. We are seeing a widening of the rich - poor gap and we need to assure that gap is not visible in the church. We are all born of the same blood and are brothers and sisters in Christ.

The last phrase is of interest. The American Standard Bible clears up the meaning a little. "Do ye not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" The person is judging good and bad by thinking evil thoughts. They are determining for themselves who are better than the other, a job better left to God.

The implication is this is a self-imposed right to judge - in other words the person has set himself as judge over all that come into the church and to determine where they will sit, which in essence is determining which will be honored and which will not.

When ministering with a Christian organization, we used to have pot lucks. When we were last in line, we would sit with the group. When we would be first in line, we would sit down at a table and when it was over we would be sitting at the table alone. Not that I cared that much, I was usually quite interested in the great food. At the time we were on a very limited budget and our diet was not well versed.

We, more than once would get in line first to see if the thesis was correct. At all times if first we were alone, if last I'd guess they were seeking an inner seat so they wouldn't have to sit with us.

What an arrogant person one must be to try to seat people by their appearance and supposed honor. For that matter, one must wonder at the honored for taking the most honored position.

The question for a church today is to consider whether they are somehow fostering this sort of activity in the church. It might be a topic for the ushers to discuss, though I doubt it is a real problem in most churches.

How else might we apply this passage for our own situation in history?

1. We might consider our "fellowship" activities. Are there free activities as well as those that require a spending of money? We settled into a Sunday school class in a new church and liked the session until they started talking about their upcoming class social. We thought it would be a good time for us to get to know some of the people. This was a short-lived thought as they quickly started talking of the bowling alley that they would meet at for bowling, and then there

would be a pizza feed at the local pizza shop. Since only one of us was working at the time, we decided this wasn't the class for us.

Do the activities require equipment that ALL would have access to? These are some things to think about.

2. Consider how your Sunday school classes are divided. Is there equal opportunity for new comers to make their way into a class that fits their need or are they kept out of some because of the cliques that have formed over the years?

3. How do you take your offerings? Are you doing anything that might make a poor person feel uncomfortable? I have always been partial to the offering plate or box at the back door where people can drop in their giving on the way out of the church.

4. How are the teaching and preaching? Is it on a level where all can understand? How are the illustrations? Do they relate to all classes of people? We heard a sermon and the pastor mentioned he was making over thirty thousand dollars a number of years prior, and he quipped that "Back then thirty thousand dollars was a lot of money." At the door I reminded him that to many people thirty thousand dollars was still a lot of money. At the time we were making much less than his big money.

5. You might consider your church building. Is it too impressive for a poor person to feel comfortable in? We need to have nice buildings to present a good testimony, but impressive is not needed.

We don't need to cater to the poor, but we need to make them comfortable in the church services. A balance is needed. After all we don't want to be so low in character and appearance that the rich feel uncomfortable.

The church should be a safe and comfortable place for all to come and meet with brothers and sisters and share their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was His blood that bought us and He desires that we all feel comfortable with one another.

6. Consideration of your church purpose statement might be good as well. Is there anything within it that would show any prejudice? Is there any way that you could include anything that would assist in your overall purpose not to prejudice?

7. What about your deacon's fund policy. Is there any built in prejudice? Are you shutting some of your church people out, while including others?

I am NOT saying you must be politically correct, I am saying as James, don't be people of faith while determining to be prejudiced against or for anyone. There is an important note there, either for or against - both are prejudice and neither have place within the church.

APPLICATION:

1. "Evil thoughts" is something to consider in your life. Specifically, evil thoughts relating to prejudice, but any evil thought. This text pictures something for us that is a universal truth. If you think it, you will probably also do it sooner or later.

Here we see James illustrate the doing of the thinking. Think an evil thought of prejudice and you will quite possibly act upon that thought by making distinctions between people.

What of your evil thoughts relating to use of your money? What of your evil thoughts relating to eating? What of your evil thoughts about intimate desires? What of your evil thoughts relating to any topic that you want to think about?

Many have had the urge to buy something, the urge may be set aside, but normally the urge rears its head and you think about it some more. Sooner or later, if you don't control the thought you will soon be making a purchase.

Thinking leads to doing. We saw this problem in verse fourteen and fifteen of chapter one. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death."

Key? Don't think - well not that drastic, but don't think about things you ought not to think about - it is well put in Philippians 4.6 "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things. 9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."

Think about the Godly things and do them rather than think on evil things and doing evil.

2. Note should be taken that prejudice or putting one above or below the other is "evil." This is not something that the believer would want to be involved in. The word translated "evil" is the word used in Matthew 6.13 when the Lord was teaching the disciples how to pray. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

A good case could be made that He was referring to the Devil in this passage, but at least it relates to the totality of all that is evil not just a little indiscretion based on favoritism.

Why would anyone do this in the church? What would prompt, say an usher to put the rich looking person in the best seat, or the filthy person elsewhere?

In the case of the rich, money might enter into the equation if the church is in financial problems it would be tempting to give the rich the red carpet service. It might even tempt the pastor to make over the person a little more in the greeting time than he normally would. Not questioning all pastors or all ushers, just saying there might be a temptation.

In the case of the dirty, it would be the first reaction of an usher to avoid seating them all together and let the person seat themselves. Dirty people are not pleasant to deal with - especially in our current society. They may be homeless, they may be diseased, and they may be mental cases that aren't on their meds.

For this reason, be careful of them, but realize the rich can be diseased and mentally unbalanced as well. Be Christian in your dealings with all people and you will not have to worry about what you are doing or not doing.

All, rich, poor, and middle class derive their standing before God via the Lord Jesus Christ and not from those things that they might be able to surround themselves within this life. When you see a believer that is down and dirty, look at them through the eyes of Christ and see a brother to be assisted, not despised.

3. Just what does putting the dirty man under your footstool mean? Jamieson, Fausset and Brown mention that under might better be stated by your footstool or on the ground. The thought being, you must stand, or if you must sit, sit on the ground. Others stick with the "under" - the American Standard translates it "under."

The term is translated about a quarter of the time as "with" which would indicate "by" which the lexicon lists as one of the meanings of the word. By the footstool or sitting on the floor while I sit in a nice chair seems to be the thought of the passage, in my mind.

I can't imagine such a thing going on in our society. This would be a total insult to anyone, even if homeless and in dire poverty. However, I suspect similar things happen from time to time that cause as much insult/embarrassment.

Back in the long hair days of the 60's and 70's Christians took a dim view of the practice of men wearing long hair. Some young men had come to know the Lord and were starting to attend church - a very conservative church. After a very few Sundays the deacons of the church cornered the men and informed them their hair was causing them to be unspiritual and that they needed to remedy their problem. Needless to say, their attendance was short lived.

Barnes suggests that the thought behind (under my footstool) would be that of not even offering a seat in our time. This could well be a good application - walking into a church and not being offered a seat, or even assistance as to where to go.

I don't know how many times we have entered a new church and wandered the premises trying to find out where the Sunday school class was or where the worship service was held. In one church

we wandered the entire length of the building and back without being acknowledged. We wandered right out the front door, past a fair number of people and got into our car and drove off. Not one person offered a hello, or get lost, not even a "can we help you."

We entered a church in the Midwest in time for the morning worship service and found ourselves in a large common area with no idea where the service was to be held. There were two long halls at the end of the common area. We stood while some came and went from one hall to another or one door to another. We noticed a young couple standing by the wall, clearly wondering the same thing that we were. Finally it was clear that we were on our own so I went off exploring. I finally stuck my nose in enough doors to find the sanctuary.

I returned to find my wife still standing and wondering. I told her that I had found the spot and invited the young couple to come with us. We sat down and awaited the service. One older lady came by and said hello. Shortly after the service started they had their usual warm greeting time. We stood with the congregation, and it was obvious that we and the young couple were invisible, so we greeted the young couple and sat down.

After the service there was no hindrance to our retreat to the car, as there was none interested in our presence. This sort of occurrence is not uncommon. We have experienced it a number of times and have talked with a number of people that have experienced similar incidents.

PERSONAL OPINION: The greeting time that has swept the nation, a fad, in my mind, is nothing more than an excuse to tell people you aren't interested in them. There are a few churches that make the greeting time a time to stop and get to know visitors, but most use it as an excuse to say hi and forget the fact that a visitor is present in the congregation.

It has been my observation that normally friendly churches have been transformed into refrigerators by this phenomena of the warm fuzzy culture of Churchianity. Churches where people would stop and say hello and get to know visitors, were transformed into churches where no one talks to visitors before or after services, but are super friendly at the greeting time. Read "super friendly" as getting 20 handshakes and hellos with no one paying attention to anything you say.

We visited a large church in the Midwest that tried to vary its greeting time. The first Sunday was the usual, everyone stand and The next Sunday the pastor told everyone to stand, and then promptly told all the church regulars to sit down. He then told them to look around and see where all the visitors were, followed by a "let's give them a good hello" and they all stood and swarmed the visitors. The following Sunday, he asked only the congregation to stand. He then asked the congregation to look and see who was sitting down and to greet them. The congregation then descended on those that were seated.

Can you imagine sitting in a congregation of several hundred and having all these hands thrust down upon you with all these toothy, smiling faces telling you hello - very quickly and moving on to the next victim? This is not being friendly; this is more like singling out for embarrassment.

Okay, that hobby horse is dead for a while.

4. The term translated "assembly" is the Greek word for "synagogue," not the normal term "ecclesia" which is translated "church" normally. Both have the thought of an assembly rather than the usual thought of a building. There is no real significance to this in the meaning of the passage, but may give us a little insight into the mind of the writer, James.

It seems to show a close affinity of James to the Jewish way of life. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown comment of his hold on the Jewish synagogue, "the apostle who maintained to the latest possible moment the bonds between the Jewish synagogue and the Christian Church."

It would seem that his thinking was similar to that of Paul, that the Jews might turn to their Messiah, and that they would hold forth that tie between Jews and the church for their acceptance. Paul always went to the Jews first in a new area and when they rejected his message he would take it to the Gentiles.

At this time as in all of the early church proceeding, the church preached in the temple areas where it was allowed, trying to reveal the truth of the Messiah to the Jews that would listen. (Acts 2.46; Acts 3.1)

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown take this a little further and state "The people in the Jewish synagogue sat according to their rank, those of the same trade together. The introduction of this custom into Jewish Christian places of worship is here reprobated by James." This may add to the reason that brought James to choose that particular word rather than "ecclesia."

Constable points out that the later Christians used ecclesia, thus James was written in the earlier part of the church's growth. I would say that this is the least that we can come away with in relation to his use of the term he picked.

5. Constable points out that this man had a double mind; he was prejudice while following Christ. The two cannot coexist, thus he is double minded. This was viewed negatively in the first chapter.

Not only is there the mental decision to show partiality, there is the outward act of being prejudicial. A triple header for the price of one.

Beware of sin, for the little small one you decide upon may have far reaching consequences. It may entail more than one act; it may also entail a number of serious consequences.

6. Some suggest that this situation is a court scenario rather than a worship service, though I am not sure I would agree. They site verse six as proof, but that text does not require it. This could well be just a comment of fact, not relating to the specific situation.

7. We have not commented on the use of "of glory" in verse one. "My brethren, have not the faith

of our Lord Jesus Christ, [the Lord] of glory, with respect of persons." He has clearly pointed out He is speaking of Christ, why did he add "of glory" to his comments? "The Lord" is added by the translators, but it is not in the original documents.

Young gives a bit of a twist to the verse by translating it thusly, "My brethren, hold not, in respect of persons, the faith of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ," Since none of the other translations took this twist, I am not sure how valid it is.

Some possibilities:

- a. He calls the readers attention to the "glory" of Christ as a call to remember who it is that we serve. He is our Lord, He is our Jesus, He is our Christ, and He is certainly all glorious.
- b. He might be calling attention to the fact that He is glorious, and we are all His children, be we rich or poor.
- c. He may have just added it as an impact to the importance of who Christ is.
- d. He was just caught up in who he was writing about and wanted to point out the fantasticness of his Lord and Master.

Of these possibles, I would suggest that it probably is the final option. James was known for his prayer life, so he was well aware of how wonderful his God was, and this is just his exclamation of the one that he had chosen to serve with his life.

In closing I would like to relate a story a missionary to Argentina (if memory serves me correctly), told me many years ago. She was sitting by a camp fire talking to some Indians. She was not sharing the Gospel at this point, but was just getting to know the people she wanted to minister to.

Among the people was an old woman dressed in dirty rags. She had some terrible disease that caused her wounds to smell. As the evening wore on the Indians listened and were interested in this white woman. The old woman at one point glared at the missionary and challenged, "If you love me then kiss me. As Mrs. Eggleston left for the evening she walked over to the old woman, kissed her on the cheek and told her that God loved her.

The next night, around the fire, the missionary shared the gospel and she noticed this same old woman sitting there. Of the people that responded the dirty old woman was the first. The love, compassion, and interest of the missionary had its mark on the old woman. She sensed there was something important in what she had to say.

Don't ever prejudge anyone, you have no idea what God's plan for that person is, and you further do not know what God's plan for you in that person's life is.

8. There are two different thoughts as to why we kind of naturally pick the rich over the poor. The positive that they might help the church, they might help us, we have status if we know them, and all sorts of positive things, and then there is the negative. It may relate to the fact that we are covetous, greedy and wanting of something of this person. All of these are wrong even though some of them seem to be good reasons.

9. We tend to assume the poor are lazy, uneducated and worthless, when in fact they may be well educated, and may have been rich and hard working. I have done very little rescue mission work, but have done enough to know many of these men are well educated and have been on top in the past - they have just lost their way somehow.

Indeed, in the work a day world in our society we cannot know the background of a person without talking to them and getting to know them. Many janitors are well educated; they just can't find work and need to support themselves. There are many that have walked away from high profile jobs for a slower, easier life.

We need to take each person we meet at face value and get to know them. All are equal in God's family, there are no rich or poor, there are only children of God. How dare we try to make it different by our favoritism?

I doubt most of us know the impact it would have on some of our less fortunate to be acknowledged as existing. At my college graduation, I noticed a man sitting alone; he was in a rumpled dirty shirt, slacks, no suit coat and NO TIE! As we passed him, I said hello and he was utterly shocked that anyone had acknowledged his presence. The lesser of our society is rather invisible these days - in part due to the homeless problem, the panhandlers etc. that cause problems, but many of them have done nothing wrong other than become less fortunate.

Barnes has a good thought which I would like to conclude with. "Religion does not forbid proper respect to rank, to office, to age, or to distinguished talents and services, though even in such cases it does not require that we should feel that such persons have any peculiar claims to salvation, or that they are not on a level with all others, as sinners before God; it does not forbid that a man who has the means of procuring for himself an eligible pew in a church should be permitted to do so; but it requires that men shall be regarded and treated according to their moral worth, and not according to their external adorning; that all shall be considered as in fact on a level before God, and entitled to the privileges which grow out of the worship of the Creator. A stranger coming into any place of worship, no matter what his rank, dress, or complexion, should be treated with respect, and everything should be done that can be to win his heart to the service of God."

John 7.24 "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

Chapter nine

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 2.5-8

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

"Hearken" is normally translated "hear" and means to hear with understanding. To perceive what is to be heard. Something that is of value, something that is useable, something that should change your life if you hear, perceive and act upon that new knowledge. It is an imperative, a command, something they are to do, not something that they are given a choice about.

"My beloved brethren" is a call to brothers that are very dear to James. One must wonder if he knew some or many of these people personally. If they came from Jerusalem, it is quite possible that he was at the very least, acquainted with them.

"Hath not God chosen the poor" is a question that aims back to the discrimination between the rich and the poor. Why favor the rich, for GOD has chosen the poor? If you are going to favor someone, it would be more sensible to favor the poor - they are closest to God.

How terrible, to go through life favoring the rich and famous in the hope of gain, only to find out you were supposed to favor the poor to get gain - well, favoring is wrong in either case, but the logic is that if you want to favor for gain, wouldn't you favor those closest to the source of gain?

Not only are the poor chosen, but they are rich in faith and they are heirs of the kingdom.

Just what kingdom is in view here? Since they are still waiting for it, it can't be anything past and the only kingdoms left are the millennial kingdom, and the eternal kingdom. Since they are Jews the millennial could apply, though they are under the blood and looking now for eternal things not the earthly kingdom of the prophets.

Some Postmillennialists chafe at this thought. They would cry that any Jew, no matter what, must be in the millennium. This is due to their logic or lack thereof, in how Israel relates to the church. In my mind they do not, they are separate entities and must be dealt with as such.

They would suggest that any Jew would want to be related to the millennium, rather than be taken away from it by the blood. The question I have is that if there is a choice of an earthly kingdom for one thousand years, and going directly into the eternal state, why would anyone want to make a stop over in the lesser of places for a thousand years?

"Which he hath promised to them that love him" is a phrase that teaches a couple of things. Entrance into the eternal kingdom is based on love of God. There is this one prerequisite - love.

This speaks to the easy believe gospel that many preach today. You can hear some words and accept Christ, but there must be a love that is begun at that point or there can be no salvation. The love might be just a seed of what it will blossom into, but love seems to be a requirement.

Secondly, there will be none in the kingdom that do not love God. They won't be forced to submit at some time future, they will love Him as a consequence of what He has done for them.

The question remains, now, that if one has accepted the Lord but does not show love for Him, are they really saved. I would not want to judge anyone, but if there is no love, then that person had better give some serious thought to what he has done in that acceptance of Christ and whether there was truth in it or a sham.

One that loves not God, no matter if they have accepted Christ mentally or not is in danger in my mind, of not reaching eternity with God. Mental assent is not a change of heart by any stretch of truth.

There is one further question from the text. Did God not choose any rich to be in His kingdom? The test is quite explicit - He chose the poor of this world. No, it does not mean that only poor and no rich were chosen. I would assume that He chose the poor in spirit, those that were humble before Him in His foreknowledge.

The rich man will not be humble before God, unless he has a realization of whom he is before God. This probably goes for the arrogant poor man. All must find humility and realize their need of Christ before God can deal with them, and these are those that were chosen.

God picked the poor and made them heirs. We have no business relegating them to the lesser seats. Let's look at some of the people God has chosen.

Paul a persecutor of Christians.

David a sheep herder.

John a fisherman.

Andrew a fisherman.

Simon Peter a fisherman.

Matthew a tax collector.

Stanley Derickson a fisherman and son of a tax collector.

Abraham a seventy year old.

Joshua an army commander.

Gideon a poor person.

Elisha a farmer.

Amos a herdsman.

Micah a simple man.

Ironsides, a bank tellers son.

Billy Graham a farm boy.

D. L. Moody a shoe salesman, a son of a bankrupt mason.

Hudson Taylor a chemist's apprentice.

William Cary a shoemaker.

Billy Sunday a drunken baseball player.

George Beverly Shea an insurance clerk.

6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

"Ye have" indicates James knew the specifics of what he was talking about. There was a definite problem among the recipients, and it would seem that it was widespread since he didn't single out a specific group, but rather seems to address all of them.

How do the rich oppress us today?

a. They make their fortunes from the poor. It has been reported that Oil companies have made tremendous profits off of the latest round of gas price raises, and will continue to do so, since the prices are still high. Profit is the name of the game, but gouging is not.

b. They control politics.

c. They control our thinking to a point through advertising and products they produce.

d. Since they are what they are, and we the poor of the world look up to them in our warped world view they cause us to stumble into covetousness and dissatisfaction with whom and what we are in Christ.

I don't say this to shift the blame from the individual, but it is rather a fact of life, if you live in America today you are probably covetous to one degree or another. If you are on top of your spiritual game then this is not true, but many in our country pass off mediocre spiritual living as the norm and it is far from the Biblical requirement.

Colossians mentions that covetousness is idolatry. I recently saw a very heated debate on an inter-net forum as to whether Paul meant that covetousness was literally idolatry. My view is that he said it was thus he must have literally meant that it was. Many and varied were the spin doctors that attempted to make it say other than what it said. Why? Why were the spin doctors working so hard? The only reason I can think of is that they don't want to give up coveting.

"Despised" is the verb - they have put action to their thoughts. They have thought evil things and given action to the detriment of others. Outward sin might be the more blunt way to put it. This is the dishonoring, the insulting, and the contemptuous actions of a believer toward a poor believer. Neat church to have to attend as a poor person isn't it. Today we can roam from church to church till we find one we can feel comfortable in, but back then there was probably only one or two to go to and that is what you were stuck with.

They despised the poor. How does that translate into our own generation? No American is poor in comparison to some in the third world countries, but how would you class a poor person today - how would you describe them?

Receiving food stamps.

Receiving welfare income.

Receiving house rent subsidies.

Receiving two free meals a day for the children at school.

Receiving free phone service if needed for some reason, be it business or personal.

Receiving kickbacks/refunds from the state and federal government on their income taxes.

Receiving free to low cost medical care.

Receiving free to low cost dental care.

Receiving help with their power bills.

Receiving help with their water and sewer bills.

Receiving free food at the food banks.

Now compare that with some in the third world countries - receiving nothing and starving to death.

Some comparison! We really don't have "poor" in our country today, but relative to the rich we class them as poor.

How do we despise the poor today? Some of us are disgusted with their taking, taking, taking from the system that is financed on our backs. Some of us think they are lazy and ought to go to work. After all, that is a Biblical principle.

These thoughts might even be correct, but for us to take action on these thoughts would be wrong. We ought not to allow their condition to change how we treat them in the church situation. Indeed, maybe we should try to get involved in their lives and see if we can assist them into self reliance. On top of that, they are lost and don't know any better, thus why would we feel we should act against them. On the contrary, we should act for them by bringing them to the Lord.

7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

Back to the rich. It is the rich that blaspheme the name of Christ. How, might be a worthy consideration.

- a. Many verbally, outwardly blaspheming Christ in their everyday language.
- b. They tend not to worry about the poor. They often take advantage of the poor thus taking advantage of Christ's chosen.
- c. They often pollute the celebration of His birth by commercializing it.
- d. They seldom look to the welfare of the poor, fatherless, and widows.
- e. By ridiculing your faith.
- f. By making fun of things religious, as the media has done for many years.

8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

What is the "royal law" referring to? A regal law or the law of the king. Some suggest "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19.18) as the law spoken of here. From the context this is part of the royal law at the very least if not all of it.

The construction seems to me to show that if we obey the law, then the love will be the outworking of our fulfilling, thus indicating that the royal law is actually something else. The

fulfilling is a present tense and the loving is a future tense, again indicating that the loving is an outworking of the fulfilling.

Verse nine seems to me to indicate the law of the Old Testament, or some law that is set and that is to be obeyed, and that will convict us if we don't. At the very least this is a set of commands which cause us to sin, if unfulfilled, as well as have the capability of convicting us of our transgressions.

The Old Testament law certainly fits into this set of requirements. We will see more about this law in the application section.

How do you love that neighbor that sticks a running hose into your open car window and fills your car with water? How do you love that neighbor that knowingly blocks your car in so you can't move it? How do you love that neighbor that knowingly borrows things and does not return them?

Some might suggest that you love them very grudgingly, but I doubt that is what God meant when He moved James to pen the words.

We should love them as if they have done nothing, especially if we ever want to witness to them about the Lord that we serve.

9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

"Sin" is the same word that is used in Romans 5.12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

James uses the present tense here, something that is ongoing. Someone once stated that he had never met the Devil so he probably didn't exist. Someone responded that if you are going the same direction you never meet.

The least you can come away from this text with is that we are definitely not to show respect between persons in the church, and that if we do it is sin. That is enough to cause us to determine not to show prejudice in the church, no matter what law he is speaking about.

APPLICATION:

1. Some suggest we join into every movement to bring equality to all. We should uplift the poor in their struggle. Not sure where you can find Scriptural basis for rebellion to gain equality.

a. Many of these movements are riotous and thus not to be partaken in.

b. Many of these movements want more than equality and at times even want superiority - they want it all.

c. Men of these movements set forth as their precepts things that are not Biblical, thus off limits to the believer.

If a movement is Biblical in all ways, then sure if you have time and feel led, join in and assist, but remember that your first priority is your Lord, then your spouse, then your family and then your employer, after that you contemplate the time you have to commit. Setting any of these below your "movement" work is wrong.

2. Let's look at this law further and see if we can determine for sure what James was talking about. It is evident that his readers knew exactly what he was talking about or he would have explained himself further. Since these were converted Jews, it would be apparent that they knew about the Old Testament law for certain. Whether they knew of the extensive teaching of Christ, would be questionable, since they came to Jerusalem as practicing Jews and were converted and left within a fairly short period of time. Some may have been around to have heard of the teaching of Christ, but we have no indication that they had been strongly indoctrinated in His information.

What law are we speaking of here? The law of love, the royal law, or the Law of Moses? If you notice the context, it seems to speak of the Mosaic Law. Verse eleven speaks of the Ten Commandments.

Barnes comments: "If ye fulfil the royal law. That is, the law which he immediately mentions requiring us to love our neighbour as ourselves. It is called a "royal law," or kingly law, on account of its excellence or nobleness; not because it is ordained by God as a king, but because it has some such prominence and importance among other laws as a king has among other men; that is, it is majestic, noble, worthy of veneration. It is a law which ought to govern and direct us in all our intercourse with men--as a king rules his subjects."

Matthew 19.19 relates to the idea: "19 Honour thy father and [thy] mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Probably the account of the good Samaritan was an illustration of this principle of life (Lu 10:25-37).

Life Application Bible suggests this is John 15.12 "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." They suggest this is the thought of the Lev. 19.18 "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD." They further suggest that this is the basis upon which all personal relationships are to be based. I would tend to agree, but would limit it to Christians, because the lost world would not necessarily accept a Biblical principle as a principle for their lives.

I would refine that thought a little and suggest that Christ was giving a higher application to the love thy neighbor passage of the Old Testament, and gives special emphasis to the love that we are to have for one another as believers.

Christ points this principle to its source in the Law. Matt. 22.37 "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Paul seemed to favor the same line of thinking (not that we should be surprised at that :-) Rom. 13.8 "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." Gal. 5.14 "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

3. The main thought is, why would you give the rich priority over the poor - it is not a logical thing to do. The rich are basically against you, and the poor are the chosen of God.

I don't know, but it seems to me that James is actually speaking to a middle class of folks that might show preference between two other classes. The middle class ought to identify better with the poor than with the rich.

In today's society we have a shrinking middle class and most are headed toward the poor class rather than the rich class, so logically, even today it is wiser to favor the poor if you are going to favor, but James is clear we ought not to favor either way.

4. Constable makes the basic point that if Christ has given the poor great benefit, why should we deny any benefit in the church to the poor. You just can't argue with that point - it is plain truth and such a simple truth, that many must have been missing it among those that James was writing to - probably many in our own day are missing the same truth.

5. It would be easy to concentrate on doing for the poor that we are showing partiality to them and not the rich. This ought not to be true either. The thought isn't one over the other, it is equality for all.

It is evident in the New Testament that it is hard for a rich person to see past their riches to see the need they have for Christ, yet that need is there and deserves to be met if they respond to the Gospel.

The thought of witnessing to the rich is daunting to most. Witnessing in general is daunting to most, but to approach someone of means seems to be even more difficult for most of us.

Years ago I was told of a television repairman that worked only in Hollywood, and only serviced rich people's televisions. He did this not only because of a desire to service them, but also he felt a call to witness to them.

He drove a Cadillac to the home, carried his tools and equipment into the house in very nice leather cases. He would carefully remove items from the TV set and place them elsewhere, then take out a fine piece of heavy velvet to cover the top of the set.

After his work was done, he made it a habit as he put away his tools and replaced items on the top of the set, to share the gospel with his customer. If the person objected he would stop, but most allowed him to continue. This was his calling - to minister to rich people in the hope that he could share his Lord with them.

We need to treat everyone equally.

6. I might suggest one application to the above truth in today's church. Pastors that institute contemporary music without discussing it with the congregation are in fact showing partiality to those that want this new music. To stop singing hymns that many appreciate and desire is to shun part of the congregation. To tell them they are obstructionists, or old fogies, or a number of other names, is also showing partiality and ought not to be done in the church in any age.

Chapter ten

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 2.10-14

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one [point], he is guilty of all.

The absolute key to the Law and understanding it. The law is unforgiving. The law is absolute. The law is unkeepable. Yet, people constantly are trying to do so.

The proof that it is unkeepable and that it is unforgiving is the sacrificial system that went with the law. The sacrifices were to bring the sinner back to God when the sinner sinned, or broke the law.

If you don't understand these two principles relating to the law you need to read the Bible more carefully, for James has made it quite clear without sugar coating it. If you offend in any point, no matter how minute, you are guilty of all and need to sacrifice for your error.

Some seem to use this truth as a club. If you break any of the law then you have failed, and they tend to leave the sinner in his sin rather than share the grace of God via the Gospel of Christ. How terrible to condemn the sinner to hell without showing him the grace side of that judging God they one day will face.

James is speaking of a future keeping and offending, not something that is present, nor an activity that is going on necessarily among the brethren. He is saying IF you attempt to keep the whole law and violate it in one point. Remember. This is the context of showing partiality to the rich. Even if you keep the whole law, if you show partiality, you are guilty of the entire law.

Now, there is a side question here. Is James saying if you show partiality you have done no greater sin than murder, have you indeed made yourself the same before God as a murderer, or an idolater, or an adulterer? This seems to be the implication, if you break a small part, then you are guilty of breaking it all. In other words, there isn't a bunch of laws, there is one law, and the one law is to be obeyed, in all of its little intricacies.

Today, in America, the Federal and state governments, not to leave out county and city governments have created a massive amount of little fine pointed laws to do what they want to accomplish in society. Example, if you kill someone, you will likely be charged with murder, illegal use of a firearm, disturbing the peace, attempted murder, assault with a deadly weapon, restriction of liberties, and possibly disturbing the peace, illegal use of a deadly weapon, and if it is someone of another race you will be open to charges on federal/state racial laws. We have laws for everything; you can do nothing without breaking someone's laws.

These are laws, plural, while God has set forth one law, a single all-encompassing law with many

sub points. Break one and you are guilty of all.

When I was in the service the order went out that there would be a big inspection. The order included a warning; anyone that did not pass inspection would not go on liberty that weekend. The inspection came. One man had one dirty shoe, another had dirty pants, and another had poorly polished shoes. The three stayed aboard a ship that weekend. Either the whole man passed, or he didn't pass. One error and it was failure. That is the way of God's law.

11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

(See Ex.20.13-14 and Deut. 5.17-18 for the basis of his comments. See also Matt. 5.19 "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." and Gal.5.3 "For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.")

This is kind of like sailing through a red light at the proper speed limit. The fact that you were not speeding does not forgive the running of a red light (as many today must think :-)

Here, James supports what I have just stated. In a sense we in America have one law, we call it big brother, that totality of government that we must answer to. We are moving toward God's concept of one law in America. As my illustration pictures, if you are guilty of one, you are guilty of many, it is not hard to jump to the end result that littering will one day be considered the same as murder. Some environmentalists might suggest this now. Killing and/or abusing animals carry about the same sentence as some murders.

The emphasis seems to be placed on God's statement of right and wrong. He has declared many things as off limits, thus one or the other matters little, failing in one is failing in all. Killing someone fails God, committing adultery fails God, as does a single lie - all fail God and His expectation for us.

Can you see a better indication in Scripture of our need to be totally pure - other than when we are told to be holy because God is holy? Purity of the individual is the standard set as it is for the church.

Think of the implications of this for the one that attempts to keep the law including worshipping on the Sabbath (Saturday). If you miss one week of church have you broken the entire law? It would seem that you have and that you are guilty of all.

There are those today that take one attribute of God or one command and make that their life's work. This is wrong. We need to take God in His totality and serve Him in all that He is, not just one part of Him.

Paul, in I Corinthians, speaks of the importance of love but the whole book is not about love. There are those today that stress love to the ignoring of God's judicial side, His retribution side, and His varied other sides.

Others take Christ's interest in the social and physical side of people and exclude all other parts. They stress the social doing, rather than the gospel telling. The whole is needed.

12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

"So speak ye" calls every believer to watch their speech, especially to the brethren. We will be judged by the law of liberty, thus we need to speak as though we know the hammer is raised over our head and ready to fall if we speak unwisely.

Eph. 4.29 "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

If, as we have shown before, the law of liberty is that revealed will of God, then we know that we are free or at liberty to do anything that we want, but here we are shown that some of that freedom will be judged if it is incorrectly used freedom.

We are free to show partiality, but we will be held accountable for doing so. We can practice equality among all and we will be rewarded for our good works. We can speak and do anything we want, but we shall be judged one day yet future.

The speaking and doing are imperatives, or commands, if you will. While we are saying and doing, we are to do it correctly. The saying and doing are not options for life, but commands for life. It is of interest that the judging is also a present tense which means we will be judged along the way as we are saying and doing.

Many speak of the judgment seat of Christ and the future date of that occurrence and well it probably is, but in some manner tabs are being set as we go along the way - God is keeping up with how we are saying and doing. That ought to scare the sloppy living believer - to know that God is watching on a day to day basis and keeping track of how they are doing and that tracking is resulting in continuing judgment.

I don't know the effect of this ongoing judging, but what if, as we are living poorly, we are being judged and as time goes on there is no change in our lives - will God begin to bring changes into our lives relating to how He is judging us?

This probably relates, in part, to the chastisement of the believer mentioned in Hebrews twelve. It is clear that an erring child of God is chastised for their inappropriate life.

It also probably relates to the fact of John fifteen, where it seems clear that an unfruitful branch is removed - not destroyed, but removed. The clear indication is that an unfruitful believer is open

to removal from this life rather than be allowed to damage the whole.

Many teach that you only need to take Jesus on and you are in - true, but there are true ramifications to not moving from the point of salvation onto a righteous way of life filled, with proper actions and good works.

Only believers are subject to this law, all others will be judged by the law that they failed to respond to. All are condemned by the law, but all can be commuted by Christ.

13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

I have to believe that this is one of the lines of thinking that Hatlo's comic strip was based on. This text speaks to the believer, while Hatlo's strip was based on those that are in hell. If you are not knowledgeable of this old cartoon, it was a one frame cartoon in which the person in hell is comically portrayed as being tormented according to the way he lived his life. I believe it was entitled Hatlo's Inferno, but memory is foggy about things that far back. At any rate one that lived a life of being nasty to people was tormented by people being nasty to them for eternity, according to the strip.

Some passages that relate to this thought of us being judged or treated as we speak and to, and do for others are:

Mark 10.31 "But many [that are] first shall be last; and the last first."

Matthew 5.7 "Blessed [are] the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

The Lord was clear that we are not to return bad action for bad action, but rather be forgiving as long as one continues to be wronged, even if the other person does not seek forgiveness.

Matthew 18.21-22 "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? 22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

14 What [doth it] profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

This text is used often to prove that the believer must work to keep their salvation. The clear indication of those that incorrectly use this verse is that if you have no works you can't be saved by faith alone.

I have stated many times that I like the arm twisting that is available to those that teach this way. They can look to a person's works and tell them clearly that if they don't do more works that they are on their way to hell - that will move many to more works.

However, this is incorrect application of the verse and a wrong concept of why we should have good works. Good works should result from a commitment to serve and love God. It is a labor of love, not a labor of fear.

The term "profit" can also be translated "advantage." Both words indicate a gain or advantage. James asks if there is any profit to a person that has faith, but no works. Clearly there is no advantage to the person if faith is all he has. The advantage of works on top of faith is the reward and pleasure of God.

The verse is clear to me, that if a person SAYS he has faith, but has no works there is no evidence of his salvation. Faith produces salvation, but salvation normally produces works. Saying you have faith means nothing normally, but if your works are clearly present then they will believe you have the faith.

This is why so many believers, when looking at a "believer" - one that says they are a believer, but has no works - wonder at the "salvation" of the professor. If there were good works, the professed faith would be more believable.

James poses a question. Can faith alone save a person? That is a man professing faith, but having no works - can faith save him? Since this is a professed faith - faith that may or may not exist, most likely not, due to there not being any works - can that kind of faith (false faith) save a man? No is the only answer available.

We will see in the next section that James illustrates this quite clearly. Let's just read it for now.

15 "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be [ye] warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what [doth it] profit? 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."

It is rather akin to the big bully that comes forth saying he is strong and can whip anyone. At that point his strength profit him nothing, but if he takes on a person or two and proves his strength, then his strength profiteth in that some will fear him.

When I was in grade school we were about to go in for school and I turned and ran into a big kid on a bike. I was a skinny, sickly kid and he was big, older and strong, according to him. He cut his hand on a fancy hand guard on his bike - not sure what good a hand guard is if it cuts your hand, well that is the commercial world for you - anyway, he was hollering at the top of his voice that he was going to beat me to a pulp and that he was going to really hurt me like I had hurt him.

All day in school I was planning my escape plans. I had several plans depending on where he was when I left school. As I tore out of the school, I could not see him, but ran to my bike and was pedaling with fear. I took the most direct route home, and surprise - I didn't see a trace of the kid.

My relief was grand when I rolled into our drive way. His strength and his warnings, and his threats seemed quite fallow.

The Net Bible states that the construction of the sentence is that a negative response is expected from this question, which adds further weight to our explanation of the passage.

APPLICATION:

1. I would like to digress a moment. This context is based on the wrong concept of showing partiality in the church. This thought of partiality is alive and well today in our churches. We attended a Baptist church in Denver years ago and were introduced just after the group of Baptist Bible college students was introduced. I also was a student at the school, just not introduced as such. After church the students were mobbed and we left the church with not one person speaking to us.

In another church we had been attending Sunday school and church for a couple of months and had not been recognized in any way by anyone. Finally the rumor mill went into action full steam and they found, through the gossip vine, that I was the new manager of a large auto parts store in town (Which was not true.) In both the Sunday school and the worship service we were introduced and asked to stand. In both services both before and after we were mobbed with welcomes and congratulations. We spent a lot of time explaining that the gossip was incorrect and that I was a television repairman for Montgomery Ward. The next Sunday it was back to normal, no one speaking to us. I guess that is what we get for proving the rumor mill incorrect.

I trust enough has been said, so that you will treat all new comers and church members in the same manner. It is very important to God that you do, and it will make your church into a refuge for all comers, not just the few that you feel belong. It is Christ's church, and all belong, not just a few - all the redeemed should be acceptable in any church of like faith.

2. We have spoken of good works. There are some that would work their way to heaven and there are those that would work like mad to keep the salvation that they have through grace. Now, both are doing good works for the wrong reason, thus they are incorrect works. These works will have nothing to do with their reward, in that they were done for the wrong reason.

How sad, to go through life working to please God yet finding that you have not done so, that you have instead done all this work for no reason at all. The moral to this story is to be doing good works, but be sure you are doing them for the right reason - to please God, and done out of love for Him.

3. Barnes makes the point that no matter how righteous you may be, your good, cannot outweigh the action of one sin. The good cannot count for or against sin. Telling the truth your entire life yet telling one lie on the witness stand is not an equal equation. One lie makes you a liar and guilty of the whole law, and no matter how often you have told the truth, the telling cannot outweigh the one lie.

