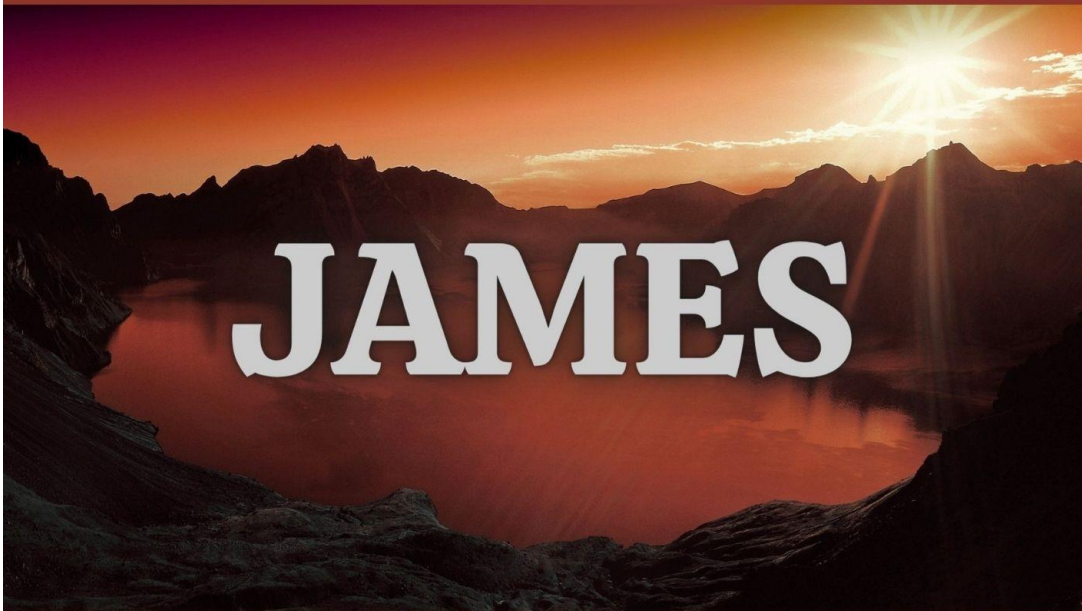


**An 11-Session
Exposition on**



JAMES

By Michael Collins

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1 – James 1:1-8

For the Audio Version on YouTube, click here – [James 1:1-8](#)

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James 1:1

“James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.”

James begins his letter by introducing himself, as the bondservant of both God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. A bondservant was a slave to his master. In the Old Testament, when God gave rules concerning slaves, He said that one could have a slave for six years, after which they were to be freed, after having received liberal supplies from the master. If, however, the slave chose to remain in the service of his master, he could do so – that was a choice he was making. Likewise, James had been freed from the bondage to sin, but had chosen to remain a bondservant to God, and to Jesus Christ, serving God by taking the gospel to those who hadn’t heard.

He then reveals the audience of his epistle – the 12 tribes (the Jews), who were scattered abroad. During the times of the early church, there was persecution against the church as recorded in **Acts 8:1**, *“At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”* After introducing himself and his audience, he greets them.

James 1:2-4

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

James then goes on to encourage the believers to consider it all joy when they face trials on account of their faith in Christ. He assures them that when their faith is tested, it would result in patience. It’s strange that there’s nothing that teaches us patience, as much as problems and difficulties in life do. He goes on to say that one should not try to cut short the trouble, by escaping from it before it does its work in our lives. It’s always a temptation to escape troubles that come our way, and while we are supposed to try to solve problems in our lives, there are times when the only solution to our problems or challenges is to go through them, because it’s only in going through them that we learn important lessons about life – lessons we will never forget, and that will stand us in good stead as we live each day. We never overcome what we never undergo. These lessons are not learned in the comfort of our homes, schools, colleges or mountaintops, but are rather learned in the school of walking daily with Jesus, no matter what, no matter where.

These trials are what teach us patience. One doesn’t need patience when things go well. We need patience when things aren’t going well, and everything around us seems to scream, *“Quit.”* In fact, patience is one of the first and most important character traits that every believer needs to develop

in his life. Paul, when describing love in **1 Corinthians 13:4**, says, “*Love suffers long,*” or in another version, “*Love is patient.*” In our effort to relate with people in love, we will face struggles in life, and instead of quitting when the going gets tough, we need to learn to stand strong and develop patience, and here’s why. James goes on to say that if these trials are to serve a purpose then it is patience that helps this to happen. He says, “*Let patience have its perfect work.*” What work does patience complete in our lives as individuals, and as The Church at large?

James says, “*That you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*” This means that when we stand the test of trials, and develop patience, we will be perfect and complete and lack nothing. Jesus said that our goal should be to “*be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*” (**Matthew 5:48**). Again Paul says in **Hebrews 2:10**, “*For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*” So if Jesus, who is our role model was made perfect through sufferings, then so must we be made perfect through suffering as well.

James goes on to say that when we are perfected we will lack nothing. He’s not talking about material abundance or prosperity here – he’s talking about growing in the character and image of Christ. It’s only when we don’t learn the lessons that trials