So it is in marriage. Some men think falling into one act of adultery is not so bad because they have been faithful before and since. Ask some wives how they feel about that faulty thinking. One act of adultery makes you unfaithful, untrustworthy, and suspect in all areas of life. Those twenty years of faithfulness may relate to the wife trying to work things out but I can pretty much guarantee that it will make little effect on the hurt, the pain, and the disgust she has for the one act.

So, it is with those that work in the hope of doing enough good to get into heaven. They have failed in the one point of accepting the work of Christ, thus their good is for naught. All the good in the world cannot outweigh the rejection of Christ's work on the cross.

4. Constable lists three interpretations for verse fourteen. One is that of the Armenian that sees this as a saved person that has fallen away. The next thought would be that the person is a professing Christian only. The third view which is Constable's is that the person is saved, and not living correctly, or that the person is not saved.

That is kind of what is called covering your bases - one or the other is true. This is the correct position in my mind as well, so call me a fence rider.

5. Gill makes an interesting observation. He comments that Adam, before the fall had the ability to keep the whole law, but after the fall, he had lost that ability. True the Law had not been given, but in the definition we are using here, that the law is God's will, Gill's observation is true, although it is rather mute as a point. The reason being is that Adam's knowledge of God's will was to not eat of the one tree. Nothing else was on the agenda, other than tending the garden and his wife, which would have been natural. As long as the fall had not occurred, he was able to keep the law - yes, not eating of the tree - actually not much different than the Old Testament saint, keep the whole law and you keep the law - the Old Testament saint just had a lot more sub points than Adam.

6. The Life Application Bible notes tell us that in the time James was sharing these thoughts with the readers that the Jewish theologian would disagree with him. They would have broken down the law into light and heavy laws. Some less important and others more important.

This dichotomy in thinking is not all that lacking in our own church society today. We tend to view adultery, murder and the like as the heavy or biggies, while those little sins of the personal life are less weighty and would be the lighter sins.

I'm told that some Holiness folks that believe that they are living life perfectly, without sin, achieve this state by believing that not all imperfections are sin. The little stuff isn't sin, only adultery, murder etc. Thus, they live perfect lives. Very convenient to adapt wrong so easily to prove your doctrine.

The sins of the mind/heart especially are light - so light that many believers today don't even consider them sin, but just the way they are built. God calls it all sin and it all breaks His will no

matter how "small."

They, further suggest that the Christian life is a lifestyle that you must adopt, that the life of purity is something that must be an integrated part of whom we are as believers.

Doctors and experts over the past few years have stated that physical weight problems can only be controlled long term by changing your life style. The permanent changes are required to loose weight and to keep it off. So, the spiritual life is a taking away of sin and keeping it away. The believer must cleanse themselves and assure that they stay that way.

7. The Life Application Bible further notes that a sin against a person, such as showing favoritism, is actually a sin against God. It is His will you thwart by slighting the person.

The "What would Jesus do" fad fits well in the reverse, though no one speaks of it. What would Jesus not do? This is just as valid a question. When you consider your relations with other people, ask these questions for guidance in handling the situation.

When we put sin in the context of offending God, it becomes a little more difficult to rationalize our actions.

8. The Life Application Bible makes the comment that when it comes judgment time, that God's mercy will win out against His judgment. They further relate that this is due to His character.

What do you think of that line of thought?

I reject the thought in that His mercy is part of His character and His judgment is part of His character. By the nature of these facts neither can win over the other. Judgment deals with judging facts justly. Mercy is about showing mercy. He shows His mercy by offering salvation, but He will judge those that reject salvation.

To accept the statement from the Life Application Bible, we would have to conclude that the Christ rejecter standing before God for the final judgment will be given mercy and be saved from hell because God's judgment cannot win over His mercy. This line of thought is counter productive to common reason as well as against the teaching of the Word - well not to mention that it is against another of his attributes - TRUTH.

9. Verse fourteen is the substance of a large debate in Christianity today - not the magazine. There is a large discussion whether Lordship is required for salvation. Lordship boils down to the idea of a believer having good works or not. One that has good works has made Christ Lord of his/her life. Someone that has no works cannot have Christ as Lord.

They question the salvation of anyone that has not made Christ Lord of their life and is consistently portraying that commitment through good works.

I believe this is a valid question. Though we might question one's salvation if they have no good works, we should never judge them as lost, and condemn them as such. That is for the Creator, not the created. To question the person's salvation and to be concerned about their status before God is normal and good - it gives action to our concerns for the person.

10. Some might suggest, since if we break one point of the law we have broken all, why should we worry about it after we have sinned that first time. A fairly logical conclusion, but it is not God's conclusion. It is for this very reason that we must continue to try to maintain a pure and holy life.

From the looks of the church in general, we have adopted this polluted thinking, for purity and holiness are far from most people's consideration today in the church.

There are many issues before the church today relating to moral judgment, and the variety of reaction to immorality is disappointing at best. There are some that take a stand against immorality, while others seem to embrace it.

Chapter eleven

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 2.15-20

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

This verse is quite clear, if a brother or sister is naked or destitute - nothing lacking in clarity here. James sets the stage for action based on this situation.

He has made it quite clear that he is speaking of a believer that is in trouble. Years ago we heard some hollering in the street outside our home. I looked out and there was a black woman walking down the street nude. She was screaming at a man that was walking with her. She stopped in front of our house and was continuing her screaming.

I was on the phone with the 911 operator telling the woman that we had a naked black woman in the middle of the street. I guess I wasn't clear because the operator asked "Well, what does she look like, can you describe her?" I told the operator that she was naked and that if she would just send an officer out that I was sure he could recognize her.

Clarity is the key unless you are speaking to someone that has fog in their ears.

James is clear. He wants specific action for the destitute believer - he is using this as a negative illustration, but the thought is when you see a needy believer, take care of that need, don't send them away lacking. The term naked used here is just that, without clothes. It can describe the human body, or someone with just undergarments on. The thought of the verse is also clear that the person is destitute by no action of his own.

This can be important in this context of helping those that are in need - "need" is the key. I am not sure that help is the real need when someone is destitute by their own action - depends on what they are doing to correct their situation.

"Destitute" is a word that can be translated "lacking" or "wanting." It is used as lack in James 1.5 "If any of you lack wisdom," If you are naked, you are most likely lacking, but the lacking is probably the cause of the nakedness.

16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be [ye] warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what [doth it] profit?

I heard a pastor in a chapel session share that one day one of his church members came to his office and told him a long story of problems, and they had increased on that day, when the family car motor failed completely. The man was in desperate need of a car to keep plugging away at his problems through his job.

The pastor was moved, and asked the man if they could pray together about the problem, fully thinking the man would then leave. As the pastor began to pray, all he could think about was the extra car his family owned. It was sitting, waiting to be used. As his prayer went on, he interrupted himself, and told the man that it was not needed that they pray for a car, because it had already been provided. The pastor gave the man the car and the pastor went back to work knowing that he had served God already that day.

This verse illustrates the faith without works. If someone has a need and you bless them and send them away without help, what profit is there? Likewise, if you have faith without works, what profit is there?

When I was in grade school, if I walked an extra four blocks, I could go to the tiny little grocery store that was in the neighborhood. At lunch when I was leaving for school I would stop at the door and ask my dad for a dime. Sometimes he would give me one, other times there was "no profit" because he would send me away with only a goodbye.

On the destitute person's part, can you imagine the damage to that person when they would come to someone for help and be turned away with a blessing? I have been in this situation and it hurts deeply to be turned away from another believer with the ability to assist but only will send you away with a blessing. How cold those people seem, and how damaged the destitute become when faced with this in an ongoing fashion.

This is why we need to be very sensitive to people in our own time that come to us asking for assistance. When there are so many panhandlers, and scam artists, it is hard to trust anyone that comes looking with their hand out. We need to assist those in need, but we should take care, not to be scammed - a hard situation.

One Sunday morning a young couple with two children came to our church. As the pastor spoke to them, the man finally asked to talk to the pastor alone. He told the pastor that they were having a very hard time and that he would like the church to give them a hand.

The couple knew the staff at a sister church nearby and knew of other pastors in the area so the pastor and deacon opted to give them a check for fifty dollars.

That week the pastor and deacon went to visit the couple. When the man opened the door and saw the pastor and deacon he shut the door and hollered at them to go away. A fifty dollar learning lesson. There was no way that the pastor and deacon could have known this was a scammer, but God asks us to assist, we need to do that as the priority. If we are taken, God will deal with the person one day future.

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

The logical conclusion is that if there are no works, there may not be saving faith, even though the person proclaims it most heartily.

I became involved in a discussion on an internet board with a man that taught baptismal regeneration - that doctrine that tells the person that they must be baptized to be saved. The discussion went on for days, back and forth, and we finally arrived at a point at which I could not move him from his view. He was so close to the Biblical view, but he would not let go of his need for baptism.

A day or two went by and I thought the discussion was over. Finally I received a note from the man saying that he had come to believe that if there is saving faith, that the person will be baptized, which I would agree with, and that this baptism would be the final act of a saving faith.

The point is not that he changed his mind, it was that he clarified his belief and realized that the act of baptism was not salvific, but an act of obedience. We agreed from that point on.

What point would faith be if there was no obedience to baptism? Little, it would indicate that the faith is not of the type that leads to salvation.

This truth from James is so very important to the person that suggests that they are saved. If they are saved, then there will be good works coming from that saving faith. It is important for pastors and teachers to know this as well - now do you see the importance of getting to know your people? If you don't know them, you will not know if they have good works or not, and if you don't know this then you must assume their professed faith is true.

We need to know a persons' status with God to minister to them properly - know their works! Not only should we know if there are works, we need to know if they are works for good or evil. Faith with evil works is not the desired outcome either.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

Simple straightforward statement of fact. If you say you have faith, then show it to me by your works. Works are the proof of a persons' faith. No works and the truth of faith should be suspect.

The idea of works is rather general but seems to dwell on the doing of something. If the person is not in the business of doing, then the faith is suspect. What does, "doing" mean in the Christian life?

I am not sure I can describe it since it is so general. It is the doing of anything that furthers the cause of Christ. Today, we have a lot of doing that I wonder at times if it is really doing for Christ. We've seen athletes doing their prayers and kneeling on the field - is that doing? I don't really know what is in their heart, but at times it seems quite ritualistic and a bit of grandstanding. "Okay, here I am Lord, I'm praying in front of these people, now give me another touchdown!"

I don't wish to detract from some honest expressions of faith, but the verse speaks to the doing of

things, rather than the showing of things. Doing good works in the neighborhood would be much more appropriate in my mind. The teaching of Sunday school, the ushering, the cleaning at the church, the witnessing etc. would be more appropriate in my mind.

The proof isn't in the pudding, but in the doing when it comes to faith.

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

A standard verse to those today that state that they believe in God. The detractor will obviously say that even the devils believe. This is a truth that we need to deal with. Satan and his workers believe in God, for they have seen Him and know Him, but they do not follow Him. They have rejected His authority over them.

They even fear and tremble at His presence, but they do not submit.

Just as belief in God is not sufficient, neither is faith alone. The two are the same. Belief in God without submission to His gospel is just as dead as faith without works and is about the same thing.

"Believe" in this verse is a close relative of "faith" in the passage. Both have the similar thought. Faith is actually to believe in something. If I have faith in the dollar, I believe that it is sound in the economic market.

The word "tremble" is the only use of the word in the New Testament. It can relate to bristled hair, or great fear. The interesting part of the word usage is that this is a present tense. The fallen angels are in a constant state of trembling, of being uneasy, of being ragged, of being off center. Why? Because they know their end and have no idea when that end will come. Can you imagine being in such a state now for six thousand or so years? They must have a miserable existence while they wait for the hammer to fall and be cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20.10 shows the Devil being cast into the lake of fire, and Jude 1.6 states some of the fallen angels are being kept until the judgment - I assume they will be cast into the lake of fire along with the Devil and the lost of all generations.)

The word "devils" speaks of evil spirits, or spirits that are lesser than God and more powerful than man. These would be the fallen angels that know full well what God is and that He does exist. No question in their mind that He exists, and there can be not question in their mind that they are in trouble with the one they have rejected.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

Another statement of clear fact. Faith without works is dead. Not partially alive, not kind of alive, but dead - no life. The term "dead" is just that - dead, it is the word used of a person dropping dead. The lexicon states it is "one that has breathed their last."

So, we might want to assure that the works are present in our lives. Not that we have to worry about enough works, but that we have the motivation of love for our Lord that moves us to do good things for Him.

Barnes tends to use plain words in relation to "vain man" when he says, "O vain man. The reference by this language is to a man who held an opinion that could not be defended. The word "vain" used here, (kenov,) means properly empty, as opposed to full--as empty hands, having nothing in them; then fruitless, or without utility or success; then false, fallacious. The meaning here, properly, would be "empty," in the sense of being void of understanding; and this would be a mild and gentle way of saying of one that he was foolish, or that he to maintained an argument that was without sense."

The implication is that if you think faith without works is dead you are empty - in our society might I suggest that they are empty headed? Seems a good translation.

Recently there was a man on television that was justifying his affair as being an old relationship concept that has been around for centuries. It is called poly-fidelity. It is being with only two women at once and being committed to only them. As he talked, he was appearing to be empty-headed and arrogant. Arrogant because he was the superior intellect and all that were listening were a little retarded because they weren't grasping and embracing his line of baloney. He was empty of understanding for his wife, he was empty of truth and he was empty in his rhetoric.

APPLICATION:

1. Good works are second nature to the believer. They are foreign to the lost person. Thus the question that must be asked is this. If a person has a lot of good works, is that person saved? My father was always doing nice things for people. Even though he was poor, crippled and had no future, he was always doing for others.

I talked to him about spiritual things toward the end of his life and he mentioned that he had always done a lot of good works in the hope that he would be allowed into heaven. This in itself is not the ticket to heaven as I explained to Him. We must enter heaven via the name of Christ, not our works, but once on our way to heaven we will certainly do good works.

He understood the Gospel, but I do not know if he had accepted the work of Christ or not. The works of Christ are our basis of salvation, our works for Him are our basis for reward - not that reward is the motivation for them.

There are some that view witnessing/visitation as the total basis of good works. This is not so. Witness is an important part of the believers' life, but it is not the only good work. Anything that you do that furthers the church or good, are good works. It can be teaching, mission work, pastoring, cleaning the church, mowing the church lawn or doing good for one of the poor in the neighborhood. Good works of any sort are right and proper for the believer.

2. We might deviate for a moment and consider James style of delivery. Notice that he, as did the Lord Himself, uses illustrations to bring home a point. There are some in our today's church that decry illustrations and stories as a waste of the congregation's time.

They submit that the Word of God will stand on its own. Yes, the Word stands on its own, but the Lord and other Biblical writers used the illustration to give emphasis to the point. Illustrations are not wrong; they only assist the hearer in their understanding and comprehension.

There is that possibility that illustrations can go far past their intended use. I've heard speakers use a verse as their "jumping off point" and they never again return to the Word. They simply string one story into the other. This is often called good preaching by those listeners with itching ears.

A well-placed illustration is great for the understanding, but a string of illustrations will tax the patience of the person that came to hear the Word preached.

3. In our time we often hear of the famines around the world and I usually find these accounts of interest, not that I am interested in suffering, but in the fact that we seldom hear of these tragedies in time to give any real assistance. Usually when the American public hears of trouble it is after thousands have died and assistance is too late for many of those that are still alive.

The media almost seems to create their own news by sitting on the news till it is a catastrophe then they will report so they can gain their precious ratings.

When famines break out why isn't the United Nations on the spot to start calling for food and assistance so the network can be up and running before thousands are dead and near death?

4. Constable gives a good application to this thought of blessing someone in need and then sending them away and the thought of faith without works. He agrees that true faith will bring about works, but he goes a step further. He says if you have a personal belief on specific items, then that should produce works in that area of faith. His example was that of believing that abortion is wrong. That belief should cause us to work against abortion. Not, necessarily to go out and march, but we ought to be vocal against it at every opportunity, we should give to support the repeal of legislation that is counter to that belief and that faith should produce other works.

You can draw your own application from this. If you believe in marriage being for a man and woman, then act on that belief, if you believe that a believer's responsibility is to witness, then get to it, if you believe that we should give to the ministry of our church, then get into your billfold and do so.

This is a very practical passage and we should make it practical to our own lives. If you have a firm conviction, then act upon it and get busy doing something about it.

5. Just a challenge to your normal hearing of deputation requests from missionaries. These folks are out doing the work of the Lord and have need of assistance from the brethren. Often we hear the requests, but don't really consider how God might have us relate to those requests. Often I believe pastors say no before they consider what God might be able to do from their congregation.

Next time you hear a request, consider it in light of this passage. You may still have to turn them away without an assist, but you will have given the request due consideration, rather than just brushing it aside out of hand.

We were on deputation for five years and never once did a pastor say that if we came to present our ministry that his church would consider supporting us. Almost every time we were told ahead of time that there would be no support forthcoming. The Lord did bless and raise up some support from those churches through individuals, so the Lord did over-ride the matter of factness given us.

I have received two requests as an individual recently that I have not taken lightly. I can't, in all sincerity, afford to give further, but feel it is my obligation to give due consideration.

6. Life Application Bible suggests that a person can have a belief of Jesus, without a belief in Jesus. The indication being that you can know of Christ, you can know facts relating to Him and His ministry, and you can know that He existed, but that does not mean that you have a personal belief in Him to save your soul.

I tend to agree, but question, if there is no faith "in" how can there be a proper faith "of" the facts relating to Him. It seems difficult to think of a situation where someone could know all the facts about Him without moving to the understanding of His significance in life.

This may be an important consideration for the church and their ability to reach the lost. How do we assure the person moves from that belief about Him to the belief in Him? Do we even think about it in our ministries today? Often, I fear, people just blurt out the gospel and knowledge and assume the person is accepting the facts and then moving to application of the facts to their life.

I suspect this is the reason many stress discipleship - founding the new convert in the basic doctrines of the church - with this time spent with the person we will see if they have really grasped the facts in a personal way.

7. Possibly we should note that faith without works does not mean that works are required in all situations. There may be situations like the thief on the cross beside the Lord. He had no time for doing of good works other than his verbal confession. There might be a deathbed situation where a person accepts the Lord, but later dies.

We need to use some common sense in our understanding of these doctrines.

8. I am not one for social programs, but there is a real need to address these situations in today's church. Many in our country are in trouble financially. It may be due to their poor decisions, but that does not matter when they view their current situation.

How are some ways the church can minister to people that are in need?

- a. Have financial training classes so that you will stop the cycle of problems in your church. Offer the classes to new members now and then. Teach retirement classes for the seniors. Anything that can help the congregation to be financially responsible.
- b. Have a healthy deacon's fund to assist in the short term.
- c. Have a good knowledge of the government social programs that are available to the citizen in your area.
- d. Have a food closet for folks to use as they have "need."
- e. Have a clothes exchange program where you can donate unused items and pickup items that are needed. This might even include used - working - electronics and tools etc., anything that a person might need but not be able to afford.
- f. Have a deacon board that divides the congregation among the deacons and gives them the task of keeping in touch with their charges so that needs might be discovered and met.
- g. Sermons on financial and social responsibilities might be needed to properly educate the congregation.

There are many other ways we can minister to members if we just put our minds to it. "Need" is the key however. We don't need to become a communistic state and share all things commonly, but we certainly do need to serve the needs of our people instead of just giving them a blessing and a God's speed.

Years ago when in Bible college we had to move from campus housing due to a misunderstanding - move the same day we found out about the misunderstanding. We were in a total mess financially; having to rent a trailer, dig up deposits etc. for a new place. We had our belongings in a trailer behind a six-cylinder Chevy II that barely got the trailer rolling. East of the school was a large hill. It took us two tries to get up the thing.

We had no idea what to do with the albatross on the back. We stopped at our pastor's house and told him what had happened. A perfect time for him to say bless you, we will be praying for you, but he didn't take that opportunity, instead he offered us his garage to store our belongings in. What a relief that was, to be able to walk away from that for a few days.

That one small act turned our whole outlook around - it was no longer a situation of desperation,

but now there was some hope of surviving this mess that God had allowed upon us. That pastor will never know how real his faith was at that moment. It was literally the step between despair and hope for us.

9. We've spoken of the person in need that receives a word of blessing instead of something to help with the need, but let us think of the person walking away from that situation that has been treated poorly.

Now, it is time for true confessions. I watch the Dr. Phil Show, a show about people coming to Dr. Phil for answers to their problems. Normally the person lays out their problems to the national television audience and toward the end of the show, Dr. Phil offers to get them the help that they need, be it doctors or therapy. He makes it happen all the time.

Recently a teenager that had been fighting Obsessive Compulsive Disorder for years was on the show. She laid out her troubles and trials followed by a couple of experts giving a few comments and the summation of the show was - Well we hope you've found something in all of this that will help you sort through your problem. No offer of help, no offer of a free book, no offer of further help in any way.

I had to wonder what the young woman felt like, knowing the usual drill of tell all, and get help. She told all and got zip. I had to think she must have felt like chopped liver along side a pile of steaks.

A person that comes for help already has tried all of the options, most likely, and has swallowed what pride they have and comes asking for help. They are probably at about at the lowest point of their life and the person that sends them away with a blessing rather than help shoves them down a little further.

I know this to be the truth because I have been in great need and been blessed and dismissed. You are mad at yourself for opening yourself up, you are mad at yourself for looking to Christians for assistance, and you are mad at yourself for getting yourself into such a situation, even though it may not be your fault.

There is usually a long time of recrimination, then a long time of hurt, followed, all too often, by a long absence from church because of the disgust with Christians. Yes, of course these feelings and actions are incorrect responses, but they are rather natural.

As we come to a conclusion on this passage it is clear why some people speak of James as "where the rubber meets the road." He could have taken off into a long theological discussion about faith, and/or works, but he doesn't - he just states the facts and moves on.

I trust that we will listen intently to the Spirit of God the next time we are approached by a believer in need.

Barnes states the case well: "If a brother or sister be naked, etc. The comparison in these verses is very obvious and striking. The sense is, that faith in itself, without the acts that correspond to it, and to which it would prompt, is as cold, and heartless, and unmeaning, and useless, as it would be to say to one who was destitute of the necessaries of life, "depart in peace." In itself considered, it might seem to have something that was good; but it would answer none of the purposes of faith unless it should prompt to action. In the case of one who was hungry or naked, what he wanted was not good wishes or kind words merely, but the acts to which good wishes and kind words prompt. And so in religion, what is wanted is not merely the abstract state of mind which would be indicated by faith, but the life of goodness to which it ought to lead. Good wishes and kind words, in order to make them what they should be for the welfare of the world, should be accompanied with corresponding action. So it is with faith. It is not enough for salvation without the benevolent and holy acts to which it would prompt, any more than the good wishes and kind words of the benevolent are enough to satisfy the wants of the hungry, and to clothe the naked, without correspondent action. Faith is not and cannot be shown to be genuine, unless it is accompanied with corresponding acts; as our good wishes for the poor and needy can be shown to be genuine, when we have the means of aiding them, only by actually ministering to their necessities."

Chapter twelve

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 2.21-26

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

"Abraham our Father" is proof that the epistle is written to Jewish believers, at least primarily Jewish. He would not have mentioned "our father" if it weren't for his Jewish readers.

The term "justified" deserves some study at this point. Rom. 3.24 uses the same term in relation to salvation. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:" We can draw from this that the word in James cannot be twisted into something other than its normal easy meaning. It can't be made to mean something different than usual so it is clear we don't have a problem in this text.

It seems that James is saying that Abraham was justified by works. We will see in our application later that Eph. 2.9 tells us, salvation is not of works, thus some would suggest we must have a contradiction in the Word. Not so. We will see the truth of the matter shortly.

Actually, we need to read the context for the full effect. Verses twenty-one through twenty-three state, "21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God."

Here we see the total package of what James is saying. You must not take verse twenty one and build doctrine upon that limited portion of Scripture. You need the context which gives understanding to the verse.

By works, in twenty-one, he means the package of faith plus works which he has been talking about in the previous context. The two go together, the two are inseparable, and one is not valid without the other.

No, works cannot save, but faith producing works certainly does.

We might give a little thought to what justification is. I will include a more detailed study at the end of this section if you want further information.

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

This seems to support that which has been said, that works do not complete salvation, but rather

complete the faith that provides salvation.

This, by the way gives a wrinkle for the Calvinist. They state that faith is the gift of God that allows us salvation. If that were true why would faith, given by God, need perfecting by works - couldn't God give a perfect faith - certainly He could and would have if that were the way of things.

23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

"And the scripture was fulfilled" refers to Genesis 15.2ff "And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house [is] this Eliezer of Damascus? 3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. 4 And, behold, the word of the LORD [came] unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

This sets Abram's salvation as a done deal, long before he offered Isaac, thus proving that his offer of Isaac was a work unrelated to salvation, but a work proving his salvations existence. (Gen. 22.9ff is the account of Isaac being offered.) One might also call to attention that he was saved before he was circumcised. This might give the infant baptizers a slight problem because most of them relate baptism to circumcision in one way or another. Abraham was saved before his circumcision, thus anyone baptized should be saved before they get wet.

There seems to be a back side to this passage - it seems, that had Abraham not done works there would not have been that perfecting, and that Scripture would not have been fulfilled, and further that righteousness would not have been imputed, and he would not have been a friend of God.

If this be true, would not it also be true that he was not saved, because "imputed unto him for righteousness" is salvation according to many. Either we have a works salvation for Old Testament saints or we have to understand "imputed unto him for righteousness" in another way than salvation.

Rom. 4.16 ff makes it clear that the righteousness was due to the faith/belief rather than any work. "Therefore [it is] of faith, that [it might be] by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, 17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, [even] God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. 18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: 20 He staggered not at the promise

of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. 22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

Given the Romans passage, we must understand the James' text in its light. The James passage cannot contradict the Romans so they must be reconciled. Verse twenty three seems to be a separate thought from twenty-two. This would make it consistent with the Roman's text. Faith is perfected or made complete by works, but works does not bring the faith, nor does it supplement faith in the area of salvation. Faith is sufficient to the salvation of man, but works are that completed picture of the faith that is present within.

24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Okay, now, who put that verse in my finely appointed commentary? This nearly requires works to be part of justification, and justification is a part of the salvation process - and the verse is clear that it is not by faith only! So, what goes with this passage? And what is with the next verse - it is just as bad.

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent [them] out another way?

Certainly these picture works as a part of justification. However we need the following verse to qualify how we understand the rest of the context.

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

Again, the thought of real faith producing works as being the key, rather than faith plus works producing salvation.

Acts 13.39 requires our interpretation. It states clearly that belief is the basis of justification, and belief only. "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses."

Consider also Rom. 3.24 "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:" Rom. 3.30 "Seeing [it is] one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." Rom. 4.2 "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath [whereof] to glory; but not before God. 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Rom. 4.5 "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works," Rom. 5 :1 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:" Rom. 8.30 "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Rom. 8.33 "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? [It is] God that justifieth." Gal. 2.16

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. 3.8 "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, [saying], In thee shall all nations be blessed." Gal. 3.24 "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster [to bring us] unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

These verses make it clear that justification is from faith/belief, and not works. The James' text must be understood within this context and not seen as a "contradiction" in Scripture as some suggest.

Joshua 6.25 gives some insight into the James' text. "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel [even] unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho." (See Joshua 2.13ff as well) The salvation given Rahab in this context is physical not spiritual. Reread the passage with this understanding.

APPLICATION:

1. We have spoken of works. Just what constitutes a work? Probably, that is a dumb question to many, but there is good reason for the question. In Christianity today "work" has many thoughts. To some it is action, to others it is thought. Now, if indeed it is a thought then I can think of good things to do and I have done good works - no that is not logical but that is the end result of what some teach. There are some that suggest that belief is a work. If I have belief/faith in Christ then I have done a work and it is not really salvation because salvation is not of "works lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2.9)

They believe that God does it all within you and you have nothing to do with it. You see, if anything is a work on man's part it detracts from the sovereignty of God - or so they believe. They are so intent that man is not going to have anything to do with salvation that they lose sight of logic.

The idea of work in the Bible seems to be action, rather than thought. Thought is an action of the mind while work is an action of the body. This is a clear distinction you must retain when dealing with the strong Calvinist.

2. Rom. 6.6-7 might be of interest. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [him], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin." The term "freed" is the same word that is translated "justify" in our context and in other passages on justification.

The term has the thought of being freed. This passage tells us we are freed from sin - we don't have to sin, any sin in our life is because we want to do it and make the decision to do so. This passage really puts a rest to the thought of "the Devil made me do it" as well as the thought that

we have a battle that rages within - that battle that often defeats us in our battle for purity - that battle between the old nature and the new nature.

We sin because we decide to turn against God and no other reason. Our own fault, our own decision, our own rebellion. That puts a much different light on our sin and should make us want to clean up our lives and keep them that way.

3. Barnes is quite specific about faith and works and so he should be. He mentions, "There is as much necessity that faith and works should be united to constitute true religion, as there is that the body and soul should be united to constitute a living man. If good works do not follow, it is clear that there is no true and proper faith; none that justifies and saves. If faith produces no fruit of good living, that fact proves that it is dead, that it has no power, and that it is of no value."

This is a very clear teaching of Scripture, and we need to use it in our lives. That person at work that claims to be a believer, that is involved in cheating, in all sorts of wrong acts, the one that is far from living a Christian life - they probably are living that way because they are lost.

How do we use that knowledge? Do we condemn them at every turn? No, we treat them like any other lost person and do what we can to bring them to the Lord.

This knowledge should never be a negative to the person that is under consideration, but a positive, in that we know how to deal with them, and pray for their salvation. It should concern us that they believe they are saved, yet having no works to indicate it, and thus prove they are not. That one has been duped into false security and it should move us to clarify their situation as lovingly as we can.

4. Constable makes a correct distinction when he mentions that "justify" means to "declare righteous," not "make righteous." To declare someone righteous the first time is speaking of salvation, while in Abraham's case in James there was a second declaration of some sort.

He continues that salvation justification is a spiritual experience viewed only by God, but that when one is justified by works he is viewed by man as being righteous. This is true, but I am not totally convinced that is what James was thinking about.

He does make a good observation in the problem between Paul and James when he states that Paul was writing people that were in danger of relying on works for their salvation and James is dealing with people that have excused themselves from works as they relate to Christian living.

5. If, this passage speaks to Abraham being justified by works and since Rahab was justified by works, then might we assume that there is some justification by works? Yes, and we must understand it in the light that Rahab's works justified her unto the saving of her physical life, not her spiritual life, though that followed.

Might James be speaking of a similar physical saving of Abraham's life through his works?

Might James be saying something like this? You might be saved in the spiritual realm before God, but you will not be considered saved in the physical world, before men, unless you have works.

I think this might be exactly what he is saying.

6. Constable notes the many dissimilarities between James two illustrations. Here are his and some others.

ABRAHAM RAHAB

Man Woman

Leader of nations Prostitute

Top dog Lowest of low

Man of means Woman of poverty

Follower of God Observer of God

Major Bible character Minor Bible character

Pleaser of God Pleaser of men

Man of faith Woman of profit

Fearful of God Fearful of man

Rich Poor

This contrast may revert back to the original thoughts of James that you should not show favor one over the other - this contrast is the favored versus the favored over, in picture form.

7. There are two items that we need to mention. Just because there are works, does not mean that there is spiritual life. The lost, at times, can do works in abundance. The second item is related to the first. Works are not always good works. They may be good in nature, but may not be good by motivation. Works motivated by fear or works motivated by a hope of eternal gain are not good works in reality, but good in nature only.

8. Gill mentions: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works,.... Not as the causes of his justification, that is denied, Romans 4:2 but as effects of it, showing the truth of his faith, and the reality of his justification: he had both faith and works, and the former were known by the latter; and even the faith which he had expressed years ago was manifested, demonstrated, and

confirmed to be true and genuine, by the instance of his obedience to God, here produced; by which it appeared he was a true believer, a justified person, approved of God, and loved by him. Now if this was the case of Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, yea, the father of the faithful, of all that believe, he is, and must be a vain man, that talks of faith without works; and his faith must be a dead one, and he be very unlike the father of them that believe:"

How vain and arrogant are we to say we are saved and not have works, if Abraham the father of all Jews and the benefactor of all that believe, followed salvation with works? We are an affront, not only to Abraham, but to God Himself if we profess salvation without works to demonstrate such. Not that we are to go out daily to prove to man we are saved, but that we go forth daily living as we ought as a child of God.

9. "Friend of God" is the statement that James made of Abraham (Verse twenty-three). How about you? He was willing to give all to God, are you? Give your house, your car, your many toys, and your all?

Doesn't John 15.13 give the similar thought? Lay down your life for a friend - the no greater love idea. The same word is used in 15.14 of our relationship to Christ if we keep His commandments. Simple enough follow what He tells you to do and you are His friend. The opposite seems to be true, if you don't do His bidding, you are not His friend. The options are clear and only one seems to be a good one to follow. (This is mentioned of Abraham in the Old Testament as well. II Chron. 20.7; Isa.41.8)

That truth should relate to how you pray. You are talking with your friend if you are walking with Him. He will respond as such if we approach Him as such.

The same truth should convict us greatly when we are not walking with Him. We ought to feel terrible about the way we are treating our friend. Especially in light of the fact that He will never treat you with such disrespect.

What are some characteristics of a friend?

Closeness

Can talk to them

Can rely on them

Can lean on them

Can trust them

Can tell them anything

Can get to know them

Trustworthiness

Confidential

Always there

We have all that with God and we thumb our nose at Him and His friendship for a closer walk with the world that certainly is not our friend. Consider a list of the characteristics of an enemy when you have a moment or two. Which is the logical choice for fellowship?

10. Gill brings up the point that Rahab believed when her countrymen did not. This, in my mind is an incorrect observation. Indeed, it illustrates perfectly what was stated earlier. James mentioned that the devils believe, but it takes the action of faith to bring about salvation. Rahab told the spies that the countrymen knew of the exploits of Israel and feared them (Joshua. 2.10ff), but Rahab took action to save herself from physical destruction.

This is not to say that the devils could save themselves by acting toward God, their judgment is set, just waiting to be carried out in the end time.

11. Life Application Bible suggests the believer ask themselves two questions as they consider their spiritual life. " Who am I trusting? and Why am I working?"

If you trust anyone or any thing for your salvation other than God Himself, you trust in the wrong thing. If you aren't working out of love for Christ, then you are working for the wrong reason. This simplifies trying to figure out if you are spiritual or not. If you serve God and work out of your love for Him, then you are doing all that you can toward your own spiritual satisfaction.

Barnes has a lengthy comment that is worthy of quoting to close out our discussion of this section. After this there is a section from my theology on justification that might be of interest to you.

"Justified by works. That is, in the sense in which James is maintaining that a man professing religion is to be justified by his works. He does not affirm that the ground of acceptance with God is that we keep the law, or are perfect; or that our good works make an atonement for our sins, and that it is on their account that we are pardoned; nor does he deny that it is necessary that a man should believe in order to be saved. In this sense he does not deny that men are justified by faith; and thus he does not contradict the doctrine of the apostle Paul. But he does teach that where there are no good works, or where there is not a holy life, there is no true religion; that that faith which is not productive of good works is of no value; that if a man has that faith only, it would be impossible that he could be regarded as justified, or could be saved; and that consequently, in that large sense, a man is justified by his works; that is, they are the evidence that he is a justified man, or is regarded and treated as righteous by his Maker. The point on

which the apostle has his eye is the nature of saving faith; and his design is to show that a mere faith which would produce no more effect than that of the demons did, could not save. In this he states no doctrine which contradicts that of Paul."

That concludes this section, but I have included a large quote from Barnes that details his thinking on the faith/works issue as it relates to the seeming differences between James and Paul. It might be useful for you in the future if you want to do a more detailed study.

"RECONCILIATION OF PAUL AND JAMES.

"At the close of the exposition of this chapter, it may be proper to make a few additional remarks on the question in what way the statements of James can be reconciled with those of Paul, on the subject of justification. A difficulty has always been felt to exist on the subject; and there are, perhaps, no readers of the New Testament who are not perplexed with it. Infidels, and particularly Voltaire, have seized the occasion which they supposed they found here to sneer against the Scriptures, and to pronounce them to be contradictory. Luther felt the difficulty to be so great that, in the early part of his career, he regarded it as insuperable, and denied the inspiration of James, though he afterwards changed his opinion, and believed that his epistle was a part of the inspired canon; and one of Luther's followers was so displeased with the statements of James, as to charge him with willful falsehood.--Dr. Dwight's Theology, Serra. lxviii. The question is, whether their statements can be so reconciled, or can be shown to be so consistent with each other, that it is proper to regard them both as inspired men? Or, are their statements so opposite and contradictory, that it cannot be believed that both were under the influences of an infallible Spirit? In order to answer these questions, there are two points to be considered: first, what the real difficulty is; and, secondly, how the statements of the two writers can be reconciled, or whether there is any way of explanation which will remove the difficulty.

"I. What the difficulty is. This relates to two points--that James Seems to contradict Paul in express terms, and that both writers make use of the same case to illustrate their opposite sentiments.

"(1.) That James seems to contradict Paul in express terms. The doctrine of Paul on the subject of justification is stated in such language as the following: "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight," Ro 3:20. "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," Ro 3:28. "Being justified by faith," Ro 5:1. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ," Ga 2:16. Compare Ro 3:24-26; Ga 3:11; Tit 3:5,6.

"On the other hand, the statement of James seems to be equally explicit that a man is not justified by faith only, but that good works come in for an important share in the matter. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works?" Jas 2:21. "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works?" Jas 2:22. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only," Jas 2:24.

"(2.) Both writers refer to the same case to illustrate their views-- the case of Abraham. Thus Paul (Ro 4:1-3) refers to it to prove that justification is wholly by faith. "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." And thus James (Jas 2:21-22) refers to it to prove that justification is by works: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?"

"The difficulty of reconciling these statements would be more clearly seen if they occurred in the writings of the same author; by supposing, for example, that the statements of James were appended to the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, and were to be read in connexion with that chapter. Who, the infidel would ask, would not be struck with the contradiction? Who would undertake to harmonize statements so contradictory? Yet the statements are equally contradictory, though they occur in different writers, and especially when it is claimed for both that they wrote under the influence of inspiration.

"II. The inquiry then is, how these apparently contradictory statements may be reconciled, or whether there is any way of explanation that will remove the difficulty. This inquiry resolves itself into two --whether there is any theory that can be proposed that would relieve the difficulty, and whether that theory can be shown to be well founded.

"(1.) Is there any theory which would remove the difficulty--any explanation which can be given on this point which, if true, would show that the two statements may be in accordance with each other and with truth?

"Before suggesting such an explanation, it may be further observed, that, as all history has shown, the statements of Paul on the subject of justification are liable to great abuse. All the forms of Antinomianism have grown out of such abuse, and are only perverted statements of his doctrine. It has been said, that if Christ has freed us from the necessity of obeying the law in order to justification; if he has fulfilled it in our stead, and borne its penalty, then the law is no longer binding on those who are justified, and they are at liberty to live as they please. It has been further said, that if we are saved by faith alone, a man is safe the moment he believes, and good works are therefore not necessary. It is possible that such views as these began to prevail as early as the time of James, and, if so, it was proper that there should be an authoritative apostolic statement to correct them, and to check these growing abuses. If, therefore, James had, as it has been supposed he had, any reference to the sentiments of Paul, it was not to correct his sentiments, or to controvert them, but it was to correct the abuses which began already to flow from his doctrines, and to show that the alleged inferences did not properly follow from the opinions which he held; or, in other words, to show that the Christian religion required men to lead holy lives, and that the faith by which it was acknowledged that the sinner must be justified, was a faith which was productive of good works.

"Now, all that is necessary to reconcile the statements of Paul and James, is to suppose that they contemplate the subject of justification from different points of view, and with reference to different inquiries. Paul looks at it before a man is converted, with reference to the question how

a sinner may be justified before God; James after a man is converted, with reference to the question how he may show that he has the genuine faith which justifies. Paul affirms that the sinner is justified before God only by faith in the Lord Jesus, and not by his own works; James affirms that it is not a mere speculative or dead faith which justifies, but only a faith that is productive of good works, and that its genuineness is seen only by good works. Paul affirms that whatever else a man has, if he have not faith in the Lord Jesus, he cannot be justified; James affirms that no matter what pretended faith a man has, if it is not a faith which is adapted to produce good works, it is of no value in the matter of justification. Supposing this to be the true explanation, and that these are the "stand-points" from which they view the subject, the reconciliation of these two writers is easy: for it was and is still true, that if the question is asked how a sinner is to be justified before God, the answer is to be that of Paul, that it is by faith alone, "without the works of the law;" if the question be asked, how it can be shown what is the kind of faith that justifies, the answer is that of James, that it is only that which is productive of holy living and practical obedience.

"(2.) Is this a true theory? Can it be shown to be in accordance with the statements of the two writers? Would it be a proper explanation if the same statements had been made by the same writer? That it is a correct theory, or that it is an explanation founded in truth, will be apparent, if

"(a) the language used by the two writers will warrant it;

"(b) if it accords with a fair interpretation of the declarations of both writers; and

"(c) if, in fact, each of the two writers held respectively the same doctrine on the subject.

"(a) Will the language bear this explanation? That is, will the word justify, as used by the two writers, admit of this explanation? That it will, there need be no reasonable doubt; for both are speaking of the way in which man, who is a sinner, may be regarded and treated by God as if he were righteous--the true notion of justification. It is not of justification in the sight of men that they speak, but of justification in the sight of God. Both use the word justify in this sense---Paul as affirming that it is only by faith that it can be done; James as affirming, in addition, not in contradiction, that it is by a faith that produces holiness, and no other.

"(b) Does this view accord with the fair interpretation of the declarations of both writers?

"In regard to Paul, there can be no doubt that this is the point from which he contemplates the subject, to wit, with reference to the question how a sinner may be justified. Thus, in the epistle to the Romans, where his principal statements on the subject occur, he shows, first, that the Gentiles cannot be justified by the works of the Law, (Ro 1) and then that the same thing is true in regard to the Jews, (Ro 2; 3) by demonstrating that both had violated the law given them, and were transgressors, and then (Ro 3:20) draws his conclusion "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight"--the whole argument showing conclusively that he is contemplating the subject before a man is justified, and with reference to the question how he may be.

"In regard to James, there can be as little doubt that the point of view from which he contemplates the subject, is after a man professes to have been justified by faith, with reference to the question what kind of faith justifies, or how it may be shown that faith is genuine. This is clear,

"(a) because the whole question is introduced by him with almost express reference to that inquiry: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? " Ro 2:14. That is, can such faith-- can this faith (h pistiv) save him? In other words, he must have a different kind of faith in order to save him. The point of James' denial is not that faith, if genuine, would save; but it is, that such a faith, or a faith without works, would save.

"(b) That this is the very point which he discusses, is further shown by his illustrations, Jas 2:15-16,19. He shows (Jas 2:15-16) that mere faith in religion would be of no more value in regard to salvation, than if one were naked and destitute of food, it would meet his wants to say, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled;" and then, (Jas 2:19,) that even the demons had a certain kind of faith in one of the cardinal doctrines of religion, but that it was a faith which was valueless--thus showing that his mind was on the question what is true and genuine faith.

"(c) Then he shows by the case to which he refers, (Jas 2:21-23,) the case of Abraham, that this was the question before his mind. He refers not to the act when Abraham first believed --the act by which as a sinner he was justified before God; but to an act that occurred twenty years after--the offering up of his son Isaac. See Barnes on "Jas 2:21" and through verse 23. He affirms that the faith of Abraham was of such a kind that it led him to obey the will of God; that is, to good works. Though, as is implied in the objection referred to above, he does not refer to the same case to which Paul referred-- the case of Abraham--yet it is not to the same act in Abraham. Paul (Ro 4:1-3) refers to him when he first believed, affirming that he was then justified by faith; James refers indeed to an act of the same man, but occurring twenty years after, showing that the faith by which he had been justified was genuine. Abraham was, in fact, according to Paul, justified when he believed, and, had he died then, he would have been saved; but according to James, the faith which justified him was not a dead faith, but was living and operative, as was shown by his readiness to offer his son on the altar.

"(d) Did each of these two writers in reality hold the same doctrine on the subject? This will be seen, if it can be shown that James held to the doctrine of justification by faith, as really as Paul did; and that Paul held that good works were necessary to show the genuineness of faith, as really as James did.

"(1.) They both agreed in holding the doctrine of justification by faith. Of Paul's belief there can be no doubt. That James held the doctrine is apparent from the fact that he quotes the very passage in Genesis, (Ge 15:6,) and the one on which Paul relies, (Ro 4:1-3,) as expressing his own views--"Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." The truth of this James does not deny, but affirms that the Scripture which made this declaration was fulfilled or confirmed by the act to which he refers.

"(2.) They both agreed in holding that good works are necessary to show the genuineness of faith. Of James' views on that point there can be no doubt. That Paul held the same opinion is clear

"(a) from his own life, no man ever having been more solicitous to keep the whole law of God than he was.

"(b) From his constant exhortations and declarations, such as these: "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph 2:10; "Charge them that are rich that they be rich in good works," 1Ti 6:17-18; "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works," Tit 2:7; "Who gave himself for us, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit 2:14; "These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works," Tit 3:8.

"(c) It appears from the fact that Paul believed that the rewards of heaven are to be apportioned according to our good works, or according to our character and our attainments in the divine life. The title indeed to eternal life is, according to him, in consequence of faith; the measure of the reward is to be our holiness, or what we do. Thus he says, (2Co 5:10,) "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body." Thus also he says, (2Co 9:6,) "He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." And thus also he says, (Ro 2:6,) that God "will render to every man according to his deeds." See also the influence which faith had on Paul personally, as described in the third chapter of his epistle to the Philippians. If these things are so, then these two writers have not contradicted each other, but, viewing the subject from different points, they have together stated important truths which might have been made by any one writer without contradiction; first, that it is only by faith that a sinner can be justified--and second, that the faith which justifies is that only which leads to a holy life, and that no other is of value in saving the soul. Thus, on the one hand, men would be guarded from depending on their own righteousness for eternal life; and, on the other, from all the evils of Antinomianism. The great object of religion would be secured--the sinner would be justified, and would become personally holy."

JUSTIFICATION

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"Justification may be defined as that judicial act of God by which, on account of Christ, to whom the sinner is united by faith, He declares that sinner to be no longer exposed to the penalty of the law but restored to divine favor." (Pardington, Rev. George P. Ph.D.; "OUTLINE STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE"; Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1926, pp 316-317)

Pardington continues in a note, "In the New Testament, the word "justify" means not to make righteous, but to declare righteous. And justification is the state of one who is thus declared

righteous"

Let's look at the terms used in the New Testament.

NOUNS

"dikaiosin" "denote the act of pronouncing righteous, justification, acquittal; its precise meaning is determined by that of the verb "dikaioo", to justify" (Vine, W. E.; "AN EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS"; Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co.)

Rom. 4:25 "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." (Scofield mentions "for" in both cases can be translated "on account of.") Rom. 5:18 "...by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

"dikaioma" "has three distinct meanings, and seems best described comprehensively as "a concrete expression of righteousness;" it is a declaration that a person or thing is righteous, and hence, broadly speaking, it represents the expression and effect of "dikaiosin" (Vine) This word is translated ordinances, judgment, righteousness and justification.

VERBS

"dikaioo" "primarily, to deem to be right" (Vine) These terms are very closely related to the terms translated righteousness.

Now, that we have seen the terms, we need to draw some conclusions from their usage in the Scriptures.

JUSTIFICATION IS DEPENDENT ON THE RESURRECTION: Rom. 4:25, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." It would seem that the resurrection was a prerequisite for our justification. This would relate to the fact that if there were no resurrection, Christ could not enter the heavenly tabernacle to offer His blood. Without the offering of His blood there could be no justification.

JUSTIFICATION IS A FREE GIFT FROM CHRIST: Rom. 5:18, "Therefore as by the offence of one [judgment came] upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [the free gift came] upon all men unto justification of life." Christ provided, in His death, the justification of all that come to Him for salvation.

JUSTIFICATION IS DEPENDANT ON BELIEF: Acts 13:39, "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (See also, Rom. 3:26)

JUSTIFICATION IS NOT BASED ON WORKS: Rom. 3:20, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law [is] the knowledge of sin." (See also Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16) There is nothing that we can do to secure justification. We cannot gain it by keeping the law, we cannot gain it by keeping a list of do's and don'ts, and we can't gain it by giving up material items.

We might just insert a brief commentary on the thought of legalism. Legalism in the Bible is the attempt to keep the law to gain salvation. There are those today that relate legalism to many other thoughts.

BIBLICALLY, legalism is keeping the law for salvation.

Some charge that anyone that keeps a list of do's and don'ts is a legalist. NOT SO! God keeps a list of do's and don'ts in the Word, and He is not a legalist. Lists are not wrong! If a person is attempting to gain salvation by keeping those lists, then they are legalistic.

Don't allow someone to condemn you because God has burdened your heart to not do something. It is between you and God, and it is not legalism. If your convictions are based on the Word, then you are responsible before God to follow them. Do it.

JUSTIFICATION CORRECTS THE PROBLEMS OF THE FLESH: Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16. The natural position of man is one which will result in the lake of fire. That position is changed by the work of justification. Justification corrects all that Adam brought upon mankind.

JUSTIFICATION IS RELATED TO REDEMPTION: We cannot be justified, until we are redeemed. Yes, the two occur in an instant, yet justification cannot occur until we are redeemed. Romans 3:24

JUSTIFICATION COMES VIA THE GRACE OF GOD: Rom. 3:24, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:" (Also Titus 3:7) We fell with Adam, and God was not responsible. He had no obligation to do anything, yet because He was gracious, He extended salvation as a remedy to our problem.

JUSTIFICATION BRINGS SONSHIP: "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Titus 3:7 Again, we see the sequence of the salvation event. We are justified, and then we have sonship available. Sonship then is dependent upon justification. This is only logical. God is not going to share His Son's kingdom with children of Satan.

JUSTIFICATION IS BY FAITH: Justification cannot be worked for, bought, or stolen. It is dependent on the faith of the individual that comes to Christ for salvation. (Rom. 3:28, 30; 5:1; Gal. 3:24)

JUSTIFICATION IS PROVIDED BY GOD: "Seeing [it is] one God, which shall justify the

circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." Romans 3:30 (It comes by belief; Rom. 4:5. It frees us from all charges; Rom. 8:33.)

JUSTIFICATION IS ACCOMPLISHED BY CHRIST'S BLOOD: "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Romans 5:9 His blood being offered in the heavenly tabernacle opened the way for justification to become a reality. With no blood, there would be no justification. We were fully dependent upon Christ and His provision.

JUSTIFICATION IS A RESULT OF PREDESTINATION: "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Romans 8:30) Again, we see the sequence aspect of salvation. In this text justification is preceded by our calling, and followed by glorification.

JUSTIFICATION IS CARRIED OUT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11) As in most of the great doctrines of salvation, God the Father enacted the program, God the Son made provision for the program, and God the Holy Spirit brings the program to pass in the individuals life.

JUSTIFICATION IS FOR ALL PEOPLES: "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, [saying], In thee shall all nations be blessed." (Galatians 3:8) God provided salvation to all peoples in the beginning, but in Abraham narrowed His focus for a time. This is not to say that only Jews could be saved, but that the Jews were the messengers. In Abraham, all nations were to be blessed.

JUSTIFICATION SHOULD RESULT IN A CHANGED WALK: "the just shall live by faith." Our walk should be based completely on faith in God. Our lives should be planned by faith, our years should be planned by faith, and our every minute should be planned by faith.

This is not a request, but a command. God expects us to live by faith, no matter what situation we find ourselves in. It has always interested me to notice that our Christian colleges and seminaries attempt to teach their students to live by faith. They expect their faculty to live by faith. Yet, the organization is somehow magically exempt from this concept. The School must survive, so the students WILL have money for school before they arrive. Many students have been turned away at registration because they do not have a specific amount of money.

If the student is to walk by faith, and the faculty is to walk by faith, then how can they learn this concept if the institution is not operating by faith? Seems somewhat illogical to me.

I would like to list some quotations which will further define the thought of justification.

Chafer mentions, "Imputed righteousness is the ground of justification. According to the New Testament usage, the words "righteousness" and "justify" are from the same root. God declares the one justified forever whom He sees in Christ. It is an equitable decree since the justified one

is clothed in the righteousness of God. Justification is not a fiction or a state of feeling; it is rather an immutable reckoning in the mind of God. Like imputed righteousness, justification is by faith (Rom. 5:1), through grace (Titus 3:4-7), and made possible through the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 3:24; 4:25). It is abiding and unchangeable since it rests only on the merit of the eternal son of God.

"Justification is more than forgiveness, since forgiveness is the cancellation of sin while justification is the imputing of righteousness. Forgiveness is negative (the removal of condemnation), while justification is positive (the bestowing of the merit and standing of Christ)." (Chafer, Lewis Sperry/Revised by Walvoord, John F.; "MAJOR BIBLE THEMES"; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974, p 200)

Chafer in his systematic theology: "Theologically considered, the term justification means to be declared righteous. It is true that, being in Christ, the believer is righteous; but justification is the divine acknowledgment and declaration that the one who is in Christ is righteous. That which God thus publishes He defends. Justification is immutable." (Chafer, Lewis Sperry; "SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY"; Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947, Vol. III, p 128)

The Westminster Shorter Catechism states, "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone."

The opposite of justification seems to be condemnation. We were condemned to the lake of fire, and now we are justified.

CONCLUSION

I would like to share some thoughts from Best Sermon Pictures by Lawson; Moody Press. They were quoting The Sunday School Times. "An instrument used for weighing gold in the assay office is balanced so delicately that, when two pieces of paper, of exactly the same size and weight, are placed on the balances, it still retains the same poise. But if a name be written on one of the papers, it will turn the scale. The name of Jesus on the heart turns the scale into peace and presence of God. It is the possession of His name thus written that spells "saved." It is the lack of it that spells "lost."

Justification has been defined as "just as if I had never sinned." Indeed, it is more than that. It is as if I were Christ, in which there is no sin. I have the same standing before God that Christ has. Ponder that point for awhile.

Chapter thirteen

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 3.1-5

I would like to let Gill introduce this section for us. "In this chapter the apostle cautions against censoriousness, and reproving others with a magisterial air; advises to bridle the tongue, and guard against the vices of it; and shows what true wisdom is, and from whence it comes. He advises the saints not to arrogate too much to themselves, and take upon them to be the censorious reprovers of others; which he dissuades from, by the consideration of the greater damnation such shall receive, and by the frailty of all men, and a common proneness to offend by words; for he must be a very singular man indeed that does not offend by words"

In the New Testament church the gathering time was patterned on the services of the synagogue. They would have a discussion or sharing of thoughts on the Lord and His Word.

Today the Plymouth Brethren follow this format as do some independent Bible people. They gather and share one with another as the Spirit leads them. Some share a passage of the word, some share a hymn, some a thought and usually someone has a more lengthy admonition for the group.

Acts 13.15-16 pictures some of this concept and in I Cor. 14.26-36, though most agree the sign gifts have passed away, that the text pictures this type of freedom in the service.

We spoke in a church in Denver, CO years ago that sat in a square. The children were seated in front of the parents throughout the service. The Lord's Table was set in the middle and was the focus of the entire service. The children were allowed only Bible story books for something to do, no toys, no candy, no pop, no goodies - and they were quiet little worshippers - they knew they were there to consider God.

The question arises, should we be doing worship and/or Sunday school in this manner today. Some suggest that discussion in the Sunday school fulfills this idea. I would disagree, because discussion is led by the teacher, not the Spirit of God.

The next problem is this. If we had this type of service, would you have enough time in the word during the week to have something to share on Sunday morning?

If all of us were in the Word enough; If all of us would share when led of the Spirit; If all of us were Christian enough to accept admonition from others; Then would we have any need for a full time paid pastor? Yes, there is the gift of pastor-teacher, however this would work out as the shepherd/teacher the gift is referring to. A teaching time is quite appropriate for the assembly, and might well fit perfectly within the time I have just suggested.

We have the clear thought that there should not be many masters in the church. This concept of worship eliminates the many masters and makes us all subservient to THE MASTER. Well, He is the head of the church you know.

This brings forth the thought of being up-front and spiritual in our speaking with others. There was a man called Latimer that was called to preach before King Henry VIII. Historians record for us some conversations that he had with himself. He first discussed the one he was about to speak before. The man that could put him in jail if he spoke out of line, the man that could have his head in a basket, the man that controlled his very existence - how should he preach in such a situation. Then he changed his perspective slightly and determined that since he really was speaking before the King of Kings, and Lord of Lord's and since the King would stand before this Christ - well he said this to himself "Latimer! Latimer! Latimer! Be faithful to thy Master and declare all God's Word."

If we all had this mind-set, we could meet in a common assembly and admonish one another without the usual commotion, hurt feelings, and anger.

3:1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

"Knowing" is a perfect tense, something that continues into the future to a sure end. You know this is true, you will know this is true tomorrow and you will know it is true when it occurs. You won't second guess this one, you know it as if it is fact and done.

Know that the master or teacher will be judged differently than others, and the indication is that it will be a harsher judgment.

"Master" is the normal word for teacher. The teacher is one that knows things that others do not, someone that can impart and share that knowledge with others in an effective way. The term master probably comes from the Old Testament and early New Testament thought of a teacher. A teacher in this time was someone that was very respected and honored.

To show this I would call upon Joseph Caro (1488-1575) a Jewish writer once mentioned some of the actions a young man should take when in the presence of a teacher.

He held that the student was to honor his teacher above his parents. He likened anyone striving or complaining with/to his teacher to striving or complaining with/to the Lord. A scholar was not allowed to answer a point of law if his teacher was present. To do so without permission was open to punishment. The student was never, even after death, to call his teacher by his first name. The student was never allowed to sit in the teacher's seat. When a teacher died the student was to tear his coat as if his father had died. Basically the teacher in many ways was to be held as superior to one's own father. The teacher however was also to honor the scholar as the scholar was to honor the teacher.

You can see that the student of old respected his teacher. Even in my own school days the teacher

was held with respect. Today, on the other hand, the teacher in the public classroom is often just another piece of trash to be kicked aside, and I might add that this concept is often transferred to the Sunday school and church situation.

Some today talk back and argue with teachers openly in class. They don't have enough respect to disagree in private.

I have had, more than once, women begin to argue and cause disruption in classes that I was teaching. This isn't just a man/woman in the church issue; it is a respect of another believer issue as well as the man/woman in the church issue.

Not only are they throwing the thought of Scripture aside of a woman questioning and learning at home from her husband but they are just throwing out basic respect and action for their own prideful feelings.

Today, we have little respect for teachers, or pastors for that matter, and often the only respect we have is for ourselves, and that is the bigger mistake. Part of the bigger problem is that people have the concept that their opinion is correct and all others are incorrect. The opinion does not need to be backed by fact or even some indication from truth; it only needs to be held to be "true."

Due to this mind-set, you can argue no matter what is said or held by another person and know that you are "correct."

Note should be taken that James considered himself a teacher. He includes himself in the judgment by using the term "we." Thus we know something more about the man that authored the book.

James speaks to a problem that is going on - many masters. He admonishes, don't do it. The reason? The master will be held to a higher standard when they are judged. The term condemnation is "judgments" in the American Standard Version.

Luke 12.48 speaks to this principle. "But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few [stripes]. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

The term translated "masters" is the word for teachers. It is translated that way in Acts 13.1 as well as elsewhere.

2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same [is] a perfect man, [and] able also to bridle the whole body.

The American Standard Version translates "in many things we offend all" as "We all stumble" "For in many things we all stumble. If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able

to bridle the whole body also."

Might we say teachers make mistakes? Might we also say that teachers will have a harder judgment because of our position? True in both cases. Teachers do make mistakes and they will be held accountable for those mistakes.

How should we handle a mistake in teaching?

Condemn them publicly as a heretic? Confront them privately? Condemn them in your mind - behind their back? Go to the pastor and tell him? Suggest the proper answer as a possibility?

Depending on the situation, I would suggest that you bring up a possible correct interpretation, if that is rejected soundly, go to the pastor and discuss it and let him make the next move.

We all make mistakes and a teacher is not above one now and then as well. The mistake is not a problem, the not making the correction is the real problem. Without admonition and correction there would seem to be pride.

This is a good text to show that we should beware of any man's teaching. Since all can make mistakes, all should be suspect. That is why the Bereans were commended for their searching of the Word daily to check up on the preaching they were getting.

James goes on to state that if one does not stumble by his use of words, then he is a perfect man.

I rather think that this was hyperbole - exaggeration to make a point. No man can go through life without making a mistake in word, and no man is perfect. I rather think that this is exactly the point James was making to his readers.

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. 4 Behold also the ships, which though [they be] so great, and [are] driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

Two illustrations to show the power of the tongue. The bit in the horse's mouth. Similar to mom taking the child's ear between her finger and thumb. With such a little member the whole body is controlled.

The ship also by the rudder is controlled. The word helm today is the wheel with which the ship is steered, but the Greek term used relates to the rudder or possibly the oar that actually steers the ship in the water.

I was on an aircraft carrier when it was in a dry dock for maintenance. The props on the ship were huge. There were four of them. The hole in the center where the props attached to the shaft were at least big enough to accommodate a man laying spread eagle, and probably room to spare. These props were large but the rudder was not as big and only one in number. It does not take a

lot to turn a ship, nor does it take much to turn the human - a tongue will do a great job of it.

The smallness of the tongue has a drastic result when used. There are other illustrations that give us the thought here. The key to a car is a small member, but key to the running of the car if you don't mind the pun. A small cutting word can control a relationship or a church.

In many churches you have to weigh every word that you use because if you cross someone it will become a divisive war. I suspect that this is partly due to the stress blown society that we live in but is also indicative of our skin deep love for one another.

The key to the tongue is Romans 6.12-13 "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13 Neither yield ye your members [as] instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members [as] instruments of righteousness unto God."

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

This is only part of the story about the tongue, but I think we will cut the section in half and consider smaller sections for our study.

Sufficeth to say that the tongue is described thusly by James.

Little member

Boasteth great things

Is a fire

Is a world of iniquity

Defileth the whole body

Setteth on fire the course of nature

It's set on fire of hell

Can no man tame

An unruly evil

Full of deadly poison

Bless God with it

Curse men

Not a nice cut of meat if you were going to purchase one.

APPLICATION

1. We have spoken of teachers and the mistakes that they make. Those gifted to teach will, in my mind, have fewer mistakes, because they are controlled and moved by the Spirit. The question might arise, what if you don't have gifted teachers to fill all your teaching positions? I would suggest that you have too many positions.

God trains and gifts the men that are needed for an assembly. In one church where we ministered I went looking for the church's teaching standards. When I asked one of the deacons, he just laughed and said, "We just take what we can get."

That is a way to fill positions, but it is not the way to see to the teaching of the Word in the Church. No wonder the church is in the condition it is in today. This is the teaching standard many churches use today and it is not a standard, it is a crime.

2. In verse two James uses the term "offend" and this term can mean to cause one to stumble, or to stumble oneself, or to fall or to make a mistake. The question might come up as to whether it is the teacher stumbles personally or if the teacher causes someone else to stumble.

None of the translations are definitive, but all seem to follow the thought of the teacher stumbling. It is also of note that of the three commentaries I checked all three followed the thought of the teacher stumbling.

In essence both are the same. If the teacher causes another to stumble he has stumbled himself, so there doesn't seem to be a real difference in my mind. Any time the teacher stumbles the student is open to stumbling as well.

This is in the context of the verbal part of teaching, rather than overt sin. The teacher by their word, by their tongue has a tendency to stumble or make mistakes.

This is of interest to me. I don't know that I have ever made a mistake in my teaching, though I am sure that I have. The point is that if we note a teacher making a mistake, we should help him to understand this and show them their error.

I do have many tell me that I am mistaken, but few have the sufficient proof of same. One example is in the case of water witching. I tend to relate it to the Devil, if indeed it works. I have had some write to me that they know through experience that it isn't of the Devil. Well, I ask, how can you know that, since you can't scientifically prove that it is natural.

I even had one man send me a book on the subject that he had written. He was convinced that it

related to magnetic fields around moving water. He had many experiments that "proved" his point. Some of his experiments were quite suspect in my mind and he did not relate how water that was not moving could be found. He went with his presupposition and proved it correct, in his own mind.

I don't, for a moment, want to say I have not made mistakes, but have not found any ---- yet! I am sure there are many; I just haven't had them pointed out to me as yet.

We must be vigilant to watch our teaching, and our students to be sure we aren't misleading them. If we do we must admit, and correct, or we will allow the student to go on to possibly teach others incorrectly.

I am not saying that all students will take in all that we teach, for many are quite sharp and will think about our comments in relation to the Word and many will see our error and correct their thinking to reflect the Word rather than the teacher - which ought to be the way of things.

The problem comes when people begin just soaking in all that we say. They err in not being alert to error, yet we err by not taking the time to prepare properly and acquaint ourselves with the Word properly

We should also consider letting our students know from time to time that they are free to discuss things with us if they see something inconsistent with Scripture. This freedom must be maintained both for their safety and the safety of others.

We must ever be watchful to be Biblical.

One of the most humbling things in my life is the fact that my theology has been included in commercial Bible software, and it is all over the world on the internet - what if I am wrong in some of my conclusions? And I probably am. I will be held accountable for damage caused; it would seem from this passage. I can only plead ignorance, for I certainly did not set out to mislead, but to share and teach.

3. What might be the reason one would want to be a teacher when they aren't really qualified for the position?

a. Ignorance. Some might suppose themselves wise unto teaching, but be in fact immature in the faith.

b. Some might want the position for the status that it carries with it. If the teacher was held in high regard as we have seen they were, then the person of pride in who they are, might well desire to be uplifted by the status of teacher.

c. In some cases today, we might see some that want the position for the monetary gain they might have. This is a warning for the elders in the qualifications. This is clear in I Timothy 3.3

"Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;"

d. Some might desire the position on a serious, nonselfish basis because they feel the Lord has given them special knowledge that the assembly needs.

There are probably other reasons, but we need to guard against the wanna be that shouldn't be. We need to be kind and loving toward these folks, and gently guide them into the preparation that they need for the position they desire.

4. One of the major evangelical seminaries found they had a sexual predator in their student body when he was arrested. After his legal responsibilities the man did two years of treatment and wanted to return to the seminary. He was allowed to return - everyone deserves a second chance was the thinking.

The man graduated and went on to take a pastorate. The church had contacted the seminary about his worthiness and nothing was said about the sexual problems, of which most today know are just about never cured.

The man went on to sexually abuse several boys, the seminary was sued and the rest is history.

Now, the reason I bring this up is that on a Southern Baptist board on the internet the seminary was drawn and quartered for their sin. The administration should have been pointed out in public and fired on the spot was the idea. Inexcusable, horrible and grievous was the type of terminology that was thrown around wildly.

One reading the thread would have thought the seminary was the predator not the man that had violated the children. Yes, they bore some responsibility if there was erroneous information given, but I rather doubt that there was any intentional wrong committed.

Some even called for the seminary to shut down immediately and permanently.

My question. Are there levels of sin? Some suggest that there are not, yet the same people on this board were labeling this as something more than just a sin that needed forgiving, but something that needed to be rooted out and burned to destruction.

I, for one do not feel that the reactions were logical or rational, but moved by disgust for the sin of the sinner. Yes, if the seminary consciously withheld information, lied or mislead the church, there is responsibility and it should be met with. However the over reaction of these "Christians" seemed way overboard especially since they did not have any of the details at the time.

Those that suggest there are no differences in sin seem to be corrected from this passage. The teacher has a greater condemnation in some manner. Now, this might be in the thought of just level of responsibility for those things done in this life. In other words, a teacher is teaching

others and that is a responsibility he takes on for his life at that point in time. The non-teacher, on the other hand, does not have this responsibility, thus in a sense has a lesser judgment.

Others might suggest that there is a different level of how people will be judged, that a teacher doing wrong will be held to a higher level of judgment. I doubt this line of thinking and would prefer the former suggestion. God's judgment is equal to all in my mind, but the teacher will be held responsible for his teaching whereby the non-teacher will not be judged for his teaching. Much like the man that commits adultery will be judged for having committed his sin, whereby the man that has committed no adultery will not be judged for adultery. The seeming difference in judgment should be clear.

5. Personal opinion, we allow men to teach that ought not today. God calls some to teach and gifts them for that ministry, yet we have a wide variety of teachers in our schools that were called to pastor, found they couldn't pastor, or didn't like it, so went into teaching. These men cannot be the teachers of choice, only the man called to teach, and trained to teach should be teaching. It would be good if all called to teach in the area of Pastoral ministries had experience in that area, but it does not take pastoral experience to teach books of the Bible, nor Greek, nor Hebrew etc.

To qualify what I have said, I have seen a number of men that couldn't make it in churches, but ended up teaching in colleges/seminaries. I've seen men that were unable to properly care for discipline problems in their churches go into positions of leadership in other organizations. At the same time I know men that were called to teach, trained to teach rejected because they didn't fit the "former pastor" mind-set. The "He isn't just like us" syndrome.

6. There is a real possibility that this book is aimed at the church leadership rather than the congregation. At least this portion of the book. James seems to take direct aim at the leaders/teachers for their activities.

Leader, how do you treat your people? Leader, how do you seat people? Leader, how do you use your tongue with your people?

7. Might we list some ways the tongue could get the teacher/leader into trouble.

a. The seminary mentioned earlier had one or more that used their tongues to accept this student back into school, and one or more allowed him to be acceptable to a church with the inactivity of their tongue.

b. The perversion of the Word.

c. The problem of passing on gossip.

d. The mistake of sharp and cutting remarks toward others.

e. The lack of use in keeping gossips at bay, of not preaching the Word, of not warning the sheep

of danger.

f. Of not speaking their mind when a group is making a decision for the body of believers. Some suggest not rocking the boat, but I say rock the boat so everyone knows what is really on the table so that a proper and informed decision can be made.

When teaching I was in a board/faculty meeting and had the distinct impression that the board had an agenda that they were not disclosing to the faculty. As the meeting drew to a close, I told the gathering that the board was in charge and that they needed to set the agenda and inform the faculty of that agenda so that the faculty could decide whether they could comply with that agenda.

I was right; within a few months the faculty was informed of the agenda that I was sure had not been brought forth in the meeting. Decisions are made on information and if information is withheld a proper choice cannot be made.

8. We must not miss the truth that the tongue is a tremendous force for good as well as for bad. We often dwell on the negative - in fact it seems that is what James is doing - he must be a legalist in the sense of modern day preachers - he dwells on the negative.

The bit in the horses mouth correctly used brings great good and joy to the rider, and the correct use of the rudder, likewise brings about great good on the part of the ship and its crew.

So, the tongue can bring great good as it teaches the Word correctly and as it admonishes, corrects and encourages the believers.

9. I would like to consider the role of teachers in the church. Oft times they are the folks that just kind of do their thing, but the preacher is the man of the hour. In the early church the elders were the teachers, they were the important part to every person spiritually. The new believer would look to them for advice on how to live their lives I am sure and look to them for their spiritual food.

I would submit that the elders of today should be the teachers, not allowing just anyone to fill in the teaching slots. The teachers, in Ephesians four were part of the training process that built new believers into witnessing parts of the body of Christ. This is not being done today I fear in most churches. In most churches, any training is from the pastor and that is not often centered on the witnessing and work of the Lord aspect.

We should have teachers that train people to do the work of God. That is the purpose of the church. Eph. 4.11 "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: 14 That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with

every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [even] Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Anything less than this is not a real church functioning as it ought. Teachers should be the cream of the crop, the best of the best, and they should be doing more than just teaching a Sunday morning class. They should be teaching new believers at every opportunity.

The problem, as most of you know is that most churches do not have enough new believers for anyone to train. The church is not growing by witnessing it is growing by propagation. We might grow due to new births in the congregation but that is often about it.

I was speaking at a missions conference in Nevada and stayed in the home of a dear old Christian that told me that he had watched the Mormon Church over many years in his town. He went on to tell me that he did not know of one towns member that had converted, that all their growth was from within. This is about where most Bible believing churches are today.

Teachers should be an important part of our church. Our elders should be doing the teaching, the training and bringing people to maturity in Christ. Now, that statement requires something. Did you catch it? Elders are men, and they should be teaching the people. Not women teaching the children, but the men teaching the people.

I don't decry what women have done for years, but men should be teaching those little ones as well as the big ones. I don't have a problem with women teaching children, but firmly believe that men should be doing the work. It is not that women should not be involved. I can't think of a better thing than an elder and his wife teaching a children's class. This would be a team that would produce some great results.

Our children are not being taught in most of our Sunday schools, they are being entertained. If there is teaching, it is often loosely coordinated with the teaching before and after the class. Curriculum is not used in a meaningful manner in most churches.

We gave our children a test once, and were shocked by the results. The quiz was over the Old Testament accounts and related to all the major Bible figures. The children knew who the different people were, but they had no idea of how they related to one another. They had a lot of facts and knowledge, but had little knowledge of how it all related.

This was the result of us having been in a number of Sunday schools over the years, filling in and coopastoring. They had not been subjected to a proper curriculum that would have taught in a meaningful, sequential manner. Result? Knowledge with no organization.

Teaching today is about the same. People are on the move so much that often there is little

coordination of what children are taught. We might consider giving tests in our Sunday schools to see where children are and teach them from there.

A test might not be such a bad idea for new church members so that they can be trained properly. That would, by the way, require some work on the part of the "SPIRITUAL" elders to set up the tests, to know where the people should be spiritually etc. Yes, a trained eldership would be required.

10. The above point may point out the need of some teacher qualifications for your teachers to live up to or to qualify to teach. Let's consider some teacher qualifications.

a. Since they seem to be on the level of pastors in Ephesians four, maybe some good spiritual qualifications would be a good place to begin. You can find many in the list for elders/deacons in I Timothy three and Titus one.

b. Some evidence that they have the gift of teaching. Ability to communicate well, seeming growth in the students he has taught, and spiritual maturity in his own life.

c. Commitment to teach and not just dabble at it. Many churches have systems that allow their teachers off time so they can "recoup" or whatever they think they need. Consistency in the classroom is needed - same teacher all the time.

d. We have assumed salvation is a part of their life, but also some level of maturity as well. He doesn't have to be perfect, but he should have some maturity.

e. Knowledge adequate to teach the level he would teach.

f. Ability to communicate with those he would teach. Now, I am not talking about an ability to talk, but an ability to communicate - two way communication. We have been under many a teacher that loved to talk but their communication skills were limited.

I have a section on my website about teaching if you are interested in further thought along this line.

Sad to say, but in our day, you might consider a background check since there are many sexual deviants on the loose that would not have a problem with dishonesty to get at children.

11. The tongue is a very powerful tool. It controls our own being, and the sad part is that it can control others as well. This control of others can be good or bad. In the case of the teacher they should be careful to teach only truth and proper doctrine.

On the other hand Hitler, Stalin, and many others over the years have exerted drastic, evil control over others and we know the results. So, in the church an evil tongue can cause terrible damage to the cause of Christ.

Within the church in general, we have seen different preachers go off into their own little world to the destruction of their followers. Often these men were within larger organizations in their beginning. I have to wonder if their false teaching had been properly condemned or if their spiritual abilities had been screened properly by a spiritual leadership. A different outcome might have been had if their character and doctrine had been condemned before they became a leader.

12. The damage caused by the tongue can be apologized for, but you can never undo the damage it can cause. Someone related the story of a child that had told a lie and that could not grasp the meaning of what he had done. The wise pastor asked the child to gather a bag of chicken feathers and to go to each house in the small town and leave a feather on the step. The next day the child returned and told the pastor that he had completed his task. The pastor then told him to go to each house in town and pick up the feather he had left there the day before. The child protested much, knowing that the wind had blown a gale the previous night. He knew that he could never locate all the feathers. The pastor had made his point quite clearly that the lie is easy on the lips but long on the minds of those it has damaged.

13. Let's list some ways the tongue can be misused.

- a. to teach incorrect doctrine
- b. to gossip (Pr. 26.20 applies well)
- c. to put others down
- d. bragging
- e. exaggeration
- f. building yourself up in the eyes of others
- g. complaining
- h. manipulation of others
- I. to misrepresent or lie
- j. falsely flatter

There are probably others as well.

I recently heard a message that contained a lot of application here. In the first place it was incorrect teaching in many ways, thus the man's tongue had caused false teaching to go forth. The man will face his Lord one day for his teaching and will be held responsible for it.

His teaching was on Ephesians four where the church is told that God gave four gifts for the perfecting of the saints. Apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers. He defined the apostles as missionaries, prophets as current day pastors, evangelists as evangelists and pastor-teachers as the teachers of the local church - completely ignoring the pastor/shepherd portion of the gift.

He mentioned, without proof, that the four in hierarchal order as well as in order of importance. Not sure why a missionary would be over local church pastors, but that is the application of his teaching.

He seemed to ignore literal interpretation; he seemed to ignore the common reading of the text and seemed to call for one prophet for each church rather than the multiple elders that Scripture seems to indicate.

I trust that as you teach, you do so carefully, as your teaching will probably steer the course of churches over many years time.

One of the dreads I have is facing the Lord and finding out how wrong I was and what damage it caused in the Lord's church. I trust that there was good as well.

Chapter fourteen

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 3.6-13

We have discussed the tongue and now we get some more on the same subject. James knows the tongue and knows that a lick and a promise won't do, that we need to really deal with this little member.

Many a reputation has been ruined, many a person crushed, and many a church has split with only a small tongue out of control.

Just an example or two of a man with a sharp tongue. When registering for my senior classes, I wanted to take Chemistry. The principle told me, "Stan, you are too dumb to take chemistry, you wouldn't make it." The same man told a friend that the only way he would be worth anything is if he were to be sent to the state reform school.

Both of us were hurt to the quick. I signed up for Drivers Ed. and extra shop classes. Neither of us were star students, but his comments were off base.

It was of great interest late in life to talk with this friend and find out that both of us held Doctorate degrees, and in fact he had three and had published several books. The tongue can hurt, but not always overcome. However, just because good came from bad in these two cases, does not excuse the miserable use of the principal's tongue.

6 And the tongue [is] a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

Wish James could make up his mind as to whether the tongue is good or bad - wow; could he not get a little more explicit? What a blast from the past we have been subjected too.

Some points about the tongue:

a. It "is a fire." When I was a child, we often spent Sunday with my grandmother in a little town fourteen miles west of our hometown. One Sunday night we were traveling home on the old highway, a graveled road that in years past had been the main route between the towns, and not far out of my grandmothers town we noticed a bright glow in the sky. My folks were quite concerned about what it was. As we drove along the glow became larger and larger. As we neared town it looked as though they entire town was ablaze, when in reality only about a square block in the downtown section was on fire.

The fire was seen for miles around as the fire of the tongue can be known for miles and miles. Often gossip transcends miles and becomes universal knowledge. A school I was associated with

had some problems and the day after I heard of the problems, I received a phone call from a publisher in the East, several states away asking what in the world was going on. News travels fast when it is bad.

b. It is a "world of iniquity" and if you don't have personal knowledge of this you probably will before too long in your life. "Iniquity" relates to unrighteousness or injustice. The tongue can be both, quite easily. It is sin the way some use their tongues and often it leads to injustice.

The venom we see in the media these days is not only unjust but is also sinful. The media reports anything anyone wants to say without a word of opposition or hearing of the other side. There is no accountability and the politicians know that, so say what they will whether it has any basis in fact or not. They know there will be no reckoning, they know that no one really cares if they speak lies, and they have no reason not to make political gain at the expense of someone else.

It is among our members, is kind of like that phrase, "Who me?" "That sort of thing isn't among my inventory of tools to relate to the outside world!" Oh, yes, it is, we all have one and James is not selective in how he speaks to its presence in our body for use by our mind.

That is the real key - the tongue can do nothing without the express permission of the mind. That sets the responsibility squarely upon the individual and how that person uses his/her tongue.

c. It can "defileth the body" and indeed it often does. Oh, the big mess that the tongue can get us into if we do not carefully use it. The term "defileth" means to "spot," or, deminish the quality of, might be a good suggestion. The improper use of the tongue can spot the body; it can detract from the body.

I was sitting at a stop light recently and looked over at a realllllly neat red sports car convertible, and sitting in that car was a beautiful blonde --- picking her nose and eating the result thereof. Now, that was a beautiful woman, a great looking finger, I would guess, and really, that finger ruined the entire image that was before me - and I am sure my wife was well pleased.

The tongue that swears detracts from the whole, in a massive way. The tongue that gossips ruins the demeanor of any man or woman. You might have the perfect look, the perfect intellect and the perfect moral character, but that tongue, when used improperly can ruin any image that anyone has of you.

d. It can set "on fire the course of nature." The media can swing the attention of the public almost any way that it wishes, just by the content of their news. They can turn a word, a phrase, an action into something terrible with the spin of a newscast.

John Dean found this out the hard way. His outburst at a youth get together was inappropriate, in most people's minds, but it was not set into its proper context for some time and the public saw him as a raving lunatic. I have no use for the man's position or beliefs, but he was incinerated by that one little lack of context which didn't show up in my news for a day or two. To this day I

would guess that scene of him hollering and raving is the only thing that comes to mind when they hear his name. (Not that his actions since with his tongue haven't shown him to be a poor choice for president of our nation. Democrats and Republicans alike have distanced themselves from his rhetoric at times.)

If you live anywhere near forests, you know that a spark can result in acres and acres of good forest land burning. If you have seen these fires, you know the terribleness of the fires and the way they consume everything in their path - man is hard pressed to control those big fires.

e. It "is set on fire of hell" gives us clear evidence of the true nature of the tongue if we haven't understood this before.

"Fire" is the same word that Christ used for hell in the Gospels. It was the Jerusalem city dump where all the trash and dead animals were cast and burned. The fire is said to have burned twenty-four seven and depicted well to the Lord's Jewish listeners, what he was talking about when He spoke of eternal torment.

This is the hell of the Devil, the eternal resting place of Satan and his co-workers. Revelation 20.10 "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [are], and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever."

This word is a word that is used exclusively in the synoptic gospels. This is the only occurrence of the word outside of Matthew, Mark and Luke. I personally see this as another indication of the early date of the book. James must have known the word with great clarity and wanted to bring to the readers mind that same image that the Lord often used to describe eternal punishment.

John makes it clear that the Devil is the source of the lie in chapter eight verse forty-four "Ye are of [your] father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

If you tell a lie, you know who is happy and who is not.

7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

This is illustration that man can tame anything except his tongue. I could note that wives are not included here, but I won't put myself in jeopardy. We can control the animal world as a whole, but cannot control such a small thing as our tongue. It doesn't say much for man does it?

The term translated "every" is that word that means most - it is a generic "every" saying that all are controlled but not every single one. The Gospels use the term of John the Baptist when it says that "all Judea" went out to him. We know that not every single person went out.

As a result, not every single creature is controlled. For example a hungry tiger may or may not be controlled by man. A shark that is on a feeding frenzy may not be controlled by man, but most animals are controlled by man and his actions, even the tigers and sharks are now controlled fairly well now that we have guns, repellants and understanding of their habits.

If you think about this, you will note that man has a special relationship to the animals in nature. We have control over them. Can you imagine a world where we had no control over the animal, bird and fish worlds? That would be a rather scary thing. We would not have the freedoms that we have today, and they would probably be much more prevalent in number.

8 But the tongue can no man tame; [it is] an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

I would submit that this is speaking of lost man specifically and to saved man in his unspiritual state. We can control our tongues if we are controlled by the Spirit, but look out if we aren't under the Spirits control.

Two points further about the tongue:

a. The tongue is "an unruly evil" thing. "Unruly" is a term that means "unruly" or something that cannot be restrained. It is an evil that is not restrained - unleashed evil might be the idea. When you fail to control your tongue, you unleash evil upon those around you.

Christian, is that the way you want to be known? Certainly, this is not the way God wants us to be known.

b. The tongue is "full of deadly poison" thus avoid the uncontrolled tongue. "Full" is the idea of a person's mind that is full of emotion. If you have ever lost a loved one, the first hours are full of thought for the loss, and little else enters your mind. This is the idea of full. The tongue is consumed with this poison. "Poison" is a word that is used of the poison of snakes, or can be used of rust. Something that contaminates the whole thing.

Years ago we were given a Chevy II station wagon. It was a great little car and served us well however when we received it there were little dimples of rust around the headlights on the top of the fender. I took the sander out and went to work. It wasn't long before I had a hole the size of a fist on both front fenders. I finished cleaning the rust away and filled in the holes with epoxy and painted it.

The idea of "rust" and "poison" was quite visible within a few months. There was a little line of rust around the epoxy and fresh paint of a few months earlier. Within weeks there were holes showing up and not long after the epoxy fell out. So some further grinding and cleaning and filling and painting, and I am sure that epoxy fell out not long after we traded the car for another.

Rust contaminates and continues to grow in its contamination. So the tongue rusts the body of Christ. It doesn't take but a small poisoned area to ruin an entire assembly if the rust is not

completely eliminated. Had I cut back an inch or two into good metal, I am sure the problem would not have kept recurring. So, in the church if you see rust you need to do some serious damage control as soon as possible.

Often I have seen pastors on inter-net forums ask for advice about how to control problem situations that are beginning to show their face. Most pastors that have experienced the rust of the tongue tell them to immediately act and stop the problem before it grows. Others suggest a wait and see attitude, and these are those that have not seen the poison of the tongue in action.

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

James gives us a look into the foolishness of man in how they use their tongue. I am sure most of you have seen this sort of inconsistency in other believers. Some might even admit to it in themselves :-)

There is indication of the trinity in this passage. It states we bless God, "even the Father" which could be translated also the Father. We bless Christ or the Spirit, and "even" (or also) The Father.

Have you ever noticed that when people swear they usually defame Christ, but seldom do they defame the Father? I don't know that I have ever heard anyone use the Spirit in swearing. Wonder why they seem to have this division of acceptability. Possibly, they relate to Christ in His humanity and He is readily available to their thoughts and tongue.

We bless God yet curse men that are made in the image of God. One of the grand applications to the teaching of our being created in His image is that when we curse men, we are actually near to cursing God for we are quite similar in our created state.

We ought never to curse men, for they are created in His image. Not to speak of the fact that some men are God's children as well.

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

"Blessing" is the term we gain eulogy from. It means speech, blessing, bounty, praise or fair. It is the giving of good words, not speaking with forked tongue as the old western movies put it. This is contrasted with the word for the opposite of blessing, that which is a curse. Two ends of the spectrum. The best and the worst of man's mind can come forth by way of his tongue.

James has a simple statement - "these things ought not so to be."

Think about that the next time you lie - "these things ought not so to be."

Think about that the next time you degrade - "these things ought not so to be."

Think about that the next time you give false witness - "these things ought not so to be."

Think about that the next time you gossip - "these things ought not so to be."

Think about that the next time you - "these things ought not so to be."

These things are wrong - all that should come from our tongue is good, uplifting, and blessed.

There is a man on one of the internet forums where I read a lot. He is a wise man, a reserved man, intelligent man - a real Christian from all appearances. Recently I found that he posts on another board. I went to that board out of curiosity and I found the same man that had none of the qualities that I knew him for. He was caustic, confrontive, nasty, and as pagan an acting man as you can find.

What a contrast between the two personas - the perfect illustration of James words and "these things ought not so to be." He would make good sweet and sour sauce.

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet [water] and bitter?

To prove that "these things ought not so to be" James observes that a water source does not put out two types of water at the same time. It is impossible. It is against nature. It is not logical.

"Fountain" can mean a fissure or spring. When in my early years I went to a Bible camp in north-eastern Nebraska. It was rustic and built by a lake. The lake was fed by a natural spring in the side of the hill above the lake. The spring was on the way between the boys' cabins and the dining hall. It was our custom to stop and drink from that spring every time we passed by it. The water was clean, cool and so good. We always knew that when we stopped we would get clean, cool and good water. It never entered our mind that we might one day find the water dirty, warm and terrible. The later is impossibility for it is not in the nature of the spring to do so.

Gill mentions that Pliny wrote of "a lake with the Trogloditae, a people in Ethiopia, which becomes thrice a day bitter, and then as often sweet; but then it does not yield sweet water and bitter at the same time:"

James continues.

12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so [can] no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

Just as a water source can give only one type of water, so a fig tree can only give one type of fruit and the olive vine only one type of fruit. It is against nature to expect anything else from a fig tree than a fig. What mentally delinquent person would look for an apple on a fig tree? Yet, we see blessing and cursing from the same tongue.

13 Who [is] a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

OHHH, ouch. I can just feel the pain for politicians when they read this passage. It must cut to the quick and deeper if that is possible.

Those in the political realm can switch from the sweets and cream to the fire and ranker in the twist of a tongue. They can greet someone in the media with the velvet of quality chocolate and before their mouth closes begin to tear and mangle the opposition. James says, "these things ought not so to be."

Imagine that glorious day when the politician spoke sweetness of all men that he works with no matter they be Democrat or Republican. Ah, there are dreams but alas, little hope.

APPLICATION:

1. I think that many of us, if we are any judge of human nature at all, can tell when someone's smile and sweet words are a front for trouble headed our way. With that in mind, why would someone knowingly do that to a person that knows what they are doing? You look like a total fool, you are taking your own self respect and grinding it under your feet, and you are showing yourself to be petty, puny and pitiful.

Why in the world do people spew forth syrup while plotting trouble and deception? Guess they seek to look like a total fool.

2. Gill mentions of the tongue, "'when Adam sinned, God laid hold on him, and slit his tongue into two parts, and said unto him, the wickedness which is, or shall be in the world, thou hast begun with an evil tongue; wherefore I will make all that come into the world know that thy tongue is the cause of all this.'" I was not sure where this quote came from, possibly the Talmud that was mentioned later in the context, but he gave assent to the idea by quoting it in his work.

Let us consider the validity of the statement. This is from a much respected old time theologian. Yet, is this statement based in truth, is it based in the Word of God? Let us consider.

a. Is it Biblical? I know of no verse that would suggest that Adam's tongue was split into two parts. I know of no verse that tells us that it was Adam's tongue that caused the problem of sin for him or for the world. I know of no verse that states that it was Adam's tongue that caused evil in the world. On the correct hand, it was his action that caused sin - it was the eating, not the tasting of the fruit that was the problem.

b. Is it truthful? I don't know of any reason to believe that it is truth.

I wonder if the original quote spoke of Satan rather than Adam, and Gill just didn't notice. Don't know.

At the least Gill should have been more careful to footnote his quotes, but at most he seemed to agree with the comment. Moral of the story, consider all you read, and match it up with Scripture, if it is wanting, reject it.

3. Proverbs 26.20-28 has a great message for us today! "Where no wood is, [there] the fire goeth out: so where [there is] no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. 21 [As] coals [are] to burning coals, and wood to fire; so [is] a contentious man to kindle strife. 22 The words of a talebearer [are] as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. 23 Burning lips and a wicked heart [are like] a potsherd covered with silver dross. 24 He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; 25 When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for [there are] seven abominations in his heart. 26 [Whose] hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the [whole] congregation. 27 Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him. 28 A lying tongue hateth [those that are] afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin."

I think the passage is clear enough on its own.

4. Just yesterday I read on a forum that a pastor had been confronted in a church assembly by people that were upset with him for some reason. The man's wife and children were present and the language became quite ugly, even to name calling from the congregation. If the pastor's children were present, I assume other children were present as well.

a. Consider the effect this will have on all those children as they mature. Will they ever see cross words, or even name calling as wrong action as a believer? When they have had this example, I would doubt it.

b. Consider the effect on the wife. How can anyone expect her to ever want to support her husband going into another ministry? She may, but I wouldn't blame her if she didn't.

Those same tongues that asked God for the man of His choosing when calling the man were using those same tongues to lash the man God sent to them.

I do not know who was right and who was wrong, indeed the pastor may be a lemon, but the use of the tongue in this manner is definitely wrong.

c. Consider the effect on the pastor. How open and honest do you think he will be able to be with a new congregation when they start asking him questions?

When the church has problems, it seems that the tongue is always out of control in one way or another and James says, "these things ought not so to be."

Now, I won't even claim to have a proper handle on my emotions/tongue when someone is attacking me, but I must admit one time I was in full control of my emotions and faculties. When pioneering a work years ago, we were meeting in our home. It was the first house we had ever

lived in as a family where we had the run of the entire house.

We loved that old place and were so very thankful for what God had provided for His work and our living accommodations.

The church group was on the verge of outgrowing our large living room that we cleared of furniture and set up folding chairs in each Sunday. I had been pursuing a number of options and felt that the best option would be for our family to buy a house we had been checking into and making the basement into a meeting place and we would gain a building for the church at no cost. Our plan would then be to sell the house to the church when we moved on, for the church to use as a church building or as a parsonage.

I presented this idea to the congregation at a meeting, thinking that there would be some discussion and decision one way or another. I thought this was a great plan for the church, but it would not bother me if they rejected the idea.

I finished presenting about half of the idea when one of the men of the church literally, verbally attacked me. He accused me of many many things which were not true. One of which was that the house we (the family) were renting (and paying the rent on) was not good enough for me and that I was forcing the church to spend money (which was not true, we were going to make the payments) so I could live in a nicer house.

My children were looking at their dad wondering what was going on, then looking at my wife quietly on the front row with tears streaming down her cheeks. Me? I was having a terrible time holding in a side-splitting belly laugh. This situation was so ridiculous that it was terribly laughable, yet this man, his family and others in the church were so serious about their total ignorance of the situation and verbalizing it via their wagging tongues. Their self righteous "assumings" about my character and motivation were so off base and they had no idea.

I closed the meeting, cleared the house and had a great laugh and soon resigned. I'm not sure my wife ever saw the humor of the situation, and I can't say as this was my usual reaction to a tongue-lashing but it worked out for the better. They did not view me as a shepherd but as an adversary, and there is no way that I could minister to them in that situation.

Spirit controlled tongues can benefit so many in the church situation, and self-controlled tongues can cause so much hurt and discord in the church situation. Please, allow God control of this area of your life, it is so important to you, your family and your church.

5. Christ spoke well to this topic in Mark seven. Mark 7.14 And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: 15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. 16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear."

Wow, what a condemnation of our mind and tongue from the Lord, yet Christians still spew forth venom at every turn. Some of the foulest language I've heard in break rooms over the years was spoken by "believers" that wanted to fit in, I suppose. Not that they did, they usually seemed to stick out like the proverbial sour thumb.

6. There is a reverse side to the tongue issue. When the tongue is unloosed on you personally how do you react? Do you unbridle your own and blast them out of the water? That is certainly the natural reaction, but it is not the Biblical reaction. Matthew 18.21-22 speaks of forgiving seventy times seven times. Personal opinion, that totals four hundred and ninety, a number that represents completeness of God's program in Daniel.

When someone gives you a tongue lashing, before you react, engage your thought processes and allow the Spirit to have opportunity to control your reaction, you will be much more pleased with the results.

7. We have focused on the deliberate misuse of the tongue, but there may be an inappropriate use of the tongue that we don't recognize as a true misuse. When you make a thoughtless remark to a person or don't think before you speak. These things can hurt just as bad as the well thought out cutting remarks.

We had ministered in a small church a few years earlier and had been back a couple of Sundays to see how the church was doing. The curious part of the people in this church was the fact that between our ministering there and our return visit, the only time we had heard from anyone in the church was when they wanted something from us. They called now and then to ask my wife to play the piano, they called several times when they had electronic equipment that needed repair, and that is all - no interest what so ever except when they wanted something.

After the two Sunday visits I was sitting in the living room when one of the men of the church showed up to "call" on us. About three minutes into the visit he mentioned that they sure could use my wife to play the piano and help in the Sunday school. (They had several people in the church capable but not willing to do the Sunday school job.

Needless to say I was hurt because I knew my wife would ask how the visit went (she was upstairs), but on the other hand I could hardly keep from breaking out in laughter at the man's comments.

Be careful of your motivations and their outworking in the use of your tongue.

8. We might also consider the inconsistent use of the tongue. How about using it to proclaim a double standard? You know, the college that does not allow Rock and Roll music on campus because the beat is straight from heathen Africa and their music, yet allows their choir to cross the country singing Negro spirituals that seem to have the same beat.

Or how about the church that preaches against the movies because of the terrible content, and

especially those terrible previews that might have "R" rated stuff in them, yet the church leaders and most of the congregation sit at home watching the three year old movies, with all the previews of "R" rated stuff as well as the terrible commercials.

May we use our tongues to be consistent as well as loving and nurturing?

Chapter fifteen
Mr. D's Notes on James
James 3.13-18

13 Who [is] a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

Show your wisdom meekly. Let others discover your wisdom instead of telling them about it.

There are some on internet boards that are all wise and are not humble about telling you so. They are usually always right and you are very definitely always wrong, no matter what.

One such person took a sarcastic remark of mine and twisted it into one of the most hateful paragraphs in history. The person twisted what I said to great lengths, and then when I corrected the mistake she had made, the person continued making application and innuendo from what she assumed I meant. I didn't know what I said in the first place, and I didn't know what I meant when I told the person they were incorrect. Thus, the person was right about me, that I was a person with a soul full of hate, and a few other choice comments. ALL based on what they had incorrectly assumed and in face of complete correction by the one originally speaking.

Now, that is wisdom, but it isn't the wisdom James is talking about. One that is wise and has knowledge is to show works by their conversation or living, and use wisdom with meekness.

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

"Envy" is a word that is also translated "zeal" in the New Testament. It is that drive of the zealous person to do the very best that they can in their effort to please God. Zeal often gets a bad name in Christian circles and this is definitely wrong.

Zeal is a good thing and more Christians should be zealous. This is one of the great faults of Christianity in America. Few are zealous about their Christian living.

In this context, it is used in a most negative way to describe the incorrect strivings of your life - for things, for power, for glory, for position etc.

"Strife" could be depicted very easily by taking short clips of the Bush/Kerry presidential campaign. It is the strife or conflict of campaigning. The word relates to putting one's self forward for a position and doing most anything to gain that position.

If you have envy, if you have strife in your heart, you are admonished to take no glory and not lie. People that envy and have conflict in their mind/heart often set themselves to glory at any cost to truth.

15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but [is] earthly, sensual, devilish.

The reader is instructed to realize that envy and strife are not from God, but that it is from the world, the senses and the Devil. It is not Christian by any masking of reality.

When a church is having problems, you can almost taste the evil that is surrounding the problem. It is not something Christian, it is not something that is "almost right" it is something evil and worldly, not spiritual and Christian.

Church trouble is not caused in the open. It is caused behind closed doors. Trouble is hatched in the inner most mind of one that is not walking with God. Trouble is spread in secret, not openly around those that it would poison. Often this trouble is based on the sensual, the breathing of words, and the moving of information from one to another. Gossip spreads like the dog flu that we heard about in the year 2005. The new strain of flu that affected dogs was spread naturally because dogs always lick and breath, nose to nose in their greetings. Gossip is the same, when you get two noses together you have transfer of all that is bad.

16 For where envying and strife [is], there [is] confusion and every evil work.

What a description of church trouble. Confusion and every evil work. To get what they want those causing trouble, will cause confusion and will use any reason/tactic to gain what they want. Often, when there are problems, they all can be traced to one person that is using every tactic that they can muster to accomplish their purpose.

"Confusion" is just that, confusion, or turmoil or instability or state of disorder. Having been in situations where someone was causing this sort of strife, I can attest to the instability that it causes. It becomes the focus of all that you do. You want to be on your guard not to say anything that would cause more trouble; you walk on eggshells, not knowing what side the person you are talking to is on.

There is little focus on anything good. You are focused on the problem. Your prayer life tends to be focused on the problem, and sadly your family and personal life are often focused on the problem to the detriment of your work and your family.

Paul calls this carnality. I Cor. 3.3 "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

When you see envy and strife in this list, you might give second thought to being involved in it. Gal. 5.20 "Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Strife is the same Greek word, while envy is a different word for envy.)

At this point the reader should be fully aware that it is their responsibility to turn away from anyone showing these characteristics. They are not Christian, they are not Godly and they are not appropriate. Turning away will give clear signal that you are not interested in ungodliness and it

may cause the perpetrator to rethink their incorrect activity and thought life.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, [and] easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

One of the conclusions I came to in my study in wisdom was that real wisdom comes from God, but that assumed and flaunted wisdom is from self. Beyond all that this distinction makes is seen in the list that James sets forth here.

Wisdom from God is:

"Pure" James says "first pure," not that pure is the first in the list, even if it is, but that most importantly it is pure. Or, truly it is pure. The word speaks of moral purity, being immaculate, or something that excites reverence. Without blemish, might be a good line of thought.

When you speak forth out of your wisdom is it as pure as the driven snow, or is there something not quite so pure about what you say?

"Peaceable" would relate to being undisturbed by trifles or free from agitation. It relates to being undisturbed by trifles. I didn't watch much of the Supreme Court Chief Justice confirmation hearings but I was impressed with Judge Roberts as he listed to the questions of the lunatics on the committee and made good answer in spit of their total lack of wisdom. He was not swayed or upset or disturbed with the little stuff, because he knew what the result was going to be. He concentrated on the majors and allowed the minors or trifles to blow on by.

This peace among men comes from our peace with God. If the up and down relationship is correct then the horizontal relationships will also be correct.

Of course the committee was irritate that they couldn't upset the man, they goaded him, they shot barbs at him, were very rude and cantankerous with him, but he made his point - let's deal with the big, correct issues not this petty stuff you are toying around with.

"Gentle" is, according to the lexicon, related to being patient, to moderation, to being suitable or equitable and fair. Someone suggested that it might mean to allow for the limitations of others, being patient with those that are less able to.

Yesterday I was entering an intersection on a green light when a woman made a left hand turn in front of me. I was very "gentle" with her; I just called her dingbat, rather than some of those other words that she so richly deserved. I was allowing for her limitations, which was her limited ability to drive, as well as her limited mental capacity. That was sarcasm; don't take me too literally :-)

"Easy to be entreated" indicates that the person is open to reason, open to be talked to, open to possible change. It has the idea of compliant.

Now, that has a wide set of ramifications in the church today. Complaint takes on a whole different character if your pastor is a dictator. YOU WILL BE COMPLIANT probably isn't the thought of James, it would be more the thought of when someone comes to you with a problem, you are open to listen and work out the solution. Compliant would carry with it the idea of compliant with what is right. You don't want to comply or become part of error.

"Full of mercy" Full means full, or topped off - it is used of a person full of thought toward good or bad. "Mercy" is a desire for kindness toward another with the desire to extend that kindness. When the big storm hit New Orleans great mercy was shown by the public toward the survivors. They opened their cupboards, they opened their pocket books and they even opened their homes to the plight of the people. They desired to help and they took action on that desire.

"Full of good fruits" is simply a person that fills their time doing good. "Fruit" relates to the fruit you eat, fruit of the field or fruit of your physical being, your children. The joy of doing good, should be evident the first time that one does a good thing. The joy of doing is a great reward. When traveling I would often stop to give assistance to people having car trouble.

What a joy to help them get themselves out of a terrible situation. One night late we stopped and a man was stranded. He had no flashlight nor tools with him and we were in a deserted part of the freeway. We towed him down off the interstate and took a look at the car. His battery terminals were in need of attention and within a few minutes he was up and running. I gave him a tract as I left.

As we drove off the man was in his car reading the tract by the light of the dome light. What a feeling of accomplishment and a real feeling that I existed for a purpose that night.

I am afraid, I don't stop any more due to the danger, well now and then I do if it looks like it is safe. I changed this custom one day when I stopped to help two fellows. One had a big wrench in his hand but they didn't know what was wrong with the car. I wondered to my self, so why does he think it will take that big a wrench to fix it when he doesn't know what is wrong. I stuck my head under the hood and could see him moving around behind me, so I casually moved around to the front of the car and when he moved around behind me again, I moved to the side and headed for my car wishing them good luck. I really didn't want my head to become an extension to that wrench.

"Without partiality" relates to being fair, no matter who the person is, be they black or white, Jew or Gentile, rich or poor. Treat all the same way. In the above illustration of our helping travelers, we stopped to assist families, old clunker cars, and nice new cars, anyone that was in trouble. The joy of those we helped was the same, and the joy we received was the same - all are equal, and all should be treated equally.

"Without hypocrisy." Absolute honesty with yourself as well as with others. The church is to be a place of openness and honesty among its people but I find all too often that there are secrets, lies and half truths within believer's relationships with others.

I find that boards are not totally honest with the people, pastors are not necessarily honest with their people, and I rather doubt that the congregation is all that honest toward the leadership either.

How do we think we can function when we treat one another with so little respect? We have no trust, we have no respect and we have little honest communication. That makes for a rather stunted church.

And so, with this long list of advantages to Godly wisdom why don't we relate to James 1.5 more often? "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all [men] liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

It seems to me that if we were wise Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians would be our gain. Eph 4.29-32 "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

If you are a peacemaker, you sow peace and the fruit of peace is righteousness. The reverse of this is also true, if you are the center of discord, you sow uneasiness and the fruit will be unrighteousness.

The Israeli/Palestinian conflict in 2005 saw the Jewish people extend olive branches to their enemies. They desired a peace that was acceptable to both parties. They withdrew many of the Israeli settlers from occupied territories as a gesture of peace. This was certainly the right thing to do. However, on the Palestinian side we saw the disrupters, the trouble makers that would take this gesture of peace and twist it into something ugly for their own gain.

Constantly, as in this passage, we see good and evil compared - with the obvious "good" of good, why would anyone choose the "evil" of evil? Because their nature is evil, might be the answer.

APPLICATION

1. Barnes notes that the term translated "gentle" appears here only in the Bible. Constable makes the observation that the term is used in classical Greek of a horse that has been broken and that will submit to the bridle.

Interesting to me is the fact that he chose this particular word when he has just given the illustration of a bridle in relation to the tongue. Godly wisdom bridleth the tongue, might be a person's observation.

This wisdom of God will allow you to know when to speak, how to speak and what to speak - that is a very good thing, I wish many Christians would realize this - ask for wisdom before they speak.

I recently saw a report on the culture in Japan that has shifted. Before World War II the Japanese held elders with very high regard, they were viewed as having great wisdom due to their age and life experience.

After the war the Japanese created a climate of dedication to the corporate home. All workers gave themselves whole to the corporation that supported them. This shift has left the younger generations feeling slighted and they see no reason to uphold the respect for elders that once was. This probably comes from the fact that the fathers and probably many mothers were not around to teach, to counsel, to guide the younger generation, thus they don't know the parents have life experience, and they don't know that there is wisdom tucked away in those grey heads.

America is not much different. Our fathers have sold out to the gaining of stuff - read that as committed to the corporation that gives the money that buys the stuff. The young see little reason to respect someone that is not there.

American teens have little respect for the aged - they are to be shoved aside. Back thirty years ago, I saw this mind-set in place. I was riding in a van with another man and a teenager. An older person was driving a little slow ahead of us and the teen, after a mile or so, exclaimed very loudly, "Get out of the way, why don't they put him out of his misery so we can get going."

I reminded the teen that when he was old there would be a whole new generation with his thinking and voting and they might just vote in euthanasia.

Bingo, our state voted in assisted suicide a few years ago. We have heard government people voice the opinion that the older generation needs to get out of the way so the newer generation can move ahead - context being assisted suicide. Soon it won't be assisted, but forced.

In fact news reports mention that people in a coma in Europe are euthanized daily. This ought not to be true in any form, yet man has found "wisdom" to say that this is the right and true thing to do.

2. Constable defines wisdom as seeing life from God's perspective. I have mentioned that good wisdom is from God, so this might be a good definition. Take some time to consider his definition.

I have a brief study on wisdom as it is found in the Word on my website. I conclude with a listing of the main points. I will include this listing at the bottom of this file. It includes a little about the unwise as well.

3. Constable makes the observation that incorrect wisdom is actually worldliness. I had never

thought of worldliness in that manner, but he is right on target. Worldliness usually is related to the material realm, but in fact it is the whole mind-set of the world, be it the material stuff, or the intellectual stuff - all comes from the world's influence on us and the Devil's control over the world.

The Pop singer Madonna calls herself the material girl - she is correct to a fault. Her life, her mind-set, her being is wrapped up in the world and all it has to offer. We shouldn't be overly judgmental of her and her character, since many of us are in the same mind-set. We may not be outward with it as she is, but many Christian's minds run in the same gutter and the same intellectual moral climate as she does.

The incidence of Christian men involved in pornography is staggering if you believe the reports circulated today. I have seen evidence on internet forums that would indicate these surveys and reports are accurate. Even to the extent that many pastors are tied up in pornography's grip.

Christians, we are not pure, we are not Christ centered if our minds are drawn to the filth of the television. I find it hard to believe some of the shows that Christians admit to watching on a regular basis. I find the commercials for some of these programs vile.

I assume that these believers figure the rating system is for the nonbeliever because they seem to ignore it for themselves, and what is worse, their families.

4. In verses fourteen through sixteen there is a discussion on envy and strife. This is in between the fact that James is speaking of many teachers, and wisdom from above. There is a topic that relates to this that I have seen discussed often on the internet. The educated, versus the uneducated, the accredited degree people versus the nonaccredited degree people.

I was on a board recently where there were three different threads on similar subjects. One was on lay people that are uneducated and the educated thinking the former were dumb. Another spoke to the subject of whether a certain seminary was "up to the proper level" of education. The final one was discussing degrees from nonaccredited institutions versus the other end of the spectrum.

In all three the "educated, accredited degreed" were quite arrogant and condescending toward all but any on their own level. What an example of causing strife with the tongue and wisdom from the world. Wisdom from God would not hurt and demean people that are serving God in the manner in which He led them.

How dare snobs look down their noses at the education that God desired for the others. Yes, some may seek "degrees" for the improper reasons, but I'd venture a guess that most feel what they are doing or have done has resulted from direction from the Lord via prayer and the Word.

This sort of strife ought not to be a part of the Christian realm, yet it is common. The educated, in this case, were causing strife among the brethren. I must be honest and say I have seen the

uneducated causing strife by looking up their noses at the educated and blaming them of the same thing - that they are just chasing degrees. Both are seemingly wrong and should confess their sin.

The key for those looked down upon is to ignore such ignorance and go on walking with God and keep their eyes off of man. An old Webster's dictionary mentions of envy "Whoever envies another, confesses his superiority." That is quite true, so don't.

The more important point is that each one of us is responsible for ONLY our own actions. If any, whether educated or uneducated does wrong, that person will give accounts to God and God alone.

Probably the more clear and present problem is that Christians are going to strangers on the internet for advice on something they should be clearing with God, not man.

5. Verse fourteen mentions envy. Envy has a couple of aspects. There is the thought of being uneasy or a feeling of inferiority in light of someone we perceive to be superior to us. There is also the aspect of feeling bad that we don't have what other people have.

Now, to boil both of these down, we should find that it is a lack of being satisfied with what we have or are. If I am satisfied with what God has done in my life, and what He has given me, then there will be no envy when I see a rich man or someone that has talents that I do not.

My wife and I watch a real estate show now and then and we enjoy seeing all of the modern homes that are built and all of the goodies inside. We also love to see the space available in these homes. We have an eight hundred square foot home on two levels and are somewhat cramped, especially when we have visitors. We think about how nice it would be to have more room, you know, one of those homes that have more room in their living room/dinning area than we do in our entire house.

Then we think of the cost of furnishings, then of upkeep, then of cleaning it, then of heating it, then of lighting it and soon we are so very satisfied with our little eight hundred square footer that we can heat and cool for eighty dollars a month (Just had to change the eighty from a seventy that I had entered in a few months ago :-). There may be twangs of envy, until we consider what we have and what we don't have and then become satisfied with what we do have and what we don't have to heat, light, and maintain.

6. Verse sixteen brings up the subject of strife within the church. I have observed a strife, and division within the church as a whole in America. There are actually, in politics, the liberal and the right, I won't comment on the various meanings of "right" but we all know that these two political areas exist. In the Bush/Kerry campaign we found that the liberal side found that they could say anything that they wanted to, truth or lie, and get away with it in the media. The media seldom called for proof or apology, just reported it as it was, and the public was left to find out on their own whether it was fact or fiction.

Very sadly, this rhetoric has been adapted by the liberal side of the church and they blast the right side of Christianity with their venom and rhetoric. I read a letter to the editor recently that accused the Christian right of about everything there was, then the author ended his comments with "My Jesus" is thus and so, depicting the namby pamby weakling we know that the liberal side of Christianity portrays. This is blatantly divisive and purposely causing strife within the church. It is bad enough in politics, but it is worse in the church. My Jesus is your Jesus in my Bible, but the liberal mind sees him in a very different way than the Bible seems to picture Him.

Within church congregations we seem to be seeing more and more strife and problems. People are causing division, they are causing unrest, and they are causing all sorts of envy and upset by their words and actions.

Even one person stirring up trouble will begin to find others that will partake in their beef with others. One person can split a church if given enough time.

The key to a peaceful church is to stop these little problems as soon as possible. Get in touch with church leadership if you know of someone starting to stir and see if things can't be corrected before serious division becomes a real problem.

If someone comes to you complaining, or causing strife, stop them - ask them to not do that in your home. Encourage them to go to those that they complain about and settle things Biblically rather than by church split.

I read recently of a church where the pastor was coming up for a vote of confidence forced by the part of the church that thought he wasn't doing a good job. He was in a whirl, trying to figure out what to do, whether to resign and beat them to the punch or stick it out and fight if need be.

As the vote came closer, he still hadn't made up his mind, when one of the deacons came to him and confessed that his poor spirit had caused all the problems and asked forgiveness. The entire division of the church was caused by this one man and his constant stirring of strife. The vote did not come to pass when the congregation realized there really wasn't a problem with the pastor.

The sad part is, the culprit in so many churches, has not found their error and many a pastor has been forced to leave God's chosen place for them, and many churches have split due to the strife. If those individuals don't find the sour side of their spiritual life, they will answer to the Lord face to face for it one day. I don't think they will be envied in that day!

7. There may be reason, in our day, to suggest that some with Godly wisdom and are not using that wisdom in the battle for God. A radio talk show host in California has recently called for the mega church pastors to become more outspoken in the homosexual/marriage problems in the state. The problem is being seen country wide, but California state government is poised to okay such things and there seemingly is going to be no Christian outcry from the churches most visible leadership.

When God has given wisdom, He expects it to be used for His purposes, not for some pastor's gain. If you are a wise person, then you ought to be sharing the benefit of that wisdom with others. There is no reason for you to have it if you aren't going to use it.

There are a couple of reasons for the need to use wisdom. First, the good of the world at large can be changed by Godly wisdom. Secondly, the congregation is to be warned. The shepherd protects the sheep, yet in these large churches the people are wondering why there is no warning coming from their shepherd.

This is one of the drawbacks to big churches. They grow and grow and the budget grows as well and there is a pressure not to rock the financial boat lest people leave and the finances go under.

It is also one of the big drawbacks to the paid pastor. When the finances start to be a problem, the pastor's salary becomes a problem so there is a pressure to raise the finances and keep the boat afloat for personal reasons. I am not saying all pastors allow these pressures to affect them, but some do and it is a problem.

THE WISE

Wisdom in a man is profitable to the man and God Job 22:2.
Wisdom is learned and should be sought Psalm 2:10.
Wisdom abandon is a mark of the unwise Psalm 36:3.
Wisdom is a hard worker in the harvest Prov. 10:5.
Wisdom is favorable Prov. 10:19.
Wisdom in a parent brings forth discipline Prov. 17:2.
Wisdom avoids hell or any unpleasantness Prov. 15:24.
Wisdom is a choice for and toward God Dan. 12:3.
Wisdom produces understanding Dan. 12:10.
Wisdom does right even when no one is looking I Sam. 18:5.
Wisdom is circumspect even when no one is watching I Sam. 18:14.
Wisdom has the respect of those without I Sam. 18:30.
Wisdom is examined by the lost Psalm 101:2.
Wisdom seeks to live a perfect life Psalm 101:2.
Wisdom in decision making will produce good Proverbs 16:20.
Wisdom considers the wicked Proverbs 21:12.
Wisdom is instructed Proverbs 1:3.
Wisdom is not solely for the believer Gen. 41:8.
Wisdom stands out among the crowd Gen. 41:33, 39.
Wisdom is discrete Gen. 41:33, 39.
Wisdom is not bribed Exod. 23:8.
Wisdom serves Exod. 28:3.
Wisdom gives to God willingly Exod. 35:25.
Wisdom desires the best for God Exod. 36:1.
Wisdom leads Deut. 1:13.

Wisdom holds forth a good testimony Deut. 4:6.
Wisdom is gender nonspecific - women can be wise as well as men Jud. 5:29.
Wisdom has been given to the angels II Sam. 14:20.
Wisdom knows its times Esther 1:13.
Wisdom surrounds itself with others which are wise Esth 6:13.
Wisdom utters wisdom Job 15:2.
Wisdom shares itself Job 15:18.
Wisdom may be scarce Job 17:10.
Wisdom listens to others Job 34.2; Job 34.34.
Wisdom can come to the simple Psalm 19:7.
Wisdom does not counter death Psalm 49:10.
Wisdom understands the loving-kindness of the Lord Psalm 49:10.
Wisdom will learn Prov. 6:6; Prov. 8:33.
Wisdom will receive glory Prov. 3:35.
Wisdom keeps it quiet Prov. 9:12.
Wisdom makes a father glad Prov. 10:1; Prov. 15:20.
Wisdom receives commandments Prov. 10:8.
Wisdom lays up knowledge Prov. 10:14.
Wisdom is a soul winner Prov. 11:29-30.
Wisdom accepts counsel Prov. 12:15.
Wisdom's tongue is health Prov. 12:18; Prov. 14:3.
Wisdom listens to his father's instructions Prov. 13:1.
Wisdom leads to life Prov. 13:14.
Wisdom rubs off on others Prov. 13:20.
Wisdom buildeth the home well Prov. 14:1.
Wisdom avoids evil 14:16.
Wisdom's crown is its riches Prov. 14:24.
Wisdom uses knowledge aright Prov. 15:2.
Wisdom disperses knowledge Prov.15:7.
Wisdom is avoided by the scorner Prov. 15:12.
Wisdom hears the reproof of life Prov. 15:12.
Wisdom counters wrath Prov. 16:14.
Wisdom is prudent Prov. 16:21.
Wisdom educates its mouth Prov. 16:23.
Wisdom accepts reproof Prov. 17:10.
Wisdom holds its peace Prov. 17:28.
Wisdom's ear seeketh knowledge Prov. 18:15.
Wisdom scatters the wicked Prov. 20:26.
Wisdom is prepared Prov. 21:20.
Wisdom is strong Prov. 21:22.
Wisdom conquers over strength Prov. 21:22.
Wisdom is listened to Prov. 22:17.
Wisdom listens Prov. 23:19.
Wisdom brings joy to its father Prov. 23:24.

Wisdom brings war when necessary Prov. 24:5.
Wisdom is not a respecter of persons Prov. 24:23.
Wisdom reproves Prov. 25:12.
Wisdom answers the fool Prov. 26:4-5.
Wisdom has no conceit Prov. 26:12.
Wisdom in the son is the father's answer to reproach Prov. 27:11.
Wisdom keepeth the law Prov. 28:7.
Wisdom turneth away wrath Prov. 29:8-9.
Wisdom contends with the fool Prov. 29:8-9.
Wisdom keeps his mind Prov. 29:11.
Wisdom is illustrated by insects Prov. 30:2.
Wisdom strengthens Eccl. 7:19.
Wisdom changes countenance Eccl. 8:1.
Wisdom is discerning Eccl. 8:5.
Wisdom may not be remembered Eccl. 9:15.
Wisdom is heard Eccl. 9:17.
Wisdom prods Eccl. 12:11.
Wisdom builds on solid foundations Matt. 7:24.
Wisdom may not know all Matt. 11:25.
Wisdom bows to all costs Matt. 23:34.
Wisdom acts Matt. 24:45.
Wisdom recognizes value owed Rom. 1:14.
Wisdom is not conceited Rom. 12:16.

THE UNWISE

The unwise are wasteful and troublesome Psalm 94:8.
The unwise detract from the wise Prov. 10:19.
The unwise rush to hell and unpleasantness Prov. 15:24.
The unwise parent Prov. 17:2.
The unwise reject God and His Dan. 12:3.
The unwise do not understand Dan. 12:10.
The unwise are less than trustworthy apart from authority I Sam. 18:5; I Sam. 18:14.
The unwise person's decisions produce less than desired results Proverbs 16:20.
The unwise uttereth not knowledge Job 15:2.
The unwise do not become great Job 32:9.
The unwise can be deceived by drink Prov. 20:1.
The unwise may be conceited Prov. 28:11.
The unwise may be conceited Rom. 11:25.

THE SELF PROCLAIMED WISE

Those that think themselves wise will find that God scoffs at them Job 37:24.
Those that think themselves wise seem to be doing evil Prov. 3:7.

Those that think themselves wise are fools Rom. 1:22.

SECULAR WISDOM

It is sought at times Exod. 7:11.

It may not be real wisdom Job 5:13.

It is desired, and possibly faked Job 11:12.

THE DOWNSIDE OF WISDOM

Wisdom is often misunderstood and ignored Job 34:35.

Chapter sixteen

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 4.1-4

INTRODUCTION:

The WORLD WARS: Between 1496 and 1861 A. D. there were only 277 years of peace. The world knows how to dispute.

THE FAMILY WARS: I arrived at my grandmother's house two hours after the funeral had finished. The house was bare - a two-story house was empty of furniture and belongings. The only thing in the house was the kitchen table where they were packing a last box or two. The family had fought over every stick of belonging my grandmother left. The fighting went on after they went home over when the house would be sold, and who really owned the car etc.

THE CHURCH WARS: When I was growing up there was a group in the church that was very conservative, and they loved the pastor. The rest of the folks disliked the pastor so they called a pastor of their liking. The two pastors tried to work together but it was not to be. Over the weeks the church split in half.

The world is expected to war if we look at history at all. The family may war if the problems are large enough, but the church should never war, as a matter of honor and love for their Savior.

4:1 From whence [come] wars and fightings among you? [come they] not hence, [even] of your lusts that war in your members?

Where do church disputes come from? Easy enough to answer, says James. From the lust that is within your own body. Not necessarily sexual lust, but it is not precluded. Specifically in this context of the tongue, of strife, of problems, it seems that lust conjures up all the wrong that comes to the church today.

Due to the comments about adultery in verse four, to follow, some might suggest that this IS sexual lust, but note in verse eleven the speaking is again mentioned. It is not to say that sexual lust can't be a part of the mix, but I think it is forcing the context to say that it is sexual lust alone.

The use of the terms "in your members" indicates that this problem gets all parts of the being involved. The feet to get you where you need to be to spread the venom, your hands to write it down, and your tongue to speak it. When someone is bent on causing strife it, will come out from the entire being of the person. They will be absorbed by their task until it is completed.

The more specific idea of the text might well be the members of the local church body. The congregation comes to war with one another. The verse speaks of the strife and division within

the church and it is certainly a war when the church body starts attacking itself.

2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

We lust for things but have not those things. We kill and desire but can't obtain. "Desire" is that word for zeal again. You are zealous to have your desires fulfilled.

We fight and war but have not because we ask not. Not that God will give us things if we ask, but this most likely refers back to asking for wisdom - Godly wisdom from above. We have not wisdom because we don't ask for it; we'd rather do it on our own in our own way with the wisdom of the world.

All church problems are right here. They are caused by people not asking God for HIS wisdom, instead they replace the void with what the world calls wisdom - you know - humanism, I should be satisfied. If it is okay with me then it is okay for me. I am the center of the universe and all surrounds and bows to me and my desires.

The phrase, "ye kill" is somewhat out of place in this context, in that James is talking about church problems that arise from the tongue and worldly wisdom. This is actually the word for committing murder. It can be used of one putting a gun to someone's head and taking their life. Drastic terminology Mr. James uses.

How can he use "kill" in the same phrase with "desire?" What is he getting at?

Barnes suggests that some say it should read "envy" since there is the possibility of a misreading of the text. The two words are very similar in spelling in the Greek. Barnes dismisses this possibility and suggests that it is a murderous attitude, rather than murder in the literal sense. He does not give a basis for this other than the same "conjecture" with which he dismisses the thoughts of those that suggest "envy."

Robertson suggests that the phrase might be better translated "murderous envy" or envy that could drive to murder, not that murder had occurred. Others simply include the term in their commentary on envy without dealing with it.

It might be possible that James is using hyperbole here, by using a drastic term for the way they are treating one another due to their envy. Constable also suggests this interpretation of hyperbole.

It might also be suggested that their envy, if not controlled, will lead to murder, which is a truth in our own society.

Personally the only line of thought I am comfortable with would be the hyperbole, or possibly it should be taken literally. It is possible that James knew that some had died from this terrible

envy. In that day, life had little value to one living in the mind-set of the world. Indeed, this is true in our own day. People that are bent on owning your belongings seldom stop at just taking the things, but often kill you if you get in their way, if not just kill you for the fun of it.

The best of the possibles in my mind would be that he was exaggerating for effect. You envy so deeply that you may well be murderers in your work. This might work into the "murderous envy" suggested by Robertson, and would be fitting in the context, rather than an actual taking of life.

Some contemplation on I John 3.22 and 5.14 might bring further light to the subject for you. 22. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." 5.14 "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:"

3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume [it] upon your lusts.

Rather straight forward - you pray for something, but don't get it because you ask for things you can use to satisfy your own lust.

"Lust" is the word we base "hedonistic" on. It means lust and desire for pleasure. "Amiss" is a word that means sick or diseased. When we are praying for things for our own pleasure, we are diseased. Not a grand picture for a believer.

This might relate to praying for a new car, it might mean asking God to pay for an education that you want so you can be called by some title, it might relate to asking God to place you in a leadership role in the church for the title, and respect's sake, rather than serving God.

4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

This is speaking to spiritual adultery of believers - they are turning against God for their own pleasure. James applies this and states clearly that if you are a friend of the world you are the enemy of God.

Now, that isn't a place I would like to find myself in - being the enemy of God.

Being a friend of the world would be bad enough for the spiritual Christian, but the added consequence is even worse.

What might be a sign of being a friend of the world?

- a. Going to the world's entertainment whether in the theater or at home on the television.
- b. Going to the places that the world loves to go - bars, clubs, wild parties etc.

- c. Doing what the world likes to do - parties, provocative clothes, and provocative life style.
- d. Talking like the world - swearing, all the fad language twists, or inappropriate topics.
- e. Taking any of the above, calling them Christian and doing them because they are "Christian."
- f. Having a world mind-set - being focused on what is going on here, when we ought to be focused on getting there.
- g. Using worldly thinking (humanism, isms, etc.) in a Christian context to reach improper conclusions and actions.

APPLICATION:

1. We have seen that we ask amiss. What are some situations where we might be praying amiss?

a. Oh, Lord, bring the snow so the skiing trip will be great.

b. Oh Lord bless this ball game and let us have the victory for you! Hum, is God interested in winning a ball game?

c. Have you prayed for sunshine for that picnic? Praying for weather is not necessarily wrong, but it ought to be for God's purpose and glory. A radio station in Europe needed to pour a concrete slab for the base of a large piece of equipment. They all prayed for sunshine - it occurred for God's glory.

d. Have you ever prayed for trials to be stopped? Instead, pray that you will have strength to get through them.

2. We mentioned worldliness earlier. Can you define worldliness?

Is it pride, is it lust, is it idolatry, is it self-righteousness?

Is it dressing like the world? Is it talking like the world?

Is it enjoying the mountains? Years ago a pastor friend told me his entire deacon board informed him they would be gone the following Sunday due to an elk hunting trip. He said, that it was okay, he would just put a sign on the church door Sunday, reading, Closed, due to hunting trip.

That Sunday the deacons were in church - they were sleeping during the sermon due to driving all night, but they were there.

Creation is not wrong as long as it doesn't interfere with our relationship with the Creator.

I heard a pastor once that stated that worldliness was anything that hindered the person's relationship with Christ. I think that about covers it. It is concentrating more on here than there.

We tend to think of things, power, and money as worldliness, but there are sneaky types of worldliness that ministers fall into. They most likely fall into the "pride of life" idea that often visits the pastor. These things often creep into all professions and jobs, so I am not picking on pastors.

Preachers can fall into the trap of "I am called to preach" to the exclusion of other needs in the church. I spoke with a deacon of a small town church that was so frustrated with their new pastor. He was called to preach and teach and nothing else. The deacon would ask the pastor to go to coffee at the local café so he could meet some of the townspeople and farmers, but he never had time, he always had to study.

Another man I heard speak once had gotten side tracked on the social end of things. He had become convinced that it was his duty to spend the rest of his life "doing" for the Jews because of Christianity's abuse of them in long ago history. He went to school to study Judaism so he could better minister to them. Had he felt called to do all this that would be another thing, but he was doing it out of some sense of personal guilt for what others had done.

Again, we see concentration on things here to the exclusion of things there.

3. Take some time and consider how Eph. 5.30-33 relates to this thought of James. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife [see] that she reverence [her] husband."

4. Let us spend some time on the Friend/Enemy idea.

FRIEND

ENEMY

one that is closely attached

one that is hostile toward

one that is not hostile toward

one that hates another

one of the same mind-set

one that is a foe

together

adversary

kin

antagonist

close

distant

fondness

dislike

There is the reverse of this as well. If you are a friend with God, you will be the enemy of the world. That sets the stage for some real blessing as well as some real trouble.

5. Some thought on I John 2.15-17 is due here as well. " Love not the world, neither the things [that are] in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 6 For all that [is] in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Note: If you love the world you don't love God - fact.

Note: The three items listed below are of the world, not of God.

Note: The world will pass away along with the threesome.

Note: The man that does the will of God will abide forever.

The fearsome threesome

Lust of the flesh

Lust of the eyes

Pride of life

Most agree that the lust relates to desires of the body and mind, while the pride of life, in my mind is being proud of whom and what you are. That is a lesson in itself. It can relate to all sorts of situations of life, not necessarily to the high and mighty. Being proud that you aren't high and mighty might also be pride of life.

6. In verse four we noted the terms "adulterers and adulteresses." The American Standard Version and Darby's version leave out the term "adulterers" and only lists the feminine term. This depends on which Greek text is used for translation. It doesn't really make much difference, in that the use of the feminine term only would probably mean James was thinking of the church as a whole - the Bride of Christ, which would include both men and women. I don't see that there is any difference between having both terms or only one.

The significance is that the church, when serving the world, is setting up incorrect personal relationships with the world and taking away from their relationship with God.

Just imagine how the spouse feels when they find their partner in marriage has been unfaithful. This is the same relationship or breaking thereof, that God uses to picture how He is treated when we give our time and allegiance to the world and the world's ways.

7. When you see the words "wars and fightings" what comes to your mind? The World Wars, Korea, Viet Nam, Kuwait, Afghanistan, or Iraq? That is our cultural twist on things. Remember that James did not write this year or last, he wrote in the early years of the church.

What might have popped into the minds of the readers in James day? He wrote early, so we might surmise that the Roman legions came to mind as well as their overrunning of Israel, or the conquests of Europe. It might even have been in their mind that Jerusalem was in danger of destruction.

I just want to point out that perspective is important to the understanding of the Word. They weren't thinking of tanks and planes, they would have been thinking, most likely, of one on one combat. They would have been thinking of close, hand to hand combat with someone whose breath they could feel on their face, not the high altitude planes with their guided bombs with cameras in their noses.

He likens church problems to this sort of war. The thought of church problems right now, brings one to the thought of type of music and which translation you should use.

Now, let's for a moment, consider this thought of church trouble today. Yes, we should divide over important doctrine, we should have disputes on many things, but music and translations are two NON-BIBLICAL issues that are splitting churches today. The battles get rather harsh when they come, maybe not to the point of blows, but of the point of real hurt and real pain in those that are involved.

Repeat, these are non-biblical issues and they should never split a church but they do. Those that want one translation over the other or those that require contemporary music will take a church to the ground over the issue and have no Biblical basis for it. This ought not to be!

I have found that even when there are differences of opinion in the church, that there is no quarter given to those that disagree. They are automatically wrong, unbiblical and divisive. This also ought not to be!

The church must offer sanctuary to those of differing opinions on the minor doctrines, but this isn't the case much anymore. Many pastors while offering their opinion deride and insult those that might differ with them and they do this from the pulpit. The result is people leaving the church because of the insults flung.

I am not saying that major doctrine should be compromised, but the other stuff ought to be open to difference of opinion and discussion. There are many in the Calvinist camp that will tell you that if you don't hold to their five points you cannot possibly be saved. I suggest that one be left

up to the Lord that saves rather than the doctrine that is held.

8. We see in this passage the thought of worldliness versus Godliness and pride of life versus satisfaction with your station in life. How does this play out in the church in 2005 or so? When you seek to be deacon or elder, do you do so with God and His work in mind or the little bit of status it might gain you for your business.

Years ago, my brother, a contractor joined the Methodist church because that is where all the business people in our town belonged. He told me it was for the business that he joined. This doesn't seem to be a proper reason to join any organization, church or otherwise. Since my brother was not saved at the time, it mattered little.

If you are a pastor, do you go out looking for bigger churches, to pastor, bigger positions in your fellowship? You ought not unless it is God doing the leading. To seek position most likely is wrong. On the other hand, if you don't go looking will you move on to other areas where God wants you? Sadly in the mind set of the church today, probably not.

The church seems set up for the social climber and anyone that isn't climbing is defective in some way. To remain in one church for years is not viewed as too good on the resume. I know many men that were not into the climbing for climbings sake and when they found themselves without a ministry, there was little call for them to enter again into a church. Many many men have gone back into the secular world because the church hierarchy seems to class them a little lower than the social climber and thus not to be desired.

The church should move to change this misconception so that good men are not lost in the shuffle of climbers. Sure, those that are climbers would suggest that the person that waits on the Lord is not spiritual, but I'm not sure there is a Biblical basis for such a statement.

Many churches have settled for less than God wanted because they were responsive to those that sought bigger churches. The ministry is not an occupation where you strive for the top notch, it is a ministry where you minister in God's place for God's time and move on only when He is leading, not when self and desire for position are leading.

Chapter seventeen

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 4.5-10

5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

"The spirit" is in some question as to what or whom it is speaking of. Is it the Holy Spirit that indwells us or our own spirit that is within, that James is speaking about? We know our spirit is active in the area of lust and envy, but we also know that the Holy Spirit is not involved with either of the two. Some suggest that it is the Holy Spirit that envies the relationship we have to sin. This might be possible in some people's minds, but it seems to detract from the character of the Spirit - to put Him on a plain with man in that swirl of envy that is so destructive and evil.

The Life Application Bible states that the Greek states "the Holy Spirit," however there is no indication that "holy" is in the text. Others suggest that the "spirit" is not referring to the Holy Spirit due to the context, although the same term is used of both the Holy Spirit and other spirits as well.

Robertson suggests the same thought is expressed in Ex. 20.5; Gen 6.3-5; Isa. 63.8-16. He continues that Paul used the same thought in Gal 5.17, 21 and Rom. 8.6, 8. He assumes that the passage speaks of the Holy Spirit but he also admits that there is no real way to be positive either way.

In my mind the passage is more fitting if it speaks to the spirit of man which is centered on pleasing the self side of man rather than the God side.

It just seems that to read the context with man's spirit in view is much smoother than to interject the Holy Spirit into the discussion so abruptly. Barnes seems to follow this line of thought as well when he states: "The meaning may be thus expressed: "It is true that the natural spirit in man is one that tends to envy, and thus leads to all the sad consequences of envy."

In relation to the "scripture saith" phrase, some suggest it is similar to some in the Old Testament, others suggest it may be from a Hebrew version of the Old Testament that we no longer have, or even others suggest it comes from the tenor of Scripture, rather than from a quote of it.

Actually you can read this as two questions as the American Standard Version translates it, and then there is no need to figure out what James meant by the following phrase because it no longer is a quote from Scripture. "Or think ye that the scripture speaketh in vain? Doth the spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying?" The King James allows for this, but it just isn't as plain as the ASV.

At any rate, the Scripture can never speak in vain, it is always true and it is always valid, and it will always be the message that God wants us to have for our Christian living.

It would be ridiculous to suggest that the Scripture speaks incorrectly, and thus any indication of the same, must be from the spirit of man misinterpreting the Scripture.

6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

My first question is just who "HE" is in the verse. Is it referring back to verse five and "spirit" - if so our conclusion there would be incorrect, because "he" would indicate "spirit" is the Holy Spirit which was rejected earlier.

Let us look further. "But" is a word that is normally translated that way, but it can be translated "nevertheless" which gives the "he" a whole new aspect - "he" would not necessarily refer back to "spirit" as some suggest. It would merely be referring to God. The term is also often translated "and" which may be the better here. We will see more on this later.

The "he" is rather suspect. It does not appear before "giveth" nor does "he" appear before "saith." "He" is supplied both times by the translator to support the idea that "spirit" in the previous verse is the Holy Spirit.

In reading several translations there is total confusion. Some say he giveth, some leave "he" out, and some say he, and others say Scripture saith.

The Net Bible translates it as follows: "But he gives greater grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.""

The Net Bible note states that this is a quote from Proverbs 3.34 "Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly." I am not sure where they get the idea it is a quote.

From what I gather we can surmise:

"But he giveth more grace." "He" does not belong, thus it would seem it refers back further than the previous verse to God, the giver of true wisdom etc. in the context of what James is saying.

"Wherefore he saith," "He" does not belong here either, but rather "scripture."

This explanation may seem lacking, but look into some commentaries and you will find this one more logical than some. I think the confusion in the translations illustrates the lack of clarity in this verse.

" God resisteth the proud," most likely refers back to the idea of the teachers and pride previously. He further states that there is reward to the humble - grace.

Referring to the proud and humble, in my mind, sets this text as looking back to 3.1 and the masters and since they are one and the same to 3.13 and the wise man.

To assist here, please read the preceding context and I will paraphrase the sixth verse in a moment. 3.13 "Who [is] a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. 14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. 15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but [is] earthly, sensual, devilish. 16 For where envying and strife [is], there [is] confusion and every evil work. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, [and] easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. 4 :1 From whence [come] wars and fightings among you? [come they] not hence, [even] of your lusts that war in your members? 2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume [it] upon your lusts. 4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. 5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? 6 And give more grace. Wherefore the scripture saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

In this usage of the sixth verse it relates back to the man of verse thirteen that is a wise man showing his works with meekness of wisdom in his life. All between 3.13 and 4.6 is parenthetical.

Verse six could be attached to the last phrase of verse five. Something like this. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy nevertheless [scripture] giveth more grace. This does not seem to fit the thought however in that the "spirit" does not seem to be the Holy Spirit.

Some further information if you want to dig deeper.

The interlinear translates verse six as follows: "But greater he gives grace; wherefore it says: - God arrogant men resists, but to humble men he gives grace."

The NIV translates it as "but he gives us more grace? That is why Scripture says; "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."" It is footnoted that this is Prov. 3.34 and the quote is poetry.

The NASB follows the NIV with the exception that it does not identify Scripture, but uses "it."

An English translation of the Septuagint translates Prov. 3.34 as follows: "The Lord resisteth the proud; but He granteth favour to the humble."

The Proverb is also quoted in I Peter 5.5 "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder.

Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

"Submit yourselves therefore to God" has some serious implications for the believer. Submit means to put yourself under, or to be obedient. I Peter 2.13 uses it in the area of us being under every ordinance of man. Romans 12.1-2 are familiar to all of us - give ourselves to God as a living sacrifice. We are to be obedient to His commands, His will and His desire.

I might add that Colossians 3.18 uses this same word in the context of wives submitting to their husbands - rather puts a new light on that passage to see "submit" being what it is here in James.

The "submit" is of interest since it is an aorist passive indicating that it is a one time act rather than the daily type ritual of the deeper life people. The passive voice is also of interest in that the passive normally indicates that the subject is being acted upon by something without. A submission of ourselves in a one time act, where the action is caused by something from without.

God through James tells us that due to outside forces, we are to submit to God. What could this be? What occurrence in the Christian life is this speaking of?

a. Salvation. God draws the nonbeliever to Himself and through the person's decision for God; God produces all those glorious elements of salvation in and around the person making them a believer. The submission in this case would be that decision to believe in God.

b. A one time commitment to serve God to the fullest extent of the person's most sincere commitment. This might entail that "supposed" Spirit whelming that some speak of that accompanies their commitment to Him. What this "whelming" is differs between people, but is usually described as sudden outpouring of the Spirit which they can barely stand.

c. That point in time when you realize the facts contained in James are reality and incumbent upon the believer, and you make that commitment to walk with God in all meekness and humility, seeking His wisdom for your continued, committed Christian life before mankind, knowing that it is God living in and through you that will accomplish His will in your life.

Note, that FIRST we are to submit ourselves to God, and then we RESIST the Devil - a sequence that is to be followed for least consequences.

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." How do we resist the Devil?

a. By submitting to God, is actually the answer. If we are properly submitted to God, we automatically are resisting the Devil. To me the clear implication of this verse is that we resist the Devil by submitting to God. One dictates the other.

- b. Others suggest prayer, and often have little catch phrases as "plead the blood" and "set a circle of protection" etc., but the passage seems to dwell on submit.
- c. I have heard some suggest a separated walk - isn't that what submission to God is?
- d. Yet others suggest, turning down his every advance.

One of the meanings for "flee" relates to the seeking of safety by flight. Might we understand this to mean that the Devil knows the power of a submitted Christian? Oh, that believers around the world would understand this truth and submit to God for the glory of God.

II Timothy 2.22 relates well "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

In Genesis 39.10-12 it speaks of Joseph fleeing the Devil - "Got him out" - he didn't stand around praying about the situation, he didn't sit down beside her to challenge the Devil, he ran as fast as he could from the situation.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [ye] sinners; and purify [your] hearts, [ye] double minded.

All verbs in this verse are aorist - one time occurrences, with the exception of the one relating to God, which is a future - you need to act before He will act might be the thought. Add to that the fact that the ones relating to us are imperatives - not options.

In short, you cannot live your life without sin and impurity in your life; you cannot live your life away from God and expect closeness. Won't happen, no matter how much you want it to be true. You cannot have it both ways. The New Testament is clear on the fact that we serve God or mammon; we walk with God or walk with the world. This is a clear and present choice for every believer. His closeness depends on us, not Him.

Several imperatives:

- a. Draw close to God: How is this done? Get close to where He is, where you can talk to Him without shouting. Be in prayer; be in tune with His word. True, He is everywhere, so you can draw close to Him in nature; just don't take a rod or gun or skis with you to get between you and the one you seek to draw close to.

When you have a moment of time that is not taken, give thought to Him or His word. When lying in bed awake, give thought to Him or His word. Take those moments to talk with Him. When you realize you are watching a television show that you shouldn't be watching, shut it off and spend time with Him.

- b. Cleanse your hands: Cleanse relates to the cleaning out of impurity. The act of cauterizing a

wound not only cleans the wound of germs, but seals it for healing.

c. Purify your hearts: While you are cleaning up the hands, clean up the source of what pollutes them, your heart - get your mind and life straight with God.

Question. How do you maintain a pure heart - a pure mind while you watch the sleazy on television? You might be able to keep the effect to a minimum, but it is there, it is constant as long as the set is on. You should be constantly purifying your heart, every time your mind skips where it ought not, every time your mind tracks with the swearing on the screen, every time temptation raises its head to tempt you into improper thought or life.

Remember, these were one time acts that James mentions, not minute by minute acts that most television programs would require.

8 I would like to repeat the previous verse with the next two. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [ye] sinners; and purify [your] hearts, [ye] double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and [your] joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Kind of seems James has something on his mind here. Personally, don't think I've heard any preaching like that in years. It seems he is serious about people that are not doing well with the Lord, correcting their problem.

This isn't the normal feel good, get fuzzy type teaching that we hear today. Guess James is just not interested in fitting into the run of the mill church social club.

Clean yourselves up, purify yourselves, mourn your condition, weep before God, stop the stupid laughing about your condition, stop being happy in your sin - get on your spiritual knees so that God can lift you up to the place He wants for you, rather than the place you want for yourself.

"Let your laughter" is in the passive, thus the turning is a result of the mourning and weeping - the turning to God seems to bring some automatic changes. I was recently reminded of Isaiah six where Isaiah seems to be drawn up short by the impressiveness of God. 6.5 "Then said I, Woe [is] me! for I am undone; because I [am] a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, [which] he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid [it] upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here [am] I; send me."

When we have been in the realm of the Devil awhile, and we turn toward God it brings us to the shocking realization of whom and what God is and how far from Him we have wondered.

It has crossed my mind more than once in this study that there must have been some real

problems among the recipients of this letter. James does not sugar coat the wrong, nor does he pull any punches on the way in which the problems must be corrected.

If there is sin in your church there ought to be some of this humbling and purifying, and seriousness rather than the usual, "Sorry bud, didn't mean nuttin by it bro!" Sin is serious business, a fact that many believers have not come in contact with. Sin is so every day that most people don't realize what sin is. They are tied up in it so closely that they don't recognize error when they commit it.

I recently read several pages of posts from all over the country relating to why Christians are so much like the world. There were few real answers, mostly blaming it on the ultra conservative people that are legalistic in their manner, which in turn puts people off. Not sure how people that live, outwardly conservative lives can be the problem, when they are the ones doing what is right. Anyway, there was little of value in the thread except the observation that it was clearly true, we as believers look like the world.

This ought not to be so. We should be the light of the world, light to show forth the desperate plight of the world. Christians should be showing the way, not covering it up with our worldly like living.

Lets reread those two passages and contemplate them in the coming days - some serious implications for believers today in our world.

James 4.8 "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [ye] sinners; and purify [your] hearts, [ye] double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and [your] joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

Isa. 6.5 "Then said I, Woe [is] me! for I am undone; because I [am] a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, [which] he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid [it] upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here [am] I; send me."

APPLICATION

1. Jamieson Fausset & Brown mention of pride: "The Greek means in derivation one who shows himself above his fellows, and so lifts himself against God."

This seems to be showing one's self above his fellow man, or putting one's self above your fellow man. The point that I would draw your attention to is that they see this putting of one's self above others as putting one's self against God. Think about that for a moment. Is there possibly some truth to the accusation that they are putting themselves above God as well?

a. Since we are created in His image, it seems to me that there would be a truth here to consider. The Devil was removed from the angelic host because he set himself above God in his pride.

b. Since God declares in His word that all are equal before Him, would not setting yourself up above others be declaring God wrong? I think that is the clear implication. (Gal. 3.28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Col. 3.11 "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond [nor] free: but Christ [is] all, and in all.")

Pride was illustrated for us years ago when we went to hear John R. Rice speak. The first speaker was Jack Hyles (This was before many felt he was cultic in nature.) and at the end of his message he was asked to take the offering. He asked everyone that was going to give a dollar to raise their hands. Then he asked everyone that was going to give five dollars to raise their hands. He then asked all that were going to give ten dollars or more to stand up. You could see the pride on many of the faces as they looked around the auditorium to see who was looking at them.

Before the offering he asked everyone to bow their heads for prayer. The pianist started playing quietly. He asked her to stop playing and stated that he didn't need piano music playing when HE prayed.

The next morning my wife tuned in his program on the radio. At the close of the program she noticed that the piano was being played as he prayed. Pride is an evil thing and creeps into all our lives at one time or another.

Before we move on, we might consider the problem of pride in the church conflicts. Many church problems arise from a few wanting what they want and some others wanting what they want and the looser and/or the winner comes to the situation with pride - trouble will be the result.

It might be that church problems with pride actually originate elsewhere in the person's life. They might have a pride problem in the real world that is causing them great frustration and it bleeds over into their church relationships as well. Often a person with problems strikes out at their family because they can't strike out in the real situation. So, the church being "family" there may be a similar feeling of safety with striking out against those that love the individual.

2. Verse six mentions that God gives grace to the humble. "Humble" is a word that means lowly, or not far from the ground. Guess my wife is more humble than her husband. She is five feet and her husband is over six. She is certainly not far from the ground when compared to me.

It relates to being lowly or of low degree. Not rising above, or maybe not even rising to the equal. Many people seem to emphasize the fact that Christ cleansed the temple so he wasn't the quiet lowly person that everyone thinks. A few moments out of a life and they judge His total character based on those few moments. Not wise interpretation. Look at all of the other indications that He was a lowly quiet man and set the excited moments in perspective with the whole.

He was quiet, He was humble, and He is our example. When He was washing the disciples' feet He told them "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." John 13.14

We ought to move toward quietness of spirit and life in our Christian walk, rather than the usual belligerent, outgoingness of today's Christian.

The term translated "grace" here is the normal term for grace. Grace is so much more than just the giving of salvation to the undeserving. The term is full of meaning that we often leave out in left field because we are focused on the Calvinist line of thought that seems to limit it to one thing - God bestowing a grand gift of salvation upon someone that is totally undeserving. This is true, but it is also the characteristic God gives to the believer to assist in his humility.

Grace is the Greek word "charis." The Greeks about sixty to ninety years before Christ or James used the term in relation to pleasure. The higher societal young women were trained in the art of worldly pleasure, or doing things that gave pleasure to men. This included all aspects of how a woman was to act around and toward a man. The word was focused on the pleasure of another, but the pleasure of the one giving was also involved.

Christians evidently took this concept and applied it to their understanding of God's gifts to us via salvation and the Spirit within us. If you apply this idea, you see God is giving you charis to assist in your humility so that you can be pleased with your Christian life, and not to forget that He will be pleased with your actions.

Part of this humbling process most certainly must be our submission to Him that has transferred us from death into life. These verses are tied closely together and must not be ripped apart for the ease of a good sermon. Submit to God so that you might be humble, but that is in the direct context of the Devil and his flight from us. Now, humility and submission does not look like we are to viciously attack the enemy, we are to stand against him and he will flee from us. No need for us to be the ferocious spiritual warriors that some suggest when we meet the Devil. If we are walking closely with God, he won't be hanging around us, except for an annoying burst of anger toward us now and then to see if he can dislodge us from Him that he hates.

3. "God resisteth the proud" should send shivers up some Christian's spines. I think that some of the most prideful people I have met are believers. They are arrogant beyond the norm, and don't mind telling you why they are so grand and why you are so terribly low and unworthy.

Some on the internet are so proud of their abilities of the sharp tongue and they are so willing to swing it around as they see the blood fly. It is their "gift" to uphold truth, no matter where they find "falsehood" and to cut out that supposed "falsehood" no matter the cost. After all, when God imparts to you, the wisdom of the ages, you must uphold what He hath given at all cost, even to the mocking and belittling of other children of God. Actually, that is one of their drawbacks, often if you disagree with them you are not a child of God, but of the other side.

I'm not sure just how much truth it takes to change a person from being appreciative of God's revellings to him, to that point where the truth becomes a weapon to be used upon your sister's and brother's in Christ, but often these people have more than enough "truth" to force them across this line.

These are the people where anything you say is suspect, if not outright heresy if it does not follow their teaching completely. When you present a verse in opposition it is cast aside because you interpret the verse incorrectly, or it does not apply. Logic has nothing to do with their position unless it might support them in some manner. After all, when one of them has declared truth, what else is there to say about the subject?

Often their arrogance increases proportionately with their education. The more degrees they have the more decrees that they make. The more decrees they make the more they decry everything which counters their own conclusions about truth.

I am not anti-education, but I see many well educated people acting as if they had never crossed into that realm of existence. I would also suggest that there are many uneducated that can be just as prideful, just as arrogant, and just as obnoxious. Both have a sad day before the judgment seat of Christ - not that all of us don't have that day to dread.

4. We are told, first to submit to God, and then we are told to draw nigh to Him. We might deduce that submission is not the whole, but only a portion. Submission is great, but drawing nigh is the completion. Not that drawing nigh is alone the whole. Both are needed to complete the task.

What might the difference be? To submit is to put Him first in our decisions, and living. Drawing nigh would seem to be that walking toward, or that seeking of His presence. You can seek His company, but if you are not submitted to Him you will not feel the closeness you seek.

You can also be submitted to Him and yet avoid prayer and the Word, though without the two, you can't be completely submitted to Him.

Within a marriage a wife might be submitted to her husband, yet not seek to be with him. They might be in two different worlds, yet she could be submitted. She might also seek that marriage bond closeness, yet fail to achieve it due to her lack of submission to her spouse.

In my mind, Peter was submitted to his place as an apostle, yet didn't seek a closeness to that office when asked if he was a follower of the Lord and he denied Christ. He might even have been submitted to God at the time, but he certainly did not want to claim the closeness that could have been his.

5. In reading several commentaries, I have concluded that any interpretation you put to verses five and six will be as valid as any other. The commentators often have a side that they choose, but seldom any proof of any substance. Several suggest this is one of the most difficult texts in

the Bible.

I guess if you can come to a satisfactory interpretation for yourself here, you can know that you can interpret any passage of the Bible, if you put your mind to it. I think we have presented a better case than any of the commentaries, but of course that is plainly my opinion and not theirs.

I suggested on an internet board once that all the Greek scholars do their best with this passage and post their results, thus giving everyone a chance to evaluate in their own minds how much Greek would assist in their personal lives. One of the men posted most emphatically that he thought this was a useless suggestion, that it would prove nothing. I wasn't looking for "proof" and stated such, but he was very negative about the whole issue.

I had suggested taking a couple of days to do the study and then posting the results. When the time came for posting there was not one post. I do not know if it was due to the negativity of the man and the other men on the board agreeing with him, or the fact that they knew that their Greek and Hebrew would not give them a good answer on this text. I assume it was the later personally.

If men with years of language study state that there is no conclusive translation of the text, rather proves that the language study is not the "all perfect" answer, that so many suggest it is, but rather, that the languages are a tool for interpretation - in my mind a time saver, but not a definitive answer to every passage.

6. Constable submits that the Devil desires to get us to "doubt, deny, disregard, and disobey" God's Word. I believe that this sums up the issue quite nicely. Constable goes on to say that he draws this from how Satan attacked Eve and Christ Himself. Any way to draw us away from God and His Word will be effective enough for the Devil's purpose.

If we are walking with Him and putting time into His Word, we will be on solid ground, but if we are walking on our own and ignoring the Word we are walking on shifting sands. I once saw a movie that I did not finish due to the terrible language that they were using, and this was the "cleaned up" language that was left in when they blurred the really offensive items out.

The premise of the movie was a monster that lived in the sand that operated on sound waves. If you were moving the thing could track you from underground, come along and cause you to become its reason for needing some antacid. The monster could only bother the people if they were on the sand, but if upon the rocks in the area they were safe. So, with the Devil, if you are on the Rock, you have it made, if you are on the sand, you are most likely sinking.

The real problem with the sinking is that you seldom realize it until you are stuck.

7. "Submit yourselves therefore to God." is quite a statement that we need to consider, not only here, but in your future, tuck it away in the back of your mind and think about it from time to time, just what is James getting at when he makes this statement?

Gill takes the position that it means to submit to His will for your life. He suggests that it is being satisfied with your lot in life. Being satisfied with where God has placed you in life, in position, and in power.

This is a tall order for most of us in our society that would have us think if we aren't well known, if we aren't rich, and if we aren't powerful we are nothing. Indeed, many in evangelicalism are misleading thousands into thinking that God wants us rich. The problem with this thinking is seen in the poor believers all across the world. Are they destined to be "unspiritual" all their lives, or might the prosperity gospel people be wrong to tie spirituality to riches? After all, did Solomon not conclude that all that the world offers is vanity? Guess he was a spiritually insignificant person as well.

God has an overall plan or line of thought for each of us and if we submit to that plan we will be as close to Him as possible. That plan may include riches, or it might not. That plan may include position, or it might not. That plan may include power, or it might not. That plan may include millions of dollars, or it might not. Being satisfied with whatever comes along is the key.

Put this thinking with verse ten "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." and you have another truth. "Humble" has the thought of making low, thus submission to God and His plan is in essence humbling yourself. Verse ten tells us if we do that, He will lift us up. He will place us in the position that he wants us to be in. NOW, don't you dare assume that He will lift you into a place of power, riches and/or position. He will lift you to the place that He wants.

That place might be to pastor a tiny church on the backside of the wilderness of Wyoming, or it might mean the largest church in the greatest city - both are a high position to which God has lift one up to.

This humbling is not all that hard to do; it is the living in that humbled position that is the strain. It is easy to submit, but hard to live poor when you want to live richly. It is easy to submit to a small church of "insignificance" but difficult not to move into a larger church or to move into a professorship at one of the seminaries.

Submit and be satisfied with the result of that submission. Rely on God to know what is best for you. Indeed, "best for you" is the best for Him. He has an overall purpose for all of mankind and all His creation and your submission to that little part that relates to you assists Him in doing all that He wishes to do with all that He has created.

In that context, being a pastor of a tiny church becomes much more important, being a poor missionary has more importance, being "just a member of the congregation" becomes a place of honor before God.

Gain God's perspective on things and you will probably gain peace with where and what He has made you to be.

8. This passage might well be the summation of all that James has been talking about. Pride is the key to most of the problems that he has been discussing and humility is the answer to that problem of pride.

As you think about the problems of life, many of them relate to pride in us and/or other peoples pride.

The account of the prodigal son illustrates the truth set forth by James. The son went forth rich and tried all that the world had to offer, and when broke he returned to the father humbled and humiliated. His father lifted up his non-deserving son to the level that the father desired. (Luke 15.11- 32)

Hopefully we will humble ourselves in a less painful and inappropriate way than the prodigal, but the result will be the same - God will lift us to the level that He desires.

9. There are seven steps to placing one's self in a proper place before God.

a. Submit to God - Putting yourself under His direction and control - being a servant rather than Lord.

b. Resist the devil - Say no to his advances, say no to his tempting and say no to his ways.

c. Draw nigh to God - Talking with Him, reading His word, and doing His bidding.

d. Cleanse your hands - Stop giving yourself over to sin - stop living in an incorrect manner.

e. Purify your heart - Stop the incorrect thought processes.

f. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep - Be sorry for your incorrect choices in life and thought.

g. Humble yourself - I Pet. 5.6 "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:"

Maybe that should be your goal for the coming weeks, or years.

Chapter eighteen

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 4.11-17

In most of the natural disasters we see on the news, there is a period of shock, but soon the greedy wake up to the realization of their opportunity and looting begins. In some cases even the police have been caught in error at this time. What is going on in these situations? Why do these people loot and destroy other people's property?

It is certainly breaking the law, there certainly is need of punishment, but why are these two truths true? Because someone wrote a law and put it into force. Usually it is the local government, or the state government. So, who made them the law givers? The Federal government gives states certain powers. The President of the United States is the ultimate authority to which we submit ourselves, or thumb our noses at in the case of the looters.

Looters are in essence saying, "We don't take you as an authority, and we will not obey your laws." They judged the law and deemed it void, as well as any authority over them.

James introduces us to a truth that should rock our Christian world.

11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of [his] brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. 12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

James tells us that if we are speaking evil of one another or judging one another we are on the level of looters and rioters. We have spoken evil of the law, we have judged the law, and we are thumbing our nose at the authority behind the law - God.

Now, that ought to cause a "shiver in yes timbers" as the pirates used to say - well the Hollywood pirates at least. We ought to quake at the thought. When we speak evil of others, we are as looters and rioters thumbing our noses at all authority. Not a wise thing to do I wouldn't think.

James uses the present tense to speak to these folks, so they were in the process of treating one another in this incorrect manner. ("He that speaketh evil" is the present tense.)

We need to consider what is covered by speaking evil of others. Is it slander, is it gossip, is it calling someone by a despicable name, or is it backbiting and/or verbal barbs? From the Greek word used it might relate to all of these. It has to do with speaking evil or against someone else. The indications would be to cause injury to another.

Might be that discussion of the pastor or deacon at the dinner table if it is speaking against them.

There might be a distinction between the person and their action, but I am not sure I would take the chance that speaking evil of their actions and finding out later that it was speaking evil of the person. Why do either?

Yes, we need to correct false teaching when we teach our families, and if the pastor has taught something that is against the Word, we should correct the thinking of our family in that area, but this can be done without speaking evil of the pastor.

So, which law is in James mind at this point? The Law of Moses, or the law of liberty or some other law? Barnes suggests that it is the law of liberty. "The law which released men from the servitude of the Jewish rites, and gave them liberty to worship God without the restraint and bondage implied in that ancient system of worship...."

The implication might be that if you speak evil of others you declare the law of liberty null and void for that person - in short you have liberty but he does not. Not unlike the current political system, where everyone is against Christian's having an opinion. It seems to be that their mantra would be "We can blast you, but you are invalid and cannot speak against us."

There are some serious implications for us. If we speak evil of others, we place ourselves above the law. We say that we can do what we want - we don't have to follow the law. We say that we can do what we want - we don't have to follow the law giver - God. We are telling God that we know better than He does - we opt to not follow Him on this one.

We really have to consider how we speak of other people. We jeopardize our walk with God when we speak evil of another. My goodness how many have stepped away from God over the centuries with this problem. We need to mind our tongues when others are in our minds, lest we demean them and offend Christ.

I like how Barnes puts it when speaking of this passage. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. It is not known to whom the apostle here particularly refers, nor is it necessary to know. It is probable that among those whom he addressed there were some who were less circumspect in regard to speaking of others than they should be, and perhaps this evil prevailed. There are few communities where such an injunction would not be proper at any time, and few churches where some might not be found to whom the exhortation would be appropriate."

13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what [shall be] on the morrow. For what [is] your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 For that ye [ought] to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

There may be a play on words in the original here. The term translated "tomorrow" seems to be derived from a term that means a breeze. The use of the word tomorrow in relation to life being a vapor, may imply not only life is tentative, but also "tomorrow" may be tentative. None of us know what tomorrow will bring - it is all nebulous until it is history.

The thought of "vanisheth away" seems to be that it passes due to outside forces. We know that when our time comes, it will come due to God's infinite wisdom and timing, thus we have no control over when it will be - thus the thought of vapor - we have no idea if tomorrow will even occur for us as an individual.

This might apply some to the question of whether suicide is wrong or not. In Oregon we have doctor assisted suicide - the technical name for it is euthanasia, but we don't use that term in Oregon, for many find it offensive. The state is assisting people to do that which God's word tells us is His prerogative. The state and those doctors involved are going against God as much as the one that takes those pills.

Suicide will not keep one out of heaven, but the state and doctors should not be a part of it, lest they be held accountable in some manner when they face their maker. I would even guess that those that voted for such legislation will face their creator in some manner for their vote.

This passage speaks to God's will in our lives. There is a wide diversity on just how we relate to God's will, and just how much control He desires in our lives. Some allow Him little input into their lives, while others tend to look to God for each and every decision of life, even to the buying of a pair of shoes. Just what is the right amount of God's involvement in our lives? Is the first person less spiritual than the second person? Is the first person in error or in sin because they allow so little control to God?

If we believe in the concept of servanthood, we would opt to the total control end of the spectrum, while if we reject God's right to be our master, then what control could He want. Servanthood is the norm in Scripture and should be the line of thought in the believer's life. If it is not then there is not a proper relationship between the Father and His child.

I am not saying we have to stop and bow our heads and pray for guidance on that pair of pink tennies, but in our minds we certainly should be doing some evaluation. Are these necessary, are they honoring to God, and listening to the Spirit's moving - God is interested in our shoes, He is interested in our every need. We ought to include Him in our daily business as if He was an integrated part of our nature - indeed, He is but we need to allow Him control.

Years ago I WANTED a turntable to play records on. I capitalized "wanted" because it was a want and not a need. We had one that worked fairly well, but I wanted a better one.

My employer had a nice one, but was a few dollars more than I wanted to spend. I also found one across the street from where I worked for the right price and was contemplating the purchase. I just didn't feel comfortable about going ahead so I decided to wait. As I was sitting in the car before driving home I asked the Lord if I was doing the right thing. I opened my pocket testament and the words that my eyes landed on were "purchased a field." This was speaking of Judas and his wrong doing. Naturally that didn't relate to a turntable so was about to go back and make the purchase. As I opened the door "purchased a field" hit me - purchased a field, or buy elsewhere. This was a negative context and maybe I shouldn't make a purchase elsewhere. I closed the door

and drove home.

The next day as I walked into work my employer called me into the back of the shop and pointed to a great looking turntable and asked, "Stan, can you use that, it is free. Someone left it months ago and if you don't want it, it is going into the trash, we need the room." I took the unit home and it worked perfectly for many years until we sold it.

I could have bought the one I could afford, but God wanted me to have something much better, and for free. Had I not been considering Him in my decision I would have missed out on a great blessing.

I might add that I am not a strong believer in opening the Word to see what magic answer is there, but I must admit that God has spoken to me very clearly on a number of occasions in this manner. I would also admit that at other times, the words that my eyes landed on might as well been gibberish, because they had no meaning to me at the time.

Knowing God's will is a combination of many things, reading the Word on a regular basis, praying, listening to the Spirit's moving, using good common sense and anything else that can reveal His will to us in a Biblical manner.

Take time in your life to be sure you include Him in your decisions; you will be blessed by including Him in your life in a detailed manner.

16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. 17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth [it] not, to him it is sin.

Some might feel this is speaking of processes of the mind rather than of actual actions. It seems clear to me that James is speaking of literal actions, as in his previous context.

Phillips translates this passage as follows: "Just a moment, now, you who say: "We are going to such-and-such city today or tomorrow. We shall stay there a year doing business and make a profit!" How do you know what will happen even tomorrow? What, after all, is your life? It is like a puff of smoke visible for a little while and then dissolving into thin air. Your remarks should be prefaced with, "If it is the Lord's will, we shall still be alive and shall do so-and-so. As it is, you get a certain pride in yourself in planning your future with such confidence. That sort of pride is all wrong."

No matter whether you feel this relates to things of the mind or things of action, know, that if you know what is right to do in your mind and you fail to do it, you are committing a real sin.

When I was just starting out in Bible College, this thought used to really sink home in relation to witnessing. I knew it was right and proper to witness, if given opportunity, but when opportunity knocked, I was not always excited to answer the door. I was quite shy and witnessing was really not in my nature, yet, I knew being quiet was sin - therefore I witnessed. I found early on that it

was those first few words that were hard. After I had started to share the Word, the words were simple to find and the time with the person always went well.

One such situation was a very ruff man, he spoke roughly, and he acted roughly, and lived roughly. We got into a delivery van and the first thing out of my mind was you need to witness to this man. The first thing out of his mouth - and the second and the third and the fourth - were exclamations against a Christian man he had just had lunch with. He turned to me and almost hollered, "You aren't religious, are you?" I sheepishly replied that I tried not to be, with the thought of continuing on to speak of living by faith in Christ, but his mouth took over for me and for several more minutes exclaimed the faults of the man he had eaten with.

All this time, I knew I was going to witness to him, and all this time I knew just how blasted I was going to be when I opened my mouth. I stewed in my fear for all those minutes, but knowing God wanted me to say a word for Him, I found an opportunity to begin talking to the man about his soul. God gave me the ideas and thoughts that caught his attention and interest and was able to share the Gospel with him in a very clear way.

God knows our time here on earth, He has told us what is right and wrong, and we are to do that which is right, not practice wrong to our heart's content as James recipients seemed to have been doing.

APPLICATION:

1. We have seen that we are not to plan for the future, nor are we to say that we have plans for the future. How does this relate to our lives? Can't we say I want to be married on March sixteenth? Can't I say God wants me to go to Africa as a missionary?

Certainly, plan for the future, certainly share those hopes and dreams with others, but don't you dare put an "I WILL" to those plans. You may not. You plan as you like and feel led of the Lord, but realize it is up to Him whether those plans will come to pass. YOU WILL NOT be able to do WHAT YOU WANT over and above His plan and desire. He may allow you to do differently than He wants, but it is because you have been allowed, not because YOU WILLED IT!

James is speaking to proud and arrogant declarations of the will and mind, not the plans and hopes of life. Be realistic in your planning for the future, for there are many unknowns out they are waiting to take you a different direction.

There once was a series of commercials that portrayed an average Joe living life, but all of a sudden a rapid series of catastrophes came his way. The point, life sometimes comes at you hard. You plan, but allow for God's intercession in those plans from time to time. The plans might have to be altered to fit some drastic changes of life.

2. Verse twelve speaks of judging another. Some translate this "another" as neighbor. Now, I have to admit this is a hard one for me. We live in a drug-infested neighborhood where you don't

leave anything unlocked due to the high crime rate.

I am here to tell you that when someone new comes into the neighborhood it is hard to not judge them as being crooks, because 90 percent of the people that move into the neighborhood will be sitting in jail within a few months. This is the reality, and this is the setting in which the words of James come to me personally.

I really try to give everyone a chance, to keep an open mind, though don't mind if I keep locking things up until things change. If someone wants to borrow something they usually get one chance. If the item returns there will be another chance etc. I must say my return rate is about fifty-fifty at this point, but these are just things.

I try to keep relations open in case there is opportunity to witness, and I want my life to be an example.

No, I don't judge and condemn them at first sight, but I keep a wary eye on them for a while until there is some trust built up. I attempt to keep an open mind to all people and not to judge and condemn. However, when the constant traffic of quick visits from people that look like they are on drugs begin; there is a quick notification to the police department.

James would have us keep an open mind to others, and to keep from assuming they are incorrect and that we are right. We have no basis upon which to judge others, it is God that knows the person and it is God that needs to take care of them, whether it is by reward, or chastisement.

There is a church side to this text. How do we handle the need to beware of false doctrine, and yet, not speak against someone that is teaching false doctrine? The key is in my statement. Don't speak against the person, but speak against the false doctrine. The person is God's child, but his doctrine might well be from the other end of the spectrum.

It is difficult to distinguish the two, but it must be done. Scripture tells us to be good Bereans and check all teaching against the Word to see what is true, but here in James we are told not to speak against a brother.

Does that mean if the person is not a brother we can blast them? On internet forums, often someone will declare a Christian author a non-believer and then cut loose on them with both barrels. Evidently they hold to this principle. I don't believe that the principle is valid nor one which we should employ.

It is also important to know that some that are good believers, and good Bible teachers, are not always correct in living in their living. Again, on the internet there are some that are obviously believers, and good Bible teachers, but get off into some of the nastiest rhetoric you can imagine when dealing with false teachers. They are biting and cutting to the person as well as to the doctrine that they teach.

Great care should be taken when speaking of false doctrine. The person is still a creation of God, no matter how terrible the doctrine. Brotherly love is still the command.

3. Verse seventeen speaks to something we should consider. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth [it] not, to him it is sin." Omission of doing what is right is sin. If you know you should witness, and you do not, then you have sinned. Not just one sin, every time you should witness and don't, it is sin.

To love one another is the command, and we all give mental assent to it, but do we actually get to the point of loving one another - if not sin lurks in the inner person.

To do good works is the command, and we all give approval to that concept, but if we don't actually do good works, then we are in error.

Omission to do that which we know to be right is sin. This ought to bring some believers up very short, very quickly.

Recently on an internet forum there was a theological discussion about a fairly important doctrine, but it is a doctrine that has different beliefs within the church. One of the respondents was getting frustrated with the opposition and made the declaration that his opponents were "Jew haters."

Now, I know that not to be the case, however even if it were the case, is that any way to talk to another believer? We are to show love and respect to one another, and this is not a way to do this. This person knows that they are to be loving, and tender, yet he omitted those qualities from his post so that he could disparage and disqualify. Actually, a double sin, one of omission and one of untruthfulness. If you remember verse eleven, you might say that this is a triple whammy. We aren't to speak evil of one another either.

To know to do good and not to do it is sin. Serious statement! Barnes says it better than I. "It is universally true that if a man knows what is right, and does not do it, he is guilty of sin. If he understands what his duty is; if he has the means of doing good to others; if by his name, his influence, his wealth, he can promote a good cause; if he can, consistently with other duties, relieve the distressed, the poor, the prisoner, the oppressed; if he can send the gospel to other lands, or can wipe away the tear of the mourner; if he has talents by which he can lift a voice that shall be heard in favour of temperance, chastity, liberty, and religion, he is under obligations to do it: and if, by indolence, or avarice, or selfishness, or the dread of the loss of popularity, he does not do it, he is guilty of sin before God. No man can be released from the obligation to do good in this world to the extent of his ability; no one should desire to be. The highest privilege conferred on a mortal, besides that of securing the salvation of his own soul, is that of doing good to others--of alleviating sorrow, instructing ignorance, raising up the bowed down, comforting those that mourn, delivering the wronged and the oppressed, supplying the wants of the needy, guiding inquirers into the way of truth, and sending liberty, knowledge, and salvation around the world. If a man does not do this when he has the means, he sins against his own soul, against

humanity, and against his Maker; if he does it cheerfully and to the extent of his means, it likens him more than anything else to God."

4. Barnes takes this passage to relate to two groups, those that thought the law of the Old Testament was incumbent on believers and those that held to the law of liberty, that law that freed them from the Old Testament law. Barnes contends that their contentious nature to one another is the error and that they ought not to speak evil of one another.

We can easily understand the evil speaking that could have been going on, and that it probably wasn't a pretty sight when these believers came together to worship. Just how much real worship could they have when they had such drastic feelings for one another?

James seems to be working toward a proper interpersonal relationship between the people. We must assume that he felt that he could do it otherwise he wouldn't have attempted. If he felt proper interpersonal relationships could exist, even between people of such diverse doctrine, maybe we should attempt to do the same in our day.

Today, pastors drive off people that don't agree 100 percent with them on all points of doctrine. If he discovers that someone is not in lock step with him he will often cause friction enough to cause them to leave. I think this is what James is trying to remedy.

We need to understand that everyone is not going to agree 100 percent with us. We may, indeed be correct in all manner, but we ought to find the common ground to meet on.

This is not to say that we should allow all manner of falsehood to run rampant in our churches. I recently heard of a pastor that declared that he would never allow doctrine to cause division within his church. That is a worthy desire, but it declares that he will allow any and all doctrine equal voice within his church. The shepherd is to protect the sheep from the wolves, not expose the sheep to every wolf that comes down the trail. ("To some such source of contention the apostle doubtless refers here; and the meaning probably is, that they who held the opinion that all the Jewish ceremonial laws were still binding on Christians, and who judged and condemned their brethren who did not [observe them], by such a course judged and condemned "the law of liberty" under which they acted--the law of Christianity that had abolished the ceremonial observances, and released men from their obligation. The judgment which they passed, therefore, was not only on their brethren, but was on that law of Christianity which had given greater liberty of conscience, and which was intended to abolish the obligation of the Jewish ritual.")

5. Barnes correctly observes that God is the only one in all the universe that has the right to make laws. He and He alone is the law maker. Hence if there be any other law that law is not of Him. Within the church this is also true no matter how much some leaders wish it weren't.

There is no law except that which is given in the Word. If one comes telling you that there is a law to be followed, give him a Bible and ask him to show it to you from the one and only Law Giver.

God has set the local church up as an independent unit beholding to none but Christ Himself. If churches want to come together for fellowship, for evangelism, that is fine, but there will be no hierarchy that tells a church what to do or how it will run its own activities.

This means that some of the "fellowships" of churches have no control over the local church, they do not tell them how to act in certain situations, nor do they send possible pastors to interview unless the church has requested that assistance.

One such association declares that their churches are independent, yet I see them meddling in the affairs of local churches where they have not been invited. They have set up procedures for pastoral resignations etc. that they "expect" their churches to follow. They send "their men" to check out pastoral positions without requests from the local church.

These things should not be, if they are going to claim total autonomy of their churches. To do so is a lie. These groups should not interfere in any way with their individual churches other than in the manner that each church agrees too.

6. James chides those that arrogantly make plans relating to their actions and finance. I wonder how this exhortation relates to the church today. The local church that looks at their growth, and their projected growth and decides they will build a new building based on those figures and go out and go into debt to build that building based on "their" facts and figures and "their" plan to grow at a particular rate.

Dangerous, it would seem to me. Years ago I called a pastor to see if I could present our ministry to his church. He was excited to say yes, for the church was in an out of the way place that missionaries seldom ventured.

I made plans with him and we said our goodbyes until the date of the meeting. It was my practice to call a week before to assure that all was set and the plans were still on. Before I could make that call to this pastor, he called me. He was obviously dreading the call to tell me that he had to call off the meeting. He said that something had come up. I asked if he would like to set up another date. He replied, "No, the church doesn't exist anymore." He went on to tell me that two or three oil companies had closed operations in their town and the majority of the congregation had to move on to other work areas. There was nothing left to pastor, and the pastor was looking for another place of ministry.

I don't give this example to show incorrect planning, but to illustrate just how tenuous life is for a church, and to point out that it is a fool that plans to pay off large debt over a long period of time. We have no idea what is going to happen, we have no idea whether our plans will come to fruition or crash in flames.

Yes, plan for growth, yes, move ahead, but do so only after a lot of prayer to the one that makes the decisions - God. Don't tie the church up in deep debt that the church may not be able to pay.

More than one board has signed for debt repayment and many of their pastors have decided it was time to leave. The board often is in danger of loosing all they have personally, due to their heavy planning for the future.

More than one church group has struggled with strangling debt for years, trying to get ahead enough to call another pastor.

For as farsighted churches attempt to be, many are very shortsighted.

7. One further point relating to our lives being a vapor and our not knowing the future. Many today declare with confidence that God has a perfect will for every life. They declare that you can know that will and count on it and take it to the bank. Experiences of hundreds have proven this incorrect. Many I know of that were "called" to the mission field but never arrived. Many I know of that were "called" to the pastorate but never pastored a church. There are many that went to the field with "for life" in their plans, that did not make it life, but were forced by circumstance to return home.

I am not condemning knowing God's will for your life, but we definitely need to include the truth of this passage in that knowledge of His will. Know that He may well change your direction. Know that He may well have something completely different for you to do. Know Him, and your direction will be clear as you walk with Him step by step, not plan by plan.

I always thought I would be a preacher, yet I ended up a writer. I knew for years that I would be a missionary on the foreign field, yet I have never been. I am certainly a missionary, but via the internet which didn't even exist when I felt called to the mission field. My website has been visited by people in more than a hundred countries over the last few years. Yes a missionary, but never in the "normal" concept of missions.

Yes, seek God's will, yes know where and to what you have been called, but always add that all important "Lord willing." He may have different directions and instructions in your future.

The key is found in verse sixteen - "But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil."

The key is that you are not boasting and enjoying your confidence about what YOU are going to do and WHEN you are going to do it.

8. I would like to think about verse fourteen for a bit. It is a verse that has been in my mind most of my life and I think believers need to understand it from two perspectives. That of the young and that of the old.

The young take this idea that life is as a vapor, by faith, to be true, because it is the Word of God and He has stated it as fact. They also have a nebulous understanding of its truth from their point of view.

On the other hand, the old have a different perspective on the verse. They know this to be a true statement, not because it is in the Word of God (though they realize this as well) but they know this to be true from the experience of life. They have a knowledge that the young do not have. They look back on their life and they wonder where that vapor went - it was here just a moment ago.

The old often come to this realization and realize their life is on the down hill side and they haven't done what they wanted to do with their life for the Lord. Don't be surprised if the old become a little more serious as they march through their years. They may be in this realization and wondering what they should do with what is left of their lives.

The totally frustrating part of all this is the reality of the aged body. The old look in the mirror in the morning and wonder who that old person is. They read their hometown newspaper and see their friends in the 40th anniversary section and wonder why their friends got so old so fast, knowing that they are still eighteen. Most old folks, know they are eighteen, they just can't get their bodies to function like they did at eighteen.

No wonder you can't get them to go to a care home, no wonder they don't want to give up driving, no wonder you don't understand them - they know what is going on, but you probably do not. Please bring some understanding to your dealings with older folks; they will appreciate you not telling them you know how they feel.

I might add that many older folks don't come to this realization until they have time to think about their lives and what they have accomplished. This is most likely why so many retired people don't live long after they retire, and why depression is so prevalent among the aged.

One must wonder if there aren't other passages that would fit into this duo perspective. I would suspect that Solomon's observations relating to vanity would fit into a duo view point. We know what he said is true because God said it in His Word, but those that have chased materialism to its logical end know it from experience as well.

I would like to take a little different approach to the passage now. The thought of our life being as a vapor relates to the shortness as well, the shortness of life. Even if you gain many years, even if you live into your eighties you will realize some place along the way that almost everything that exists is going to outlast you. Your house will be around long after you are gone, your tools, your collections; your clothes might even outlive you. The trees in your yard and certainly the weeds, the things you have collected in your garage, maybe even the car. We are one of the most transitory parts of God's wonderful creation, yet we buy and gather as if we are eternal.

We won't outlast much of anything, so why are we acting as if we will. Many have two or three cars, maybe even two or three houses, but those things, as well as their need for upkeep will probably continue after you are in the Lord's presence.

We gather as if our eternity is here, when in reality it is not. Our eternity and gain are elsewhere.

9. "Speak not evil one of another" is James comment, while "By this shall all [men] know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." were Christ's words in John 13.35

Speaking evil of another precludes love, one would think. We cannot do Christ's bidding if we are not doing as James has told us. Note that by our love the outside can know we are His disciples, and I'd guess the speaking evil would indicate that we are not to the lost world.

It is no wonder the lost are beginning to scoff at the church. In history lost man has always shown disdain for the church, but today the scoffing has turned to accusation and hostile rhetoric. Even some of the liberal Christians are beginning to speak evil of the conservative Christian folks.

Christians have been called Nazis in recent days. One must wonder what the cause of this shift was. I have to wonder if they see that the church is just another secular political power group that needs to be stopped. The media has turned Christianity into a political block. They speak of us as the right, which if they thought about it, we are (right) and they are what are left, as in the political left. I make jest, but they are serious as can be. They want to bury us because they see us as a political threat rather than an answer to their spiritual needs.

One must also question the church today. How can we be a body that meets needs, if we have become a political block to be buried? I am not condoning our not standing up for what we believe, but we need to consider carefully how we go about it. We also need to consider seriously whether we are living up to the standard set for us, Christ. I fail to see Christ coming through in the Christian right's political rhetoric.

The Christian movement of today has not only separated themselves from the world, but they have set up a substitute world for themselves. It might work if it was a world that was Christian, but the world that the Christian community has created is exactly like the Devil's world, except they stick a cross and a religious term or two into it and call it Christian. Kind of like sticking a cross in the Devil's lapel and calling him brother.

The world isn't stupid. They see through the Christianizing of everything including their government. If we don't have something different to offer the lost, then we have nothing to offer.

One further point, I am not sure that we need to worry about how we turn out, whether the world buries us, or whether we become the dominant force in history, it is our ability to be a witness to the individuals of the world that is the key to our purpose. We need to take serious care of our ability to talk to the lost about their souls. Their souls are much more important than our gaining political clout.

10. Gill points out that the speaking evil of others is to be expected from the lost, but not from believers. My brother worked in a large retail center in Ogden, UT years ago. He was surrounded on every side, as a new believer, by Mormons. Everywhere he went, he was dealing with them. Everyone in his store was Mormon. He did not speak of them or his relationship to them very often, but one day he told me that they were the most despicable people toward one another.

They didn't seem to bother him, but they were constantly at each other's throats about something. They would stab one another in the back when in meetings and in all of the store business dealings.

His observation was one of total disgust for their activities - supposedly so spiritual, but in reality so terrible toward others.

Yes, the lost are depraved and will act this way, but James reminds the believer that is misusing their tongue, that it is not the way of the believer.

11. James has enlightened us on the fact that not doing what is right is as much a sin as doing what is wrong. These two types of sin often are labeled sins of omission and sins of commission. Just thought I'd get theological on you for a moment.

We tend to concentrate on the sins of commission, because that is what we are involved in so often, but we seldom think of omitting something being just as evil, just as wrong and just as much against God.

Chapter nineteen

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 5.1-6

One of my relatives owned his own business, working hard, keeping everything going smoothly throughout his life. He poured many long hours, or you might say his life into the business looking forward to his retirement. He and his wife had a nice home, furniture and cars.

He had two children but they weren't offered any help from their father, because he was laying his riches away for the future. He did nothing to benefit others with his money, and didn't benefit himself very much. They lived fairly modestly for the wealth that they had accumulated.

One day someone found one hundred dollar bills lying around the alley behind his garage. He had forgotten to close his safe and the neighbor kids had found the open safe and were playing with the money.

He had a foul mouth and condemned anyone that did good for others. His brother-in-law was a minister, but I did not know this until the man's funeral.

When retirement age arrived, he sold his business for a great deal of money and set out to enjoy his gain. Within six months the man was laying in a hospital with terminal lung cancer that had spread to his brain. He never left the hospital, though he lived another several months.

Slaving his entire life to gain riches, he laid up stores in earthly investments, not looking at his eternal bank account.

He didn't get to enjoy his hard earned riches

Oh, how this man fits this passage of Scripture. It was of interest that only after he had been stripped of all desire for his wealth and stripped of his health did he consider spiritual things. God in His infinite grace reached down through a born again Presbyterian pastor to touch this man's life for himself. The pastor mentioned in the funeral sermon that the man had opened his heart to God.

And the heavy blast strikes the reader. Oh, how appropriate to our own day. The rich in James day were probably the middle class of our day. Weep and howl for your miseries - this guy isn't nice. Your riches are polluted and your clothes are rotting off your back. Moth-eaten - doesn't James know how offensive it is to intimate that you have moths in your home. When I was a kid that was like admitting you had mice or lice in the house.

James really lays out his thinking to the rich. The rich must have been way off base spiritually. We might make note that these were people that had not had a lot of good preaching down at

First Baptist on the corner; they were saved but for the most part not well grounded in the Word. Jews with an Old Testament background, but no real New Testament teaching it would seem. Their pastor wasn't a graduate of Jerusalem Bible College and seminary, but probably just a graduate of Read and Study Institute.

How does this link to the previous context might be your question. He has just pointed out that the planning without God is improper. Several commentators assume that he was speaking to Jewish businessmen of the day that would go to a different location and make a fortune and return home.

If this is the case, then he is just continuing to point out the folly of their way of life in an attempt to get the men to change their ways and to conform to the proper Christian living principles set forth.

This rather ties in well with the whole thought of the book - not giving preference to the rich etc. It would seem the rich were a problem among the believers in these churches.

1 Go to now, [ye] rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon [you].

The verb tenses are of note in this verse. They are told to weep, a one time act, but they are also told to howl which is a present tense or something that was to continue. They might weep, but that turns to howling when the full realization of their miseries is clear in their mind. These problems are to come upon them - this is also a present tense, something that is probably already upon the reader. "Come upon" can relate to an attack on someone. This isn't just a problem of life, this is real misery. "Miseries" relates to hardship and calamity. Weep and howl when your calamity is upon you, oh rich man.

It would seem that these miseries are due to the sins of omission in the last verse of chapter four. They knew to do good, but did not do it, thus sinned.

Moving on, I would like to share the account of an old man in my hometown. I do not know his name, nor do I know where he lived, but the whole town knew the man. Every now and then he would come to town to buy groceries and supplies. He came to town in a horse and wagon. It wasn't just a buggy; it was a freight wagon like Charles Ingles drove in "LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE" the type with just a rectangular box on four wheels and a seat on top.

This old man would drive into town from the south on the main paved highway. The only modern convenience his wagon appeared to have was a triangle danger, slow-moving sign on the back - reflective of course.

His appearance rather well fit a freight wagon driver. He was dirty, long hair with a long unkempt beard. His clothes were testament to his lack of darkening the door of a clothing store for quite some years. His coat had holes in it and was quite soiled.

Not a pretty sight, but it may give us some indication of what James was getting at when he mentions the rich people's clothes were moth eaten.

Many in that day were wealthy to the point of having hundreds of garments; in fact one is known to have owned over five thousand garments.

I am told that Jackie Onasis, when alive, had an entire large warehouse for storing her wardrobe - the out of date stuff of course. She kept a small wardrobe in every house that they owned and in every city that they visited.

Most would suggest, what is the purpose of buying this many items in the first place, and why hang onto them in a warehouse in the final place. What a waste of money and especially time, looking for them, buying them, cleaning them and then preparing them for storage.

This idea of moth eaten is of interest in the thought of our illustration. Imagine the rich person like Jackie Onasis hearing that the warehouse had been invaded by moths. What a loss, what a problem. Moral of the story, don't buy a lot of clothes so you don't have to go through such heartache.

Before we begin the verse, I might mention that some of the common commodities of the day were oils and grains, which spoil and rot. This may be what James had reference to, when he mentioned, "Your riches are corrupted."

2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are Moth-eaten.

In this verse the riches and Moth-eaten garments are in the perfect tense, something that is corrupted and will be corrupted to the end of the process, and the garments are Moth-eaten now and they will continue in this Moth-eaten condition to completion - most likely the destruction of the garment.

These are processes that are happening, are ongoing and that will come to a final conclusion. Not much hope for the rich man's riches and clothes.

We need to understand that riches may not mean money, but can relate to power, position and holdings. The end is the same for all kinds of riches - corruption.

These are most likely the miseries of verse one. The rich weep and howl at the declining condition of their riches. One of the joys of giving your riches away must be knowing that the money is going to a good cause not just sitting in an investment somewhere drawing corruption.

Recently I saw Bill Gates talking about his foundation and the tremendous good it was doing around the world. I could be mistaken but I really felt that he was very happy at the moment as he spoke of the changed lives. He seemed much happier than when I've seen him talking about computers and software. There was a real peace and joy in his face and his speech.

Riches bring short lived joy and happiness, but they cannot bring that joy that the soul desires from God.

3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

Again, the construction of "cankered" is the perfect - it is and it will be till the end. Rust has the thought of poison, the poison of snakes. It is that process of poisoning your gold and silver. The verse speaks of heaping treasures together for the last days. To the Jew of this time, this was most likely the piling up of riches to take with them in death. They most likely had little thought to the prophecy aspect of the last days. One of our relatives always told everyone he was taking his money with him, that he had ordered an asbestos coffin. Might have saved his money but from where we are in medical research the cancer would get him from the asbestos poisoning.

I would like to consider the gold and silver for a moment. I think this is speaking in general of money, riches etc. Anyone that has collected coins knows that coinage of Christ's time is still around. It isn't in the best of condition, but the coins are still being found today. They didn't have banks to take their money to, so many buried their money in the back yard. They are still digging up money in the old Roman Empire. Even many of the non-precious metal coinage is in fair shape, so this isn't speaking specifically to the gold and silver coins. I have a coin that is very pitted, but the image is quite visible, and this coin dates to the time of Christ. The phrase could also refer to the jewelry that was worn at the time.

Let's take a quick read of Mark 10.17-25, a very familiar account. "17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? 18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? [there is] none good but one, [that is], God. 19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. 20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. 21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. 22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. 23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Several things to observe. First, Christ loved the man in the condition he was in, whether lost or saved. We don't know if he was a believer in the Old Testament sense or not, but it would appear that he was. Often this account is told in light of the man being lost and not willing to give up his riches. We aren't told either of these items from the text.

If he believed, he may well have gone and sold all that he had, we aren't told. Christ, however

used the man to show that a rich man will have a hard time entering into the kingdom. Not that he cannot, but that he will have a hard time doing it. The costs will be great. The cost is shifting from trusting their riches to trusting God.

That is where the middle class of America is today. Trusting themselves, rather than God. To trust God instead will be very difficult for them. Remember the man in my opening illustration? The man was on his death bed, not caring one whit about his riches before he bowed before God - it was a very long hard struggle through the man's entire life before the struggle for the kingdom was over - a hard time indeed.

4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

Some of these believers actually were ripping off their help. They were using them to reap their crops, but then cheating them in their pay.

One must wonder of these believers that would defraud to make gain. These were either new believers that did not know any better, or believers that knew better, but didn't care. Both are possibilities since James is an early letter, and we have decided the recipients were probably converts from the day of Pentecost. However, if you consider the language of James, one must wonder if it isn't the later possibility. He speaks quite tersely, if encouraging believers in edification. He speaks as though he is totally disgusted with these people and really wants to blast them to gain their attention.

We see the rich doing this today. We have corporate leaders that are ripping off the public in pricing as well as their own shareholders in tacky bookkeeping. We see unions swinging power that they ought not to have. I heard on the news this week that a union had agreed to limitations on health care for retired workers. The union ought not to have any say over what a man has worked for and gained. His health care provision is set between him and the company, and the union ought not to have sway over that agreement.

"Lord of Sabaoth" means Jehovah of hosts. Holt in his commentary mentions that the Jews will not even utter this phrase or name of God. (See also Deut. 24:14, 15)

5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. 6 Ye have condemned [and] killed the just; [and] he doth not resist you.

These verses would add to the thought that these rich people were believers that knew better, and were living in outward rebellion against what they knew to be right. Isn't that the context - knowing what is good, and not doing it?

One must wonder how quiet the church assembly was when this portion was being read. The poor and subjugated are quietly saying to themselves, "YES!" "It is about time someone blasts

these characters." And the rich are sitting there wondering if the poor are getting the full implication of this and wondering if they should head for the closest exit before someone takes him down and pounds some sense into him. It had to have been a scene of quiet and tension.

One wonders also if these rich people made good use of James words and changed their ways. Can you imagine being confronted with such bluntness and not making some changes in your life? Don't count on it. I have seen sinning Christian's confronted and they have walked away as if they have heard nothing. On the other hand, thank God for His Spirit's working in lives, I have seen it work the other way as well. This is God's desire, He does not like to blast a believer, but if they are living in open sin, often He will do that which is needed to change the person's course.

May each of us, no matter what our sin, be serious about living a righteous life. When the Spirit tweaks our conscience, let us respond immediately to change our ways to His.

"Lived in pleasure" and "been wonton" are very similar in meaning. The first descriptive of the lifestyle and the second the result of that same lifestyle. They have lived to their fullest in pleasure. We have all seen the modern day examples of this pleasure and luxury of the rich.

I was going to use Bill Gates as an example here, but I am not sure I should. He probably lives quite high on the hog and his new home in the Seattle area isn't a medium income two bedroom home, but he doesn't really seem to live the "pleasure" and "wonton" lifestyle. He goes to work; he does live nicely etc. but doesn't seem to be the pleasure seeker than many of the rich seem to be.

We know that the rich and famous usually live like they are rich, and find grand pleasure in it. The last phrase seems to go to the extent of their pleasure and wantonness. They live as if every day is the day the animals are slaughtered and they have all that they could possibly want or use.

I would guess the difference is that the wonton people are those that revel in pleasure, those that seek pleasure, and those that fail to do other things due to their involvement in seeking pleasure. Others simply enjoy what they have, yet have a healthy desire to live in a decent manner.

My in-laws knew the man that discovered artificial insemination for Chickens and had made his fortune. They were members of the same church and when visiting the in-laws one time we were invited into this couples home. It was a larger home, it was furnished nicely, but the home was not that uncommon for that period of time and very modest for the money that the couple obviously had. The only real extravagance in the home that I saw was a microwave oven. That was back when they cost over a thousand dollars and were first on the market.

The man had one wonton part to his being however; he had discovered an ice-cream shop that had every flavor of ice cream you could find on earth. His passion was trying the different types of ice cream. He would go out and come home with gallons of ice cream, pickle ice cream, bubble gum ice cream, every ice cream one could envision.

These two people were rich, but not locked into pleasure and wantonness, but were well grounded and just common folks. Being rich isn't wrong, but wrong life going along with being rich can be very wrong.

We aren't told what James meant by verse six, but we can be assured that the readers in his day knew clearly what he was talking about. They were condemning and killing. The word for killing seems to relate to any killing, but seems to lean toward murder more than just random killing. It may be that they were unjustly having people killed. Indeed, the last part of the verse would indicate this ("killed the just; [and] he doth not resist you.").

Constable suggests that James may have been speaking hyperbolically when he mentioned killing. He suggests that these are day laborers and that if a person was not paid at the end of the day they could die. He continues that if they were not paid, they could not eat, and after a few days of not eating their strength would diminish and death would occur. True, but I see little to indicate hyperbole in the text.

APPLICATION:

1. Wow, what an opportunity to comfort and maybe witness to the rich, when they are howling over their tragedies and losses. Take that opportunity, not to gloat, but to offer comfort and maybe even assistance in their hard time.

You like comfort when having hard times, and the rich are no different. They hurt the same way you do - just not as quickly during financial losses. Being a friend might be just what they need. They don't need you preaching, they need you supporting. If a good opportunity to tell them of the Lord opens up, go ahead and share God's love, but don't start telling them you know how they feel, or that riches are wrong anyway - that is not the message they need to change, their lives - only the Gospel can assist in that task.

2. This passage is partially meant for the rich, but must have been a great encouragement for the believers that were suffering under the hands of the rich. The caution would be that the suffering believer should not get all high and mighty, knowing trouble is coming to the one that causes them trouble. Probably a better reaction would be one of sorrow for what the rich person is going to have to go through.

Man normally loves it when the bad guy gets their due, but that isn't always the correct attitude for the believer. Putting ourselves in their place and trying to understand what they are going through will bring us to a proper attitude of wanting to support and assist.

I have mentioned before that our neighborhood is filled with the poor end of society, both economically and legally. Often when someone in a family is arrested, there is that rush of "Finally, the police are going to do something!" However, soon you often see the rest of the family trying to move out to some other place because they don't have money to pay the rent.

The water, electric and gas disconnect folks ought to put remote, radio valves and switches on the rental houses in our area, it would save them a lot of trips out to shut off and turn on utilities.

3. Not only the rich need the following passage, but many middle income in our day, and probably the poor as well. Our society is so fixated on funds, things, and being that we all tend to seek riches in the wrong area of life - the material.

Matthew 6.19 "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Poor people seem to even have a sense of entitlement to all that everyone else has. Even young people have fallen into this trap. A young person almost expects that he is owed all that he/she wants or desires. When they are out on their own, they assume that they will automatically have everything their folks have - it is their right, my folks have it so I should also.

They assume that if they don't have it all, that it is their employers fault; they are not paying them enough to buy it all, so start wanting raises or looking for a better job.

The sad part of it seems to be that businesses are willing to give more and more to the young people because they demand it and take and take from the older folks that have worked hard for what is being taken away from them.

All believers need to be reminded that it is God and His area of life, that we should concern ourselves with, not the world and all it has to offer.

4. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown state the following of verse six. "Ye have condemned [and] killed the just;" "Their condemnation of Christ, "the Just," is foremost in James' mind. But all the innocent blood shed, and to be shed is included, the Holy Spirit comprehending James himself, called "the Just," who was slain in a tumult."

They do not suggest any reason for taking the passage to mean Christ; they just assume it and state it as fact. James, himself was called "the just" but there is no reason to assume he was speaking of himself either. I might add, however, that this passage probably came to some believers minds when James the Just was killed for his faith later on.

5. One must consider whether these rich were saved or unsaved. Verse seven seems to transition from the first part of the chapter with "Be patient therefore, brethren," which indicates the first portion is to unsaved people. Verse six also seems to draw a division between the just and those persecuting them. The whole tone of verses one through six seems to be to unsaved people.

The next question is whether they are part of the assembly or not. It might be possible that James is speaking to the brethren with this parenthetical outburst to indicate he knew what they were

facing and to encourage them, however this is a bit of a stretch for me.

Barnes follows this line when he suggests that James did not expect the rich to actually hear the words that he spoke against them.

It is possible that the rich lost people were in the assembly as people professing to believe. This has been a problem for the church all through history.

It would seem, for whatever reason, that the rich, lost people were in the assembly. Now, I see a pure, body made up of believers only, as the Biblical standard for a church. If these rich were present in the assembly, and they seem to be, then the church was already in the habit of inviting lost into the assembly in the hope of bringing them to the Lord. If true, this fallacy continues to this day.

This idea that the people invite the lost into the church has cost the church dearly in purity as well as dollars. I was speaking to a man that attends a large church and we spoke of the costs of the church and apart from the building, much of the cost was programs to draw people into the church to evangelize them. This is not the proper mode of evangelism and is costing churches millions of dollars in buildings and programs.

Think about it, it costs big money to have the big concerts, the secular concerts the Texas holdem events and all the other nonsense that is put on in the name of Jesus to draw lost people into the church - to hopefully win a few.

One church spent a couple million plus for an auditorium so they could show secular movies to the neighborhood in the hope of evangelizing them. Knock on their door, that is free.

I Cor. 14.23 states: "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in [those that are] unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" The church is assembled and unsaved seem to "happen" in. This is not prohibited, but it doesn't seem to be the norm. No where is the church described as a station of evangelism, but rather a training center for believers, so that they mature. There is no way to have a pure church when you invite the lost in via enticements and false motives.

6. In Verse six there is a bit of controversy. Some suggest that "just" refers to Christ. There doesn't seem to be any basis for this interpretation in my mind. Phillips translates it as follows: "Yes, you have had a magnificent time on this earth, and have indulged yourselves to the full. You have picked out just what you wanted like soldiers looting after battle. 6. You have condemned and ruined innocent men in your career, and they have been powerless to stop you."

Those that see "just" as Christ go on to tell that Christ will certainly oppose the rich in the end. This is true, but there doesn't seem to be good reason to view "just" as indicative of Christ.

7. How might the rich, today, cause the death of the just? Are these just situations for James day,

or is there something for us today?

I have heard, over the years, of many mining accidents where miners were killed due to cave ins or explosions in the mine. Many of these, later, are found to be caused by the leadership pushing the safety limits or pushing the men and equipment to unsafe limits. This, in my mind would be a case in point from our day where we could apply James principles.

Any accident where someone was injured or killed because safety or correct procedures were forcibly avoided to the detriment of the worker would fit into our thought.

If you are an employer, you need to assure the safety of your workers and not cut corners to save a few bucks. Your workers are your responsibility so you ought to care for them as best you can.

8. We will look at the "not resisting" topic later, but just a few notes now. If we are not to resist, how do we relate to the following situations?

- a. If we aren't to resist can we Biblically participate in a strike?
- b. If we aren't to resist can we Biblically participate in wage/benefit demands?
- c. If we aren't to resist can we Biblically participate in picket lines?

Apart from being involved in saying no to an employer, you are involving yourself in everything that a union stands for which is violence, corruption and liberal ideals. Indeed, some unions advocate great violence. There was a teacher's strike in Oregon that was becoming a little contentious. The union placed a quote from a man that lived in the early days of the union. The quote advocated killing anyone that would cross the picket lines. This was displayed on the union representing the teacher's website.

Would you, as a believer, want your name associated with such things?

The shocking thing is that many Christians see nothing wrong with a union, nor their activities. They take the good with the bad and wink at the bad, dismissing it because they disagree with it.

Humm, wonder what that lost neighbor will think when he sees you in the picket line seemingly advocating what your union does. Wonder how inconsistent you will seem to those you work with when you bow to the union and they know that you believe the Bible that tells you to be in submission to your employer.

Some ramifications believers ought to consider before backing a union in any way.

We might add to the list any sort of march or protest rally.

Some passages to consider: I Tim. 2.1-2; Rom. 13.1-2; I Peter 2.13-14.

9. Not only do these rich people have the woe of being on the wrong side of Christ and being miserable in not being happy as a rich person, but they do not know the joy of doing good.

Not all rich are miserable, but many are. Imagine having a billion or two lying around and wanting to spend it and enjoy it - what could you do, you can't spend that much money, though we'd all probably enjoy trying. Some rich people do find happiness and it is usually around doing good with their money and having a proper attitude toward money - a case of them ruling their money rather than it ruling them.

I'm not sure where rich begins and not rich ends, but I do know that when your heart is here and now, there can be little true happiness, and when your heart is where the Lord is, there is true happiness.

When a person is centered here and now, there is never enough to satisfy the desires, be it money, power or position. When you are centered in the heavenlies you have all that you need, are powerless to do anything but serve Christ and in the best possible position - right where God wants you.

10. The idea of having a ton of money, and not being able to spend it or enjoy it must be a little bit of terrible in itself. To know you have a couple thousand extra to spend and being unable to go out shopping - what a frustration that must be.

I will say that the rich person that goes to his death bed may not be too interested in trying to spend it. When you are in the hospital and the physical is off center, you seldom look very far beyond the physical pain and feeling of total loss of control. You are reduced to the physical being and getting it back on track, but if death is coming that is impossible and a large frustration, I would assume.

If, in your life's walk you encounter a rich person that is failing, have a little compassion on them, they are going through a double set of circumstance - losing control of their riches as well as their physical being.

Christians can enjoy the peace during these times that comes with having no concern for the things of riches, and only needing to focus on the Lord for their physical and spiritual condition.

11. I would not want anyone to think that the rich are the only ones that assemble to themselves excess riches. Even middle income and even poor people can amass more material items than they can use.

I subscribe to a Yahoo group of "recyclers" that post by email anything that they want to get rid of that still works and is useable. It is amazing what is offered. Microwaves, televisions, stereos, baby equipment, and all sorts of other items of good value that are no longer needed. At least they are getting rid of the stuff before it is cankered and rotted.

If you just think about your own closet. How much of the clothing that you own do you actually wear? How much "stuff" is stored in the garage that you no longer use, that you probably will never use, that your children will have to garage sale off, when you die? My kids are going to kill us when they start going through stuff.

My wife has a tin collection, those pretty popcorn, candy and everything else tins. They are great to look at, and we look at them because they are stacked all over the house. But more importantly we store all our unused treasures in them. If my wife wants some yarn she doesn't go to the store to purchase it, she goes looking through tins to make her selection.

I think we all have things we don't need, so we shouldn't be too hard on the rich that do the same thing we do, even though they do it in a much larger fashion than we.

I might add, to this thought that our riches are corrupting and rotting, just like the rich man's. I love electronic things since I was in electronics for years. I have stored a large bunch of items that we purchased and used, but when we stopped using them, I just put them away for future use.

I have been shocked recently, in that the last two items that I took out of storage to use, did not function. They had failed while sitting idle in the garage. Soooo, the moral of the story, the rich man is wrong for his actions, and is paying for it, but we also, tend to do the same thing in a smaller manner.

12. The text dealt with the rich making money by cheating the worker. We see this today on the corporate level. The several big "book cooking" operations cheated employees out of millions. The car manufacturers went to the unions and cooked up deals to cut benefits for people that had already retired.

The airlines have dumped their retirement programs and the Federal government is required to cover the losses because they were dumb enough to guarantee them in the past. This is the corporations stealing from all taxpayers, not just their own employees.

In the Old Testament there are many countries that are listed as having a future judgment. Now, we don't know how a country can be judged, but if a country can be, I suspicion that corporations will also be judged.

It may be that the leaders of the countries/corporations will be held accountable in the end, or whether this is a "here and now" decline into insignificance we don't know. God will have His way with those that counter his commands in the Word.

13. "Ye have condemned [and] killed the just; [and] he doth not resist you." is a phrase that just screams for some consideration. James speaks to the fact that some in the church had killed, or caused the death of just men, but the men had not resisted the rich.

Two things. Christian's involved in unjust killing and secondly the just being killed were not resisting the killers. Let's think about those two items for a moment.

Christian's involved in unjust killing: We might think of Saul and his persecution of the church, but we realize that he did this while he was a non-believer. He thought he was doing "right" for Judaism, but he was certainly condemning just men to death.

How could a believer be involved in this sort of action? How could a believer involved in such actions be a part of the church? Why wouldn't he be subject to church discipline? A number of questions that we need to understand.

Being unjustly condemned to death and not resisting: Now, if someone hauled me off to jail and was trying to put me to death, I think I would be fighting with every tool I have to clear myself.

I have been corresponding with a prisoner in the south that contacted me through our website. I have been taken with his complete peace about his situation. He is not condemning people for incarcerating him unjustly, he is simply doing the best he can in the situation he is in.

He has determined that he is going to play by the rules, and take full advantage of all that is offered him. He has a fairly interesting job, he lives in minimum security so has his own room with a little more than bare minimum. He is taking extension Bible training and has planned that by the time he comes up for parole that he will have his Doctorate in counseling. He evidently knows his situation is just and deserved, but he is going to make the most of the opportunity that God has afforded Him in this not so nice situation.

Evidently he was an unjust man justly condemned. He has not resisted those that wished him harm, probably due to his realization as a believer that it was just.

Imagine now, if you will, being UNJUSTLY condemned. We have Joseph in the Old Testament that is a good example of being unjustly condemned, and we know his attitude was that God meant all of his younger life for GOOD.

We have other examples in the book of Daniel. Daniel himself was condemned for something that was right - prayer - some of his enemies just hornsawgled the king into making prayer illegal. The trio in the fires of the furnace as well. They didn't cry out concerning their unjust treatment, they just endured what God had brought into their lives.

Now, let's apply this to our own day.

a. Our son is told he can't read his Bible at recess on the playground. How do we react? Do we go to court if need be? How far do we go to gain our rights?

b. Someone t-bones you in an intersection. It was fact that you looked both ways and saw no oncoming traffic. The driver is known for driving under the influence and multiple accidents due

to the drugs.

Do you fight her lawsuit? Do you try to demean her in court over her past driving history?

First off, her past driving history cannot be brought up in trial - a little more unjustness to the mix. She sues you, so you have no choice but to go to court and make a defense. The insurance company makes most of the decisions for you so you are limited in what evolves in this situation.

c. The church wants to build a new building, but there are city codes that seem to block your efforts. Do you go to court to force the city to allow your building? Do you "prove" the bureaucrats wrong?

A church in our city was faced with such a situation. They went to the neighbors on foot and talked to everyone they could contact and there was no opposition. When they went into the permitting process with the city, all sorts of opposition came to the front. The city had two options available and rather than stand up to the sudden opposition which had no real foundation, they opted to reject the permit for the church.

The church then jumped through a large number of city hoops to try to gain a permit in another manner, and that attempt was squashed as well. The church had adequate property to build their desired building on, the new building covered up a rather simple looking educational wing and there was no reason for them not to be allowed to build, other than the city council rejecting their permit process.

This church opted to sue the city. They were faced with a difficult decision. On the one hand they were treated unjustly because they were a church. This was evident in the public discussions as well as in the council meetings on the subject. They had every right to have the permit, and there were no valid oppositions that were not met with complete answers by the church. The church agreed to build a smaller building, the church jumped though every hoop the city set before them, yet they were still rejected.

They could have walked away from it and found other solutions, but they took a stand based on the principle that they were being discriminated against because they were a church. Whether they were right or wrong in the situation to sue needs to go back to Scripture and its dealing with lawsuits - that is another study.

The actions of a believer, when unjustly treated, is a hard one to determine, but we do have this passage as well as others. Maybe a "NO RESISTANCE" policy would be the best.

We, in America, have been blessed beyond belief with our freedom to do as we please as believers. This however is changing drastically lately. More and more our rights are being challenged and eroded. We need to make a good study of how we should respond to these challenges. Ought we to stand up and fight as many are doing, or as others are doing, allow unjust treatment to go unchallenged.

One thing we should realize from this passage is that the people had no real options to resist in a legal manner. They had little in the way of rights if they had no money.

Let us see if we can set some principles to consider as we go forward in America's anti Christian atmosphere.

a. Use those avenues to which we are given in our legal system. The real question here is do we have Biblical authority to enter into lawsuits. The New Testament says we aren't to sue a brother, due to the fact that we have church discipline to settle difficulties between believers. Some take the phrase at the end of the Matthew church discipline passage to mean you can take non-believers to court. "17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell [it] unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Personally, I am not sure that is a correct interpretation of the phrase. This seems to mean that you treat them as a heathen and a publican due to his non Christian stance. To take it as if they are to be considered non believers, you would need to witness to them, kick them out of the church. This doesn't seem to fit the nature of the Word of God.

I Cor. 6:1 "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? 6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather [suffer yourselves to] be defrauded? 8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that [your] brethren."

b. Consider whether you will be able to witness to that lost person that you sue. What will your relationship be to them after the law suit? Not a friendly one I would assume.

c. Is there some other way to settle the issue? Any method but cutting off ties to the person should be preferable.

d. Is a law suit ever the answer for a believer? I am not sure it is. If you, as a believer, are sued, then you need to give a good defense, but if it is up to you to sue someone else, I am not sure you should in light of what we've seen thus far. It probably would be within your rights if the person is not a believer, but is it expedient? Is there anything in this life worth going to law over if you can't share the gospel with the person at a later date?

One further passage. There is a passage from the hand of Peter which speaks well to this subject. I Pet.4.18-21 "18 Servants, [be] subject to [your] masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. 19 For this [is] thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God

endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what glory [is it], if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer [for it], ye take it patiently, this [is] acceptable with God. 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:"

When we do right and suffer for it patiently, we will be following the Lord's example. It would seem that this is the life that we are called to rather than the life of one standing up for our rights.

As you sit patiently, remember to consider the other person's problems before God. Consider the person's need of salvation. Consider how you might be used in both areas.

Chapter twenty

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 5.7-12

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

"Be patient" and do it right now! Patient is not in the vocabulary of most people these days. They not only want it ALL they want it ALL RIGHT NOW.

Remember, this is in the context of the rich being terrible to the worker, and James tells them to be patient. Be patient when in trouble and when you are being treated terribly.

Just how patient should we be? Should we stand by when others are being treated miserably? Should we hold our peace when we are facing terrible times?

There are Christians around the world today that are going to court to gain their rights. Not, like us in America over prayer and Bible reading in the schools, but for their lives, for their future and for their right to worship.

I Peter 2.21-23 mentions: "21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed [himself] to him that judgeth righteously:"

He suffered, and He is our example. If we want to answer our questions let us look at how our EXAMPLE for this life suffered.

Matt. 27.27-31 "21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed [himself] to him that judgeth righteously:"

Mark 15.19-20 "19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing [their] knees worshipped him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him."

Of course there is the reality that He was here to die, and that to fulfill prophecy He was to give Himself up to the cross, but how does this relate to us? How far should we go in our humbleness and patience when trouble comes upon us?

We also have the example of Paul that called upon his Roman citizenship as a means of gaining a hearing, but we also see in him a willingness to give a defense, a witness and leave it to the authorities. Thus we might want to take careful use of our rights and do what we can within the system we live in; however we ought also to attempt to retain the possibility of witnessing through and after our hard times, to those that seek to give us trouble.

The reality of this life is that God will take care of all injustice to His people either now or later. You know that old story from our days as children - "My dad is bigger en yer dad!" Well, I have to tell you, my Father is bigger en all other dads combined, and He is going to care for any wrong that needs caring for when it comes to His son.

"Be patient" has the idea we have of patience, but also has the idea of length of patience. That is why we use the term long suffering. It isn't just patient today, but also to continue to be patient as long as it takes. In fact the word is translated "hath long patience" later in the verse.

Some might ask, well just how long suffering do we have to be? Well, James says, till the coming of the Lord. That would relate to, be patient until the end if it takes that long. This is the rapture that James is speaking of, that physical appearing of the Lord - that may well be a long time, indeed, it may be all your life and then a bunch of years, we don't know.

It is of note that the disciples asked the Lord how many times they should forgive someone. His answer was "Until seventy times seven." Matt. 18.22b. Relate this to the numbers Daniel uses in his prophecy of the end time and you must wonder if we aren't to forgive till the end as well.

"The coming" is the Greek word "parousia" and relates to the visible return of Christ for His brethren.

The thought is to be patient until the end if need be. Till all is done and God settles all accounts, would work for the text.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

While you are being patient, "stablish your hearts" for the time of the coming is nigh. The question is, how do we accomplish the phrase "stablish your hearts?" The term "stablish" relates to the establishment of something on solid footing. Making it set and secure. Our hearts or more to the point, our minds, souls, and focus should be securely grounded. On what, might be your question. Surely, on the coming, when all will be made equal and just, but more to the point, establish yourself solidly in preparation for all that might come, so that you can face it with patience.

"Draweth nigh" is in the perfect tense indicating something that is on the way at the present time and will be on its way until it gets here at some future, but final moment. It is a sure thing is the thought of the tense. You can go to the bank on it - it will certainly happen, there is no doubt, and there is no question, it will occur.

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

"Grudge" is not quite what it appears on the surface. The term has the thought of "sigh" or "groan." It is like when someone tells you to do something quite distasteful and you sigh in resignation to having to do it.

The word is used in relation to sighing against another or a brother in Christ. James says that we can be condemned at the judgment if we do. Apply that one to your activities in church folks. Wow, should be your comment, and shock should be your reaction. All those nasty things that you have said about brother so and so!

Don't do it, or you will be judged. What a stern warning. I think, some time to look at this word, would be prudent, so that we assure that we don't "sigh" against a brother.

The term is the Greek word "stenazo" and is translated groan, sigh, with grief, and grudge.

The key, may be the tense of the word which is present, you are not to do it on a continuing basis. Now, it is not saying you can do it now and then; you are not to do it on a continuing basis. You can't do it to this brother, and then to that brother, then to another, you are not to continue to do this. STOP IT might cover the idea.

That really puts a blanket on all church gossip, complaining, and talking down about others. Don't do it, if you are doing it, then stop it.

To murmur against another is to first judge them incorrect in some manner and then to complain against them, thus you are open to being judged by the coming judge.

When we realize who we are before God and Who He is in relation to us, how can we dare put ourselves above other brothers and sisters in the Lord?

Recently I was watching the national news and they had a story of Christian Wrestling leagues that draw people in with wrestling matches then they preach the gospel. I could never do that, I could never go to one of those, but I should probably not condemn what they do. I might well question how the Lord feels about such activities, and I might wonder about the validity of the practice, but I most likely should not condemn it as wrong activity. God will speak to the people involved one day and I probably won't be included in the discussion, so why should I insert myself now?

10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

If you think you are having a ruff time in life, look to the prophets for your example of affliction and patience. There are two items there, we understand affliction or suffering, but the patience

might relate to a number of items.

Yes, suffering requires patience to endure, but patience and the "prophets" might indicate something else in my mind by way of application. The prophets had a large audience, but seldom any listeners - that is listeners that ever paid attention to them. Yes, I'd guess there were some that heeded the warnings, but as a whole the audience was with earplugs.

So, today, many that we speak to are with muffled ears. They may hear, but they seldom heed, they may notice your words, but seldom change. Again, there are a few, but the majority go on as if they have not heard.

Patience is the word in this case as well. You aren't called to change people, you are called to speak the Word, and allow the Spirit to change whom He will. This is the reason for many frustrated pastors and teachers. They assume too much, they assume they are to convince people to change their ways, but it must be the Spirit that does this work.

In my mind, we could shorten all invitations in the church to a moment or two. If the Spirit hasn't moved by that time, all the groaning, coaxing, and praying of the pastor won't help at all.

The suffering will come, and in it we must be steadfast as a silent witness to those that bring the persecution. Silence isn't a strong point of this preacher nor many that I know, but when religious persecution comes we should stand as the prophets stood. Speaking truth and suffering that which the truth haters bring on.

Patience is normally translated longsuffering. Even if the trouble lasts a good long time, we are still responsible to suffer with patience as did the prophets.

Now, as to the prophets, James could have been thinking of the New Testament prophets, however we have no Biblical record of them suffering. Thus, if the reader is to know how they suffered - to tell the believer about the example, they probably are the Old Testament prophets that they had known about for most of their lives.

The book of Hebrews speaks to the suffering of Old Testament saints, and they might have heard of the book, but we don't know if they did, nor if indeed, it had been written at this time.

11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Now, there goes James, meddling again. It's bad enough we are to suffer with patience, but now he wants us to be happy about it! You could read it that James and others could be happy of their suffering, but I think the thought of the text is that the sufferer was to be happy.

Happy in knowing they are living their best for God and doing all they can to stand for Him, might be the line of thought.

With the introduction of Job to the context we know how much suffering we might look for and still be patient and happy. Job lost family members and all the riches and possessions he had, and yet he was faithful. Maybe not right on in his life, but he followed God the best He could and waited for the Lord's will for his life.

The end of Job pictures God as one that has pity for what His children suffer, and that He extends mercy to Job in the end.

Job 42.10 "And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. 12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. 13 He had also seven sons and three daughters. 14 And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch. 15 And in all the land were no women found [so] fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. 16 After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, [even] four generations."

This may be why James encourages them to suffer with patience and happiness. They can know that God will bring it to an end and that happiness will be the result. This is not a guarantee that the end might not be through death, but the end surely will be an end to suffering and continuation of happiness.

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and [your] nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

This might seem to be a separate thought, but it seems that it is related to the previous verses about suffering, and how to suffer. Here they are encouraged not to do any swearing in their suffering, but to do it with patience and steadfastness.

"Condemnation" can also be translated "hypocrisy" which would give a little different light on the passage. One might wonder if some of the readers were saying yea, when they should have been saying nay etc. The lie might have been a problem to the readership.

The thought here seems to be that we aren't to swear or have an outburst when persecuted. The troubles should never find us swearing and having a hissy fit about what is going on. This might have application to those days when the car is not working, you have bought parts, the parts won't fit, and you have to go get different parts, and the new parts are defective and you have to go get others - now if you are going to swear, that is the time, just after you beat the car with your twelve-inch crescent - nope - not even then should we swear - remember - "patience."

Some have taken this verse to mean that, we in America, should not swear on the Bible in court. I don't think that is a valid application of the verse, but then I don't know that we should swear on the Bible either. It kind of depends on what the swearing means. To ask one to swear on the Bible is to suggest less than honesty, which is an affront in my mind to the honest person.

APPLICATION:

1. Verse seven mentions the early and later rain. The context would indicate it is simply waiting for the full season of the farmer or vine keeper. They look for the first to get their crops going and the later to finish up the crops, or in some cases to get the crops in before the rains ruin the harvest.

Many have seen great things in this phrase and drawn quite the profound applications. In the seventies Dr. Okenga suggested that the later rain was the out pouring of the Spirit in the later times. He suggested that this might be the Jesus people and the other charismatic movement groups.

Time has been clear that it was not the Jesus people and one would have to question whether it was the charismatic movements. Indeed, we know him to be a mistaken due to the fact that the Lord has not returned and the harvest is not over thirty-five years later.

This is a good illustration of how not to interpret. You place yourself open for later public correction if you suggest a future interpretation and it doesn't come to pass. Indeed, this was proof that you were a false prophet in the Old Testament time.

Indeed, this is a figure of speech for the husbandman. He also wants the rains between the early ones and the last one or there will be no harvest. It is simply a phrase that would illustrate the brethren waiting for the time to expire. Christ is coming and the end is near, but we must be patient for the end to come.

Some of the hype and misinformation of the charismatic movement tells us that we can speed the return of Christ by restoring the earth to its pre-fall state. Not going to happen sooner, twill happen when all is ready and fulfilled. Others tell us that we must evangelize the world so Christ can return. Evangelize, yes, but do it because it is commanded and our duty, but not to bring Christ back. He is able and capable of returning when it is time, not when we work and sweat enough to bring Him back in our time.

Oh the fallacy of thinking we can return the earth to the pre-fall times, or that we can hurry the return of the Lord - what utter and extreme arrogance!

There is another aspect to the waiting husbandman. Not only do they wait until the time is just right for the harvest, but they also prepare for that time when the harvest will arrive. They prepare for the harvest, they service the equipment, they ready the containment for the harvest, they hire workers if needed to get the harvest in quickly before it is spoiled.

So, we ought to be ready for the harvest, and waiting for that day when Christ will return. Not on the house tops or the mountain tops but in the fields and barns getting ready for that great day.

One last comment of the idea of later rain, there is a group within the charismatic movement called the Later Rain. This group is not a group that most would want to be associated with, yet it amazes me that many sound churches sing contemporary music published by an organization of the same name.

There are accusations of what they believe, but they often deny the accusations and from what I see on the internet, deny they are associated with latter rain, so I will leave it to the reader to determine where they stand with this group. Some suggest that all Word of Faith people are latter rain and I am told that the Assembly of God as a denomination rejected Latter Rain teachings years ago.

Most Baptist and independent Bible churches would not want to have anything to do with them yet invite their theology into their church via music all the time. Seems counter productive at best, terribly unwise at worst.

In general they are supposed to believe in healing, yet some of the websites deny this. They are often in the radical end of setting up God's kingdom here on earth, though they deny this on some websites as well.

I include a quote from Barnes relating to the reality of these rains in history: "In the climate of Palestine there are two rainy seasons, on which the harvest essentially depends--the autumnal and the spring rains--called here and elsewhere in the Scriptures the early and the latter rains. See De 11:14; Job 29:23; Jer 5:24.

"The autumnal or early rains of Scripture, usually commence in the latter half of October or the beginning of November; not suddenly, but by degrees, which gives opportunity for the husbandman to sow his fields of wheat and barley. The rains come mostly from the west or south-west, continuing for two or three days at a time, and failing especially during the nights. The wind then chops round to the north or east, and several days of fine weather succeed. During the months of November and December the rains continue to fall heavily; afterwards they return only at longer intervals, and are less heavy; but at no period during the winter do they entirely cease to occur. Snow often falls in Jerusalem, in January and February, to the depth of a foot or more, but it does not last long. Rain continues to fall more or less through the month of March, but it is rare after that period. At the present time there are not any particular periods of rain, or successions of showers, which might be regarded as distinct rainy seasons. The whole period from October to March now constitutes only one continued rainy season, without any regularly intervening time of prolonged fair weather. Unless, therefore, there has been some change in the climate since the times of the New Testament, the early and the latter rains for which the husbandman waited with longing, seem rather to have implied the first showers of autumn, which revived the parched and thirsty earth, and prepared it for the seed; and the latter showers of spring, which continued to refresh and forward the ripening crops and the vernal products of the

fields. In ordinary seasons, from the cessation of the showers in spring until their commencement in October or November, rain never falls, and the sky is usually serene.--Robinson's Biblical Researches, vol. ii., pp. 96-100."

2. Patience, that which we should portray. How does that relate to the church that is growing and needs more room, but doesn't have the money to build? Do they practice patience and put off the building program until the Lord blesses in the financial area? Would seem wise to this writer.

How does patience relate to the person that desires something, that special toy, but doesn't have the money? Again, patience and not making a purchase would be the wisest position to take.

This country has an average of \$10,000 in personal credit card debt. That is a lot of impatience to say the least. This writer has had the same problem over the years. It is so easy to spend when the card is present, but when you have to dig into the cash; you really have to think again before making that purchase.

We want it NOW, that is why they call it the NOW generation. Not that we are so up to date as some suggest, but that we want it and we want it NOW! Now it is the scourge of the church as well. Many are so in debt that they can't give to the Lord and pay their bills on time. This is not the way to run a family, nor a church for that matter. Some churches shift funds from one account to the other to make things come out right on a regular basis.

All of us, church and individual, ought to be patient and buy only that which we can pay for at the time, and that paying for, should be out of extra money, not the grocery money.

Another area of patience is the pastorate. The average pastor stays in a church less than two years. That isn't enough time to get your garden planted and established, much less your spiritual tendings. How can anyone think that eighteen months is long enough to invest in a church and then move on to another eighteen-month ministry somewhere else?

This is wrong and ought to stop. It isn't required that a man stay twenty years, but to give up in eighteen months is quitting normally in our day and this ought to change. Yes, there may be some situations where eighteen months is too long, but the majority of these moves are due to lack of excitement, lack of super growth, or lack of commitment to the ministry which God has provided.

I read on an internet board on this subject. The majority of the respondents were suggesting that these dumb ignorant Christian congregations weren't worthy of their talents. Now, they didn't use those terms, but if you boiled down the comments, that is about what they were saying.

These men had spent four to seven years in college/seminary and they weren't going to waste all that knowledge and talent on no-account small churches, they were going to move right on up the numbers game and be top dog in the growth craze.

When they were reminded that it was the Lord that is to build his church there was not a comment, they just ignored that post and continued on in their quest for fame and fortune - yes, literally looking to be a popular pastor making lots of money.

The sad part is, many churches have bought into the same false idea of "church" and have started paying men outlandish wages plus benefits and are building bigger and bigger churches, while the missionaries struggle to even get to the field. Millions are being spent on pay packages, gyms, and electronics while missionaries can't stay on the field due to declining support levels.

Many churches spend small fortunes in electronics so that the people don't have to hold a hymnal while singing. I was in a church years ago that met in another denominations building. They were planning a million dollar building program. The only reason I heard while there, and I asked several people, was that it was a pain in the neck to have to carry all those hymnals in and out of the building every service. Had a notion to tell them I'd make it a life time job to carry them in and out if they'd just give me the million.

3. "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." The Net Bible lists some Old Testament references in relation to this phrase, while translating it as "the Lord is full of compassion and mercy." (There are some added verses to the ones that they listed.)

Ex. 34.6 This is in the context of Moses on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments. "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,"

Neh. 9.15-17 Here we see a recount of the Israelites in the wilderness and their stiff necked actions. In the midst of this God is still God, no matter what the people do. "15 And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. 16 But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, 17 And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou [art] a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not."

Ps. 86.13-15 "For great [is] thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. 14 O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent [men] have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them. 15 But thou, O Lord, [art] a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

Ps. 102.13 "Thou shalt arise, [and] have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come."

Joel 2.13 "And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he [is] gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

Jonah 4.2 "And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, [was] not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou [art] a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."

What a study in the character of God. He is all that we could ever desire, but we seldom seek Him out for close fellowship - and the question that begs to be asked is, "Why don't we spend more time with a God that has all the qualities that He has?"

4. Verse seven has an interesting thought. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." In the context it is clear that all the traits of the believer, good and bad, are viewed in relation to the coming of the Lord.

In a very real sense "the husbandman" might well refer not only to the general illustration of the husbandman, but to the Lord Himself as He comes to gather the fruits of man at the end. He is waiting for the latter rain so that the harvest might be completed. He indeed has been long in patience in waiting for this harvest and He is waiting for "precious fruit" which we are to have yielded unto Him.

Like the earthly husbandman looks for a crop, Christ is looking for a crop of righteous fruit. However, like the earthly farmer, He is not assured of a good crop, he is dependant on everything but His good planting and nurturing. He cannot guarantee Himself a good crop, He can only plant, tend, nurture and look for the increase.

Increase is something that is totally up to the believers of each generation. When you look at the previous generations and the wave of missionary activity all over the world, or look back to the apostles' time, when the known world was touched with the Gospel, and then compare it to what is going on today. The mission field is a place of relaxation and enjoyment. Yes, some great missionary work is being done today, but many times there is less work and more play.

I watched a slide report from a veteran missionary from Europe some time ago and it looked more like a ten year series from Rick Steves and his Public Broadcasting System travel shows. The man and his wife had been all over Europe and not only in the countries, but to the tourist attractions. It was obvious that they had been doing a lot of traveling, while reporting very little of any work being done in their little town.

One missionary told me that you can tell where the Southern Baptist Missionary lives, it is the big house with the RV and big boat parked in the driveway. Again, I don't want to paint with a broad brush, since I know some Southern Baptist missionaries that are doing a great work. I am also aware of how much support some people are raising these days for work with independent mission organizations.

The mega churches are spending millions of dollars on new and bigger and better buildings,

while little is being done to reach the lost of our generation. I really wonder how the Husbandman will fair in the coming harvest.

5. It seems to me that James was looking for the coming of the Lord soon. He seemed to call the readers attention to this as the answer to their trials. He had this anticipation of the coming, yet it is of note that he is believed to have gone deep into the Middle East in his missionary work. He reportedly went into and past India in his labors. Likewise, we look for His return, but we should also make plans and execute them for the reaching of the lost of the world.

Never should we sit and wait for His coming, we should, as James, work as if He isn't coming, work as if our life depended on our expansion of His Kingdom. It is our job, it should be our goal, and it should be our quest.

If this is not true, then we need to spend time evaluating what we are doing in our lives. If we as a church or as a Christian organization do not have the fervor of James to reach the world, then we have not the correct focus in our lives, and in our organizations.

Our purpose should be the winning of souls, our goal should be the expansion of God's Kingdom, and our lives should be committed to these high principles. If your church or organization has anything else, then it is misfocused. I am not saying you can't be a food bank, or a crisis center, but I am saying the focus should be reaching the lost through food, or through counseling etc. Never set anything between yourself and reaching the lost or you will produce a poor harvest for your Husbandman.

We might also assume some things from the fact that the coming did not occur in the time of James. These people had been encouraged to look forward to that time at which their suffering would conclude, but when they probably did, the weeks went by with no coming. The years went by with no coming.

We might assume that they continued on in their watching and anticipation of the end of their persecution, but did not realize their focus. I am sure there were days when they got out of bed and felt like they could not go into the fields another time to tend for the master. They probably wanted to sleep in late, just once, instead of seven days a week going out to the fields and the weeds and the problems. "Just one morning I'd like to sleep in as late as I want."

We have our down days, just as they, the great part of it is we know they survived the down days and continued on - were patient - in their waiting on the Lord.

I have mentioned the young pastors that move on in eighteen months or so, to a new church. Might it be that they aren't being focused on the end, but rather the wanting to sleep in one morning now and then? I think patience is a great need in our leadership today.

We often read the acts of Paul and forget that these are the high points of his life, not the day to day dealings with life.

He had his down days, he had his up days, and he had his flat boring days with his body wrapped in a stinking tent that he had to get done for that rich bozo at city hall. He walked with God no matter what the day was. It is clear in his writing that the down days really had him down, but he always walked with God in a clear and concise manner. (See II Cor. 4.8-10 "[We are] troubled on every side, yet not distressed; [we are] perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.")

6. Barnes makes an excellent point in relation to the terminology of verse nine in relation to "grudge not."

"There are some persons who are always grumbling. They have a sour, dissatisfied, discontented temper; they see no excellence in other persons; they are displeased that others are more prospered, honoured, and beloved than they are themselves; they are always complaining of what others do, not because they are injured, but because others seem to them to be weak and foolish; they seem to feel that it becomes them to complain if everything is not done precisely as in their estimation it should be. It is needless to say that this spirit--the offspring of pride--will make any man lead a wretched life; and equally needless to say that it is wholly contrary to the spirit of the gospel."

We all know this person, it is I, we might say. Most of us at one time or another has slipped into this mode of operation. Usually when we have been wronged and we feel very put upon in life. We tend to build ourselves up by bringing others down to our level. The commonality of this trait does not make it acceptable, nor correct action, thus we must guard against it as best we can.

I raise the issue to discuss a secondary issue. Just how do you draw the line between this and finding fault with false doctrine and practices? It is easy to condemn something, but it is more difficult to identify it as truly, Biblically wrong. Often we condemn first and leave the truly and Biblically out.

Say you are in a church and the pastor is tending toward sheer boredom in his messages, he seems to dwell on his accomplishments in life, he has little if any meat in his messages. Is this reason to move on to another church? Say he invites a leader of a Charismatic mission to speak in the church (assuming this is a non-charismatic church). Do you start looking for another church? Say none of the other people in the church are seemingly unconcerned about all the items listed. Do you allow your mind to start sorting through the known churches for one to try?

What distinguishes between the evaluations you do in the above questions, from the "grudge not" issue? What makes the two different? How do you do one without involving yourself in the other?

- a. Pray about your decisions and seek God's leading and guidance in what to do.
- b. Do not make your decision making process public and carping. Keep your evaluation and

thinking to yourself, or at least your spouse. Do not go to everyone in the church to try to stir up trouble.

c. Go to the Word and be sure the principles you are applying to the situation are Biblical and well applied.

d. Find understanding. The pastor may not know that the mission is led by charismatics; he may be having a difficult time in his life and not have time to prepare properly for his messages.

e. Talk to the pastor and find out if he is aware of the problems that you have noticed. Many go through months on semi automatic and fail to stop to analyze their direction and actions. Your bringing it up might remind him of his need to take stock of his past months of activities.

Remember, however, talking to a pastor these days may not be a pleasant experience. Many feel they are king and you are subject and YOU need to be obedient, WITHOUT QUESTIONS. If you misstep you will automatically be looking for another church.

7. Relating to the reference to the prophets, let us look at Heb 11:33-38 for a moment. "32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and [of] Barak, and [of] Samson, and [of] Jephthae; [of] David also, and Samuel, and [of] the prophets: 33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 And others had trial of [cruel] mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and [in] mountains, and [in] dens and caves of the earth."

Okay, take some time and verbalize just how persecuted you are in America. What of the above do you know of personally? No, we in America are not yet persecuted, though it may come. Many in the world today are facing these sorts of problems however and we as believers need to be praying for others as they go through these many problems of life.

8. I have wondered aloud in my writing at the Christian "persecution" that we are beginning to see in America. James tells the reader to suffer patiently, yet we see today, Christians standing up for their rights, even to going to court to gain their rights.

The readers of James probably had no rights for the most part, many being slaves, and the rest most likely in poverty, however today, in America we do have rights guaranteed to us by our constitution.

How do we live in America under our constitution, and still live by the words of James? Do we

stand for our rights? Do we sue over our rights? Do we make a big fuss when someone steps on our rights?

First of all, let me acknowledge the difficulty in not automatically standing up for our rights. Rights are the watch word of our society, what with everyone wanting more rights than they are guaranteed, and more rights than anyone else.

The welfare recipients/advocates feel that it is a right to receive a free check from the government. This is not a right guaranteed in the constitution, it is a perceived right in the mind of the one wanting and wanting and wanting from the government.

The homosexual community wants to have special rights. They aren't satisfied with the rights afforded them, they want more.

How do we, as Christians, walk this line of suffering patiently and standing for our rights within the responsibilities of a citizen of this country?

a. When a decision is made, for or against, "patiently" accept it and live with it. If it is in your favor, don't gloat about it and raise a fuss by thumbing your nose at the other side. Should we go to court for our rights? That would be a matter of prayer and the Lord's leading in your life.

b. When a true Christian or Biblical principle is at stake, then maybe we should be more vocal in our response. Court would again be something to pray about.

c. Court is a legal right of our system of justice and we might avail ourselves of it if we feel that God will be honored and His kingdom furthered, but if it is for vindictiveness and GETTING MY RIGHTS, then further thought/prayer might be the best course of action. While on the topic, Paul claimed and used his Roman citizenship when working with the officials of his day.

9. We have mentioned that the wrong doing of man will one day meet face to face with the right doing of God. One day each person will meet God and face the implications of what they have done in this life.

I remember often, an incident in my child hood that I would love to just forget. My father took some canvas awnings off of our duplex and rather than throw the two largest ones away he made us a tent to play in. My brother found that if you took a match and held it to the canvas on the inside it would catch the fuzz on fire with a little flash, but would go out immediately.

Having shown me the neat trick, he left for whatever adventure he was on. I, in turn got the matches and set about to try this new trick of nature. I found another trick of nature however, and found that if you hold the match there too long, the canvas ignites with a bit of a flash as well. The soft ball size hole in the roof of our tent was obvious proof of wrong doing.

When God speaks to man, the proof will be just as obvious, just as glaring. The hole in our tent

had to be on the side where my father drove in after work, not on the other side where he might not notice it for awhile.

I knew what was coming and I knew it was deserved, but that didn't make me want to see it occur. All afternoon, I kept thinking of the displeasure that my father was going to display toward me. The odd part of life is that most of mankind, including many Christians totally ignore this display of displeasure that is going to come when we stand before Him - our Heavenly Father.

Man acts as if this face to face meeting is going to be with a God that overlooks all shortcomings, and acts accordingly, but I rather doubt that this is the judgment that is coming. After all, isn't it called the judgment rather than the love in? God is going to be in the judging mode and we had better realize this before we go booping into His presence to get all those good vibes we think He is going to be spreading at the love in.

For the lost, there will be an even bigger horror than just being confronted with their works; they will face the reality of all that they have been hearing in their life - that sin is wrong, that good works are right. They will know they are facing a righteous God that has been totally rejected in their life. They will know their coming dwelling place. They will know that they will have to bow to the Lord of Lord's and King of King's even though they denied His existence and authority.

When waiting for my father, I was near sick to my stomach at the thought of his displeasure and having to talk to him about what I had done. Maybe this is why I have such a high regard for the final judgment coming on all of mankind. My life has been lived in my attempt to find pleasure in the eyes of the coming Judge.

There is the threat of judgment, but there is also the sense of great shortcoming before God. We cannot please Him when we wrong Him. That wrong, one day will sink into our minds as sorrow for what we have done to Him that has so loves us.

I have mentioned in my studies before, that I highly recommend the viewing of the Sistine Chapel's paintings on the ceilings. The last judgment is portrayed and one part of that judgment is a portrayal of the boatman beating men with an oar to get them to step of onto the shore of hell. The horror and anguish should move lost man to consider his ways and standing before God the judge.

For the believer there will be no facing of hell, but there will be a facing of the Lord that saved their worthless hide from hell. Years ago, I made an overhead projector overlay depicting the rapture and the things we might be doing as we are caught up into the air to meet the Lord.

I pictured people as being taken where they were, one in a recliner, one with a cocktail glass lifted high, one clinging to a television set, etc. I realize that the recliner won't be going with me, but the thought ought to make us wonder at how we use our time in this life. Are we doing all that we can for Christ? Are we really serving Him or serving ourselves in this life?

The context of this overlay was for a sermon in a little pioneer work in the Midwest. We had accepted this little church knowing that I would have to work full time to support the family. I was working forty-five hours a week at a secular job, and was teaching five lessons per week in the church. We had three small children at the time, a rented house/yard to care for and the usual junk car to keep running. My wife's parents lived about forty-five minutes away so we took trips there near weekly and there was always fishing to work into the plan.

Against this back drop I created this overlay one morning at about two and was feeling guilty that I didn't feel like I was doing enough for the Lord, and was wondering if I was being honest in this overlay - how committed to Him was I. I have to admit that we didn't have a recliner, but someone had given us a huge rocking chair that was just as good, and I seemed to spend a lot of time in it.

Just how will we fair when the judgment seat of Christ is called and we have to face the one that suffered the horrors of the cross for us? Yes, we are under grace, but the Word also tells us a lot about good works. I doubt very much that grace will cover the lack of good works!

10. We have observed that swearing in verse twelve relates not to the formal oath given in court, but rather the outburst of swearing that is usually related to anger and/or frustration.

On this subject this author can speak clearly. As a young man I entered the Navy right after high school and learned all the tricks of that trade quite well, including the foul mouth. I really have no idea why people put up with my cursing and impure mind. This was when I was having a good day, not when angry or frustrated.

When the frustration came to a head, there was really no being around me. I recall many times when working on my car that something would go wrong and in frustration, I would grab the biggest wrench I could find and swing at the motor a time or two.

In later life I realize that there was a lot of anger at other things that was sitting under the surface that I wasn't aware of, but I was certainly aware of the results of frustration. When God started working with me and seemed to be leading me into the ministry, the first thing that came to mind was that He would send me to Africa, and the second thing was that I would have to deal with my swearing and then the smoking.

The sad thing is that many believers swear, either audibly or under their breath and never know the peace of dealing with that sin of swearing out of anger or frustration. They go through life constantly embarrassing themselves if they are audible, and constantly feeling guilty if inaudible.

Often the problem of swearing is not dealt within sermons and lessons in the church, because everyone in the church knows who swears and the pastor wouldn't want to embarrass them publically, though preaching through James would give them good opportunity to speak to the subject clearly. In saying the pastor doesn't want to embarrass, I am not being negative. In this case a clear case on swearing would probably embarrass a swearing person needlessly. A private talk

might well be the better option, unless it can be addressed from a passage in a series of messages.

Swearing, though wrong, is nothing more than a habit that is released by an emotional trigger, just as shopping is a release from an emotional trigger, or eating etc. It is a learned behavior, and it can be unlearned - not necessarily easily, but it can be corrected as any bad habit can.

The key is for the person to acknowledge that it is inappropriate behavior for the believer and that steps should be taken to correct the behavior. Steps such as commitment. Easing of things that frustrate may help, but this normally just lengthens the process of dealing with the habit.

When the smoker quits smoking, often they deal with the habit by substituting another more acceptable habit, but this is avoiding the problem. There is a habit that needs to be stopped. Finding a more acceptable habit isn't quite the answer to habitual activity. Many smokers shift to chewing toothpicks, sunflower seeds, candy, coffee, soft drinks - most anything that allows the smoker to stick something in their mouth instead of not stuffing something in their mouth. This is not deep research, but the experiences of the author and several other ex-smokers that he has talked to over the years.

Swearing is just as much a habit as smoking and needs to be dealt within the believer's life, just as much as any other habitual activity.

Chapter twenty-one

Mr. D's Notes on James

James 5.13-20

13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

Two sets of people and two sets of actions. Afflicted, then pray - merry, then sing. An appropriate action for each group. The action is probably mostly natural. When trouble comes people always turn to God no matter if they know Him or not - at the point of trouble they assume He is there for them, not that He is necessarily. Likewise, when we are happy, we often break into joyful singing.

Many believers have not found the "afflicted" side of life. They are so self sufficient that they have not seen want, they are so self centered, they have not known rejection and they are so self absorbed that they have not seen reason to help the afflicted and find that they have empathy. They often skip along merrily singing their cheerful song not knowing what the other side of the coin might be.

On the other hand, some have been so afflicted; they don't remember the merry side of things. Some have lost friends, homes, families and have nothing but trouble. These need to pray, but those around them need to act. Prayer is the only course for those that are down and out. It is their only hope of things turning around, of things getting better, of things starting to go their way.

In the church situation, both are going on at the same time usually. The merry should be sensitive to the afflicted, but the afflicted should also be sensitive to the merry. The merry are to enjoy their good tidings, as the afflicted are to endure their affliction. This is not to say that the two should ignore each other, just don't rain on the merry because you are in a storm. Allow them to cheer you in your troubles, and the merry should allow the afflicted to speak of their hard times.

Just voicing the frustration of hard times is good for the afflicted, just as singing is good for the merry. Giving voice to our situation and feelings will assist us in getting through them.

It may be that listening to the afflicted will help the merry to better realize how blessed they are and help them to appreciate their blessings more.

The word "merry" does not carry the idea we give it today, but as Barnes observes, "the word properly denotes cheerful, pleasant, agreeable, and is applied to a state of mind free from trouble--the opposite of affliction-happy"

This is a contrasting of situations and words both. On the one hand we have the afflicted and on the other hand we have the non-afflicted. Both ends of the spectrum trials wise.

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

The term "sick" can also be translated weak, or weakness. The importance of this will be seen later as we discuss the overall meaning of this text. Is it speaking of being sick as in the flu, physical sickness, or is it in the context of spiritual sickness? We will see later on in our study.

The formula is, if you are sick, call the elders of the church and "let" them pray over him, with anointing with oil - in the name of the Lord. Some very specific items are called for. Elders, not deacons, the term "elders" is plural, not singular, prayer, anointing in the Lord's name. Many suggest that the office of elder is for THE pastor, but here we see that there are multiple elders in the church. (Every translation I checked lists this as a plural.)

This will require some scheduling, to get more than one together for the visit. Indeed, it seems to me that it would be ALL of the elders unless it was impossible. Most today suggest anointing be the touching of the forehead with a drop or two of olive oil. There is nothing in the text to show this to be incorrect, though there is nothing in the text to show this to be correct either.

Since James did not specify the how, we might suggest that the why was well known to the readers, thus possibly something from Jewish culture, or it might indicate that the how is not all that important, that the prayer is the important part. It would be suggested that the anointing must be of some importance since it is to be done in the Lord's name.

There are some that view the oil as representative of the Spirit, which it may be. To anoint would seem to be a small amount to me, but it might be that a covering of the forehead of the person, might be soothing and cooling if there was a fever involved.

There might also be another truth tucked away in the verse. Call the elders, is the statement, not go to the healing meeting, go to the revival, or go to the television. The elders of your local church are the ones that are to be involved and no one else. The healing of our "church society" is not Biblical, nor is it effective. The going forward and being knocked to the floor, the wailing, and the showmanship, all are totally foreign to this passage of Scripture.

Now, which would you want to do if you were sick and looking for relief from God? Especially if you had it in mind that this sickness was caused by sin. The sinner should look to their spiritual leaders for relief. It would be better if they would just deal with God, but there seems to be the failure to do so.

Constable points out that the word translated "anointing" is not the normal Greek word for anoint, but rather the word which describes to rub with oil. It is a common word for any sort of rubbing. He also mentions that there is another word used of religious anointing. However, if you look up the other references to the word used by James you will find that it is in the context of times spent with God, or indeed the anointing of Christ Himself multiple times. I am not sure the observation that it is "mundane and profane" the every day rubbing that Constable implies.

Correct that it may not be a religious sacrament or ritual, but more than just everyday rubbing.

15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

First on the agenda is to figure out what the "prayer of faith" is and how it is offered. Is it praying by some special formula? Is it praying a special set of words? Is it praying that contains lots of utterance and emphasis?

It is of interest that this word "prayer" is different than the one used previously. This word means a vow or prayer to God. This might give us understanding to the phrase. It might even indicate that the sick person has made peace with God by making a vow which will remedy the problem.

Some might wonder who is to do the praying. It seems that the elders are to pray for the sick person, while the sick person is to correct the deficiencies of the situation with a vow to God.

"Save the sick" may well indicate that there are further ramifications to the sickness. If there is no change, then possibly further problems will occur. This could be either further sickness, or as John fifteen suggests, death. John 15.1ff speaks of the Lord taking away unfruitful branches. Corinthians mentions that disorder at the Lord's Table has caused the death of some. God is loving, and He is long suffering, but He is also serious about dealing with His people in relation to their sin.

This all is in the context of cure of the sickness and forgiveness of sin. Now, it should be noted that there is a possibility that there is no sin involved when James states, "and if he have committed sins" however the context seems to indicate sin is the culprit. This will become clearer as we move through the passage.

Note, also, that it is the Lord that will raise him up, not the healer, not the formula of some quack, but Almighty God in response to faith.

The "prayer of faith" doesn't seem to be anything super special, but more the thought of praying and believing that God will answer. Now, I don't know specifically what this prayer of faith is, but have always thought that it related to those times when you really know that God is going to do what is asked. There are times when I pray, asking that the Lord will do something, but always submitting to His will in the issue. A few times in life, I knew what to pray, and I knew that the answer was on its way and I knew that God was going to answer. As noted, this has been a "few" times in my life. I suspect, but cannot prove that this is the prayer of faith.

"Shall save the sick" is in the indicative mood or something that will occur. It is not something that we should hope for, nor something that we look forward to maybe happening, it is a sure thing, it will occur. This is also another indication that this sickness is related to sin. If someone has terminal cancer, there is no reason to think that this passage is for them. The prayer and the anointing would not be wrong, nor ineffective, but the "raise him up" would not necessarily

occur.

Likewise, the forgiveness is a sure thing. It isn't something hoped for, nor something you have to jump through hoops for, it will be given.

If a person is sick and they know it is due to their sin, they should take tremendous comfort in this passage - it is something they can count on, it is something that can give them immediate relief of mind - all they have to do is act - get right with God.

16 Confess [your] faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

This verse calls not only the sick person to confess faults, but also the others present. Someone might suggest that the elders are in on this somehow. Not necessarily, but certainly a possibility. All that are involved are to confess faults to others and then pray for one another that "ye" may be healed. "Ye" seems to allow for a plural number being sick, again indicating elders are involved.

Now, just because someone calls the elders to their home for prayer and anointing, elders don't get your feathers ruffled, and church members don't assume there is more than the need for prayer.

The reason for everyone being involved in the confessing is so that all might be on praying ground. An elder with sin in their life will not be an effectual prayer partner and most certainly is not a righteous man, so why would you want him involved if he doesn't take care of ANY problem that exists within his spiritual life.

"The effectual fervent prayer" of a RIGHTEOUS man availeth much. Two items in the way he prays and one item in the way he lives. Effectual prayer, fervent prayer and righteous living. Sounds like a spiritual man to me. Actually effectual and fervent are one word in the original language. It is a term that we get "energy" from. It is energized prayer, or prayer that requires work to accomplish. Not that quickie in the morning worship service or in Sunday school, but a prayer from a righteous person that is connected with God.

Now, since a sick person is to call the elders, and since righteousness is a part of the text, then is it not an imperative that the elders of your church should be righteous men? I think the case has been made clearly by the apostle.

17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

I've always wondered if I would have had the faith of this man to pray for the stopping of rain - we live in Oregon, the rain capital of America. This man was a true man of faith, and his faith should be studied if you desire to deepen your own faith.

Elias means "my God is Jehovah" and is Elijah of the Old Testament. For the account which James refers to, take a look at I Kings seventeen and eighteen.

It is of note that James includes the readers with himself in saying that "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are. This would indicate that James thought the readers were of a similar nature to Elijah and similar to himself.

The question seems to come up as to what the like passions is getting at. Are we all like passionate about our prayer, or like passionate in our spiritual physical makeup? It seems best to suggest that we are all like passionate in who and what we are as human beings. We all have our lackings, we all have our varied amount of faith, but this man - this man that is just like us - prayed that it would not rain.

Now, I don't know about you, but to be likened to Elijah is quite an honor to me. I'd like to think I am like he was, though I'm not sure that I come up to the mark. How about you. Something to consider in coming days isn't it?

There is a point here that might give us some challenge today in our Christian society.

This man prayed and nature stopped doing its thing. How great a prayer warrior is that? I really don't think the average of about five minutes a day for the average pastor is adequate. This was the latest stat for pastors that I've seen. I know that there are some that spend a lot of time in prayer, but to have a five minute average, there must be a lot that pray even less. This is not to point fingers at pastors; it is just that their survey is all that I have at hand. I cannot imagine the average believer even coming up to that average.

How is your prayer life? Do you spend adequate time with the Lord? James, it is said, spent great amounts of time in prayer. That should be a hallmark of believers across the world, but it is doubtful. Trials and troubles will make one a longer prayer - that was the situation James readers were in. Many Christians in the world are under great persecution and these folks spend a lot of time in prayer. They have no other hope, than to look to the Lord.

Elias prayed and it didn't rain for three and a half years. Consider this for a moment. Only God has that sort of power, yet he allowed Elijah to have a part in the grand happening. Elijah was a part of it because he prayed. What great things have we missed out on by not praying? He prayed again and there was rain. Seems pretty definite that his prayer controlled the natural order of things.

We today, do not really know what we could do for God because we never talk to Him about it. We have the responsibility to speak with Him. It isn't His responsibility to smack us long side the head and tell us to pray. He is our Father, and it should be natural for us to spend time with Him.

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide

a multitude of sins.

No, this is not speaking of eternal security as many try to make out. It is speaking of what we have already spoken of, chastisement unto death due to rebellion against God. If you through action or prayer keep someone from continuing on in their refusal to follow God, then you will save them from death - physical. "To hinder the knowledge of a thing" is one way of putting the meaning of the term "hide" which James mentions.

If you assist someone, you hide a multitude of sins, or prevent them from coming to knowledge. I assume that by going to someone that is sick, praying, anointing, and counseling, there is a change in the person's heart, then they will be raised up, won't die, and their sin will not come to light of day - WILL THEY? That is a distinct command to the elders to keep their mouths shut about the whole situation, especially the sins of the person.

There is no reason for anyone to reveal anyone else's sin. The sin is between the person and God in this situation and should stay that way. If the person's sin has come to public knowledge then other steps should be taken, but if the sin is private, then it should stay private.

James seems to want this to be public knowledge, it is assumed, because we should be touching each others lives by challenging one another to purity of life. Again, when is the last time anyone in your church challenged you to purity? Maybe a preacher has made your toes feel uncomfortable, but has anyone really challenged the way you live your life in a way that you were convicted, and you changed your way of life.

It must be admitted that to challenge anyone's purity today in the church is to ask to have your head handed to you in your hand. There must be proper teaching and preaching for a time before we can really expect to be able to do this today.

Teaching that purity is the expected standard, teaching that we are to challenge and disciple one another in the area of purity, and quite possibly some teaching about the consequences of not leading a pure life.

Purity is not a popular topic to discuss. One of the forums where I read and post occasionally is not very conservative. There are a lot of opportunities to challenge to purity, to challenge from the Word, but when someone does so, they are either totally ignored, or they are ridiculed for being unbiblical. People are not interested in purity, they are interested in their own little world that they have created, and that they feel is adequate for their life. No matter there might be something unbiblical, no matter there might be something they do that is against God's wishes. They are okay in their own eyes and there is no need for further discussion.

APPLICATION:

1. Is this speaking of the flu or some other physical problem such as a bad kidney etc., or is it speaking of sin related spiritual problems?

The easy answer is that since they are to anoint, which would be physical, it must be physical sickness. However, by the same token the word sick can be translated weak, which could mean spiritual problems. By the same logic as the easy answer, we could say they are to pray so it is a spiritual problem.

The common sense answer might be both - a sin/spiritual problem that has sick/physical consequences. This could relate to the person that is in rebellion against God and God has taken steps to get the person's attention.

This is not uncommon. I talked with a man that told me that God had been leading him to sell his television repair business, which he had built from the ground up. It was a large and thriving business, and he had no leading as to where or what to do after selling the business so he put off what God was telling him. Over a number of months he kept saying no to God and ultimately his health went sour. Finally he was lying on his death bed with his family around him. He knew why he was there and finally committed to sell the business.

As his health returned he found that he was quite relieved not to have the business to run. As time went on the family moved to another city where he found employment in a large repair business. He became very involved in a small Bible church where he knew he had been called to serve - they would have never moved had he not sold the business. He knew all the rest of his life that he was right where God wanted him to be and he was always at peace with his station in life.

Sin may lead to physical sickness, and it may just render one weak both spiritually and physically. The weight of sin wears a person down and sooner or later will affect how they function in the physical realm.

Is there anything else we can point to as we try to determine the intent of James in this text? Yes, Hebrews mentions, "6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected [us], and we gave [them] reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they verily for a few days chastened [us] after their own pleasure; but he for [our] profit, that [we] might be partakers of his holiness. 11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. 12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; 13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. 14 Follow peace with all [men], and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble [you], and thereby many be defiled;" Heb. 12.6ff

God keeps the option of bringing chastisement into the life, if the life is not responsive to the Spirit's work. This may be soon after the person rejects God's work, or at times He is quite

patient and long suffering, but chastisement usually comes along. It may be in the form of trials, or of physical sickness.

The point of James text seems to relate to those that have sin in their lives and that have refused to move toward God on the issue. While the elders are to anoint and pray for the physical, there seems to be the need to go a step further and see if there are spiritual things to be cared for and prayed for.

2. Verse sixteen calls for church leaders and members to confess their faults to one another and to pray for one another. Dwell on that idea and see if you can relate it to your present church. Is this going on? If not, why not? If so, why, and how can you encourage the continuance of the behavior?

This is the standard James set, and it is the standard that the church should be meeting. If the church is not doing this, then the church is inadequate to the needs of believers. If your church is inadequate, steps should be taken to assure that the inadequacy is remedied.

Some steps to closer relationships in the church membership.

a. Commitment of individuals to Christ like living.

b. Commitment of a righteous leadership to lead their flock in the ways of the Lord.

c. Commitment to teach the Word, even when it hurts. Most will suggest, and it is true in many cases, that gossip is the blanket that stops sharing and confessing amongst believers. If you confess or share in the Wednesday prayer meeting it will be the topic of discussion on the phone Thursday morning. Gossip is the death of any meaningful relationships in the church today.

d. Admission that the individual can do wrong. Many Christian's would choke before admitting that they have sin in their lives. Individual responsibility is required of all believers.

e. Size of the church may well relate. James probably was writing to home churches, not five thousand member megachurches. There is no way that closeness and relationships can be built in these huge congregations without some serious organizational structure and some serious church leadership.

3. There are some points that need to be made. "Elders" is a plural, not singular as in the Roman Catholic system of calling the priest when someone is on their death bed. Confessing faults, one to another is the Biblical standard, not as the Romans teach, confessing to a priest.

There is also the point that the forgiveness is not coming from the priest in this passage, nor from the prayer, nor from the oil, nor from the elders, it is coming from God.

4. Some make a change of subject between the calling the elders section, and the praying for one

another. This change would occur between verses fifteen and sixteen. Whether this change exists or not, there is little difference in how we use the text. The principles of sixteen and following would relate as well to the elder section.

If sin comes to sickness, call the elders for prayer and anointing, if you have sin and realize it, talk to someone about it in the church - NOT THE PASTOR in particular. The passage says to confess your faults one to another.

Let's consider this a little further.

How do you go about confessing a fault to another in the church today? Hopefully there has been proper teaching and preaching on the subject so that there are people that you may approach.

- a. With great care. There must be a number of things that are involved in doing this.
- b. Choose someone you know is totally trustworthy. Someone that will not pass your conversation on to the whole church. Someone that will not blab it to the social club, or anywhere, or anyone else.
- c. Choose someone that is spiritual, someone that can guide you to correctness, someone that can give you some Biblical perspective and guidance.
- d. Be sure there is a need to confess your fault. It might be a fault that really is not a fault; it may be a fault that is correctable by your own action and knowledge.
- e. Be plain, clear and concise about what you are talking about, lest there be misunderstanding.
- f. Choose someone that will listen to what you have to say, to its completion. Someone that will be listening and understanding of what you say, so that they will not jump to conclusions and/or give you incorrect counsel.
- g. Choose someone that you feel comfortable with, someone that you don't mind knowing your faults, someone that you can confide in, not only now, but maybe later on as well.

Some thoughts about the type of person that is approachable. If you would be a counselor, attempt to build some of the following traits into your life.

- a. Add all of the above items here.
- b. Really listen and try to understand what you are being told. Allow the person to talk through the problem before attempting to provide solutions. Ask questions if you don't understand fully what is being said. If you have no solutions, tell the person so they can seek further assistance.
- c. Be open to the needs of the person, not open to condemnation, or criticism. Neither will help,

they already know they have a problem, you needn't tell them about it.

d. Someone that is not in a constant rush when at church, someone that looks like they have time to assist others.

e. Be spiritual yourself, keeping yourself from sin. This often will be evident to those around you. You cannot hope to deal with other people's sin if you haven't already dealt with your own.

5. In verse seventeen it mentions prayed earnestly. The Net Bible note suggests, prayed with prayer, and said it was a way of showing an intense prayer, or fervent prayer.

We often avoid prayer than is other than the "Heal aunt Bessies wort" and get uncomfortable with prayers that become intense, not in noise, or actions, but in quantity and quality. We can reel off those common, everyday prayers, but to get down to business with God is not so easy for many of us today.

Prayer meetings seldom draw more than a small percentage of a church's membership. Often only a handful meets for prayer during the week. This is the group that you need to get next to. Spend some time with them in prayer - even if you keep your mouth shut for fear of not knowing how to pray, spend time with these saints and learn from them.

Don't be satisfied with how they pray, learn to spend more time with the Lord in private so that you will know how to be with him in public. Prayer is a learning item, just as is learning to talk to another person. We need to understand who we are talking too. God can only be known via the Word and time with Him so the options are set - take note of every opportunity.

6. The passage speaks of confessing faults one to another. Recently we have come to know of a church where the pastor was hooked on pain killers. He is obnoxious with new people due to his asking them if they have pain killers they aren't using, the membership became sick of it. They confronted him and half the membership didn't see anything wrong with his addiction and backed him while the other half left the church.

On an inter-net board recently someone mentioned his pastor was involved in sin. The result was a pinning of the man to the wall, not the pastor, not the board, but the man that did not feel it right for the pastor to be living in open sin, especially when he won't acknowledge it.

Where did the church change from believing that the church is to be pure, when did the church change from believing that the church is to have church discipline - is to have a pastor that lives to a higher standard than the rest? Certainly pastors sin because they are only human, but they are to confess their sin and make a change in their behavior - not continue on in sin as though nothing were wrong.

The latest polls suggest that Christianity in America is doing as it did in Britain - decreasing. We are dying off and no new Christians are being won to replace them. The only growth in the

church seems to be from children born into the church. The third world countries are blossoming and the Asian countries are becoming the center of Christianity. Recently it was announced that Australia will become a majority Muslim due to the high rate of the morning after abortion pill by Christians. In fifty years there will be more Muslims than Christians.

Sin in the American church must be the central reason for church problems. Due to sin we have no standards, due to no standards, we look like the world, and thus the world has no desire to listen to someone preaching to them when they are the same as the world.

We have adopted the world's music, we have adopted the world's literature, we have ingrained ourselves in the world and now there is little difference between the church and the world - we just call our little corner of the world Christian and feel good about it.

7. Verse thirteen opens up the area of trials. Not only of the persecution that the people were going through, but just plain life. "Life is Hard" is a flip statement but it is quite true. Most of us go through all sorts of problems and troubles in this life. You might try to relate to the people in your church and know that many of them would like to talk about their problems. Talk doesn't take long, just some concentration on keeping yourself out of the conversation.

People loose jobs, loose money, loose children, loose spouses, loose parents, loose health and many other problems of life. They are in prayer but there are still things that you can do. God assists people in problems with His other people. Let's think about how you might be able to assist a person with a problem.

a. Listen when they talk.

b. Take note in how you might be able to assist them in their problems. If their car burned yesterday and you have two, lend one of them till they get things straightened out. If they have lost a spouse, shut up and listen because if you haven't gone through it, you DON'T know how they feel.

If they are afflicted physically, is there some way that you could assist them around the house to help in their problems etc.

c. Take the person's need to the church board for assistance that you cannot give. Assist the board in any way that you can to bring about an answer.

d. If death is related, don't just listen once and drop it, you can minister over time as well. Many that loose a spouse find they have all sorts of friends, until the funeral is over, then they disappear and they know how many real friends they have. Grieving is a long term process and people can use a friend for a long time.

e. Maybe you have gone through the same problem area and found a great answer for the problem. Share it in a way that they can take it or leave it. Don't force it down their throat or they

will spew it out. Suggesting possible answers will probably bring about a lot of negative, and I've already done that's, but don't worry about it, just do what you can. The suggestion has been made, and may make good sense to the person later on.

f. Love them no matter how they react to you. Their reactions may be very negative, but remember that the reaction is probably to the troubles, rather than you personally.

It might be of note that the phrase "sing psalms" is an imperative, or command. Not open for discussion, do it. This may speak to those somber people that are having a good week and tend to act as if they aren't. Sing it out when you have a good day, and pray when you have a bad one.

8. Barnes suggests that the elders are called because they can focus on the praying, whereas the one that is sick may not be able to focus on prayer as they ought. Not that they are normally unable to, but due to the sickness they are focused on their physical plight.

It has been shown that this sickness is probably due to sin, but even then Barnes may have a point. When one has a malady, they are often focused on the pain or nausea that accompanies the problem. There may be little desire at that point to try to pray.

Many years ago I had a kidney stone, one that caused me tremendous pain. They finally operated to get it out because they could not control the pain. Our pastor came to visit somewhere in the process, I think before the operation, but I don't recall because I was so focused on the pain that I was not thinking adequately. I remember having the thought that he had driven sixty plus miles to visit - that impressed me, but I really didn't care if he was there or not because he had no way of dampening the pain that was my total focus.

This would be a good opportunity to mention the elders/pastors visitation. Yes, it is good, yes it is often appreciated, but if you don't feel appreciated, don't let it bother you, because the focus of the visited probably isn't on you or your feelings. Not that you shouldn't visit, but beware that a visit may or may not be the best thing at the moment. Allow the patient to give you indication of what is needed.

Quite often a hospital reduces the person to the physical and nothing more for awhile. The questions are physical, the discomforts are physical and every thing you are involved in is physical, so the friendship side may be more important than the spiritual side, though for the lost if death is on the way, we need to be willing to share spiritual things if needed. Often a lost person facing death will be quite focused on spiritual things. This time was the one time I was able to talk openly and freely with my father about spiritual things.

9. Relating to the anointing with oil, Barnes mentions the following which might be of interest: "The custom of anointing the sick with oil still prevails in the East, for it is believed to have medicinal or healing properties. Niebuhr (Beschrieb. von Arabien, s. 131) says, "The southern Arabians believe that to anoint with oil strengthens the body, and secures it against the oppressive heat of the sun, as they go nearly naked. They believe that the oil closes the pores of

the skin, and thus prevents the effect of the excessive heat by which the body is so much weakened; perhaps also they regard it as contributing to beauty, by giving the skin a glossy appearance. I myself frequently have observed that the sailors in the ships from Dsjidda and Loheia, as well as the common Arabs in Tehama, anointed their bodies with oil, in order to guard themselves against the heat."

10. Barnes points out that this promise of being raised up is always in light of God's will in the matter. He makes the point that if this is an absolute promise of the sick always being raised up, then there would never be death. This, we know is not true from other passages in the Word that declare that all must die, unless the rapture occurs.

11. Some suggest that this passage relates to the apostles and their ability to heal miraculously, but there is no indication that this speaks to healing every time, nor are the apostles mentioned, but only the elders of the church.

The Roman church relates this to the rite of "Extreme unction" which is administered to the person that is about to die. First of all the passage speaks of raising up, not putting six feet under. There is no indication that extreme unction is in view. This supposedly proves that the early church used the process of extreme unction. James speaks of one that is sick, not one that is about to die.

12. Verse sixteen calls us to confess our faults to one another and this is the context of elders praying for the sick. The confession might well be a part of the anointing and praying situation. It seems to me in Scripture that the person that prays seeking something from God must first of all confess the sin that is in their life and seek forgiveness. Why would God answer prayers of someone that has unconfessed sin in their life?

If elders are going to pray and pray successfully for a sick person, they should first find holy ground before God for themselves and THEN pray for the sick.

This is true in the prayer meeting, this is true in seeking assistance for the sick and it is true in your personal prayer times. Seek forgiveness before you seek anything else so that God might see you as an obedient child seeking, rather than a rebellious brat that wants and wants.

Indeed, does not the passage show this application to be true? "prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

13. The "sing psalms" is one word in the Greek and it is used four times in the New Testament.

It is translated simply, "sing" in Rom. 15.9 "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for [his] mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name."

It is translated "I will sing" twice in I Cor. 15.15 "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I

will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."

It is translated "making melody" in Eph. 5.19 "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;"

Thus, it should not be made to mean that the merry are to actually sing a psalm from the Old Testament, but that they are to make music. The lexicon suggests that this can mean to pluck the strings of a harp, so singing may not even be required, just music.

Indeed, there might be the case that this isn't even outward music. Ephesians says in your heart, and I Corinthians mentions sing with the Spirit. Both of these could well be inaudible music.

One would not want to make a whole lot out of these passages, but the idea that the joy or merriment brings a song to your heart or lip. Probably in the context of the use of the word, aimed toward God and not your fellow believer.

14. The question of whether a church is to have one or plural elders is often raised today. Some try to screw the single elder/pastor into Scripture, but they don't always do a good job of it. First of all the use of the plural is much more common than the use of the singular.

Acts 14.23 mentions the ordination of elders, plural, in EVERY church.

Acts 20.17 mentions calling the elders, plural, of the church, singular.

Titus 1.5 mentions elders, plural, in every city

I Tim. 3.1-12 is often used showing a singular to a plural deacons, but this is not proof of a single pastor, it is proof, only that Paul was saying IF ANY MAN, whether there might be one or ten dozen is not shown in the text.

If a church is small and only has one elder, that may have to be it until others are qualified. If a church decides only one man is qualified, then that is fine, until others are disciplined to assist him as qualified elders.

To say Scripture teaches the one pastor, over all and all under him is unscriptural and should be named as such. A plurality will give the wisdom to run a church, a single person running the church is called a dictator and is dangerous at best for the church.

So, what can we learn from the book of James? We can learn some practical Christianity and most likely that it is based on a close walk with God and a good strong prayer life. There is also the principle that we are to be leaning on one another, not finding division within our church body.

This draws one to wonder at the local church today in America. Most are either run by a dictator that does not allow descent, or they are splintered into factions. The key is to have one head and that being Christ Himself, not Christ telling the dictator what to do, but leading the entire congregation.

Some time ago there was a church that we were attending. There had been no discussion as to the mission and purpose of the local congregation, yet up pops, one Sunday, a Mission Statement that appeared in the bulletin from that point forth.

There is no way the church body is united in effort toward the mission statement that is thought up by the pastor. The entire body should be in on the planning of the church because the individuals are guided by The Head, Christ.

With this hap-hazard sort of goings on, it is no wonder the giving is mediocre, it is no wonder few show up for prayer meeting, it is no wonder few are at visitation. People will gather around a common goal, but seldom gather for someone else's goal.

There must be equity in the body as well; we cannot have the poor being side tracked to give preference to the rich. Both are equal in the sight of God and we need to make it so within the walls of the church as well.

James is a practical book and we have not touched the vast information and application there. Let this be your introduction to the book, and then dig deeper on your own. Allow God the Spirit to lead you to truths that are tucked away for you personally, then share those truths with others that all may benefit. Ask God to direct your thinking and be sure to take time to consider things slowly and carefully and allow Him to bring forth the truths that you need for your walk with Him.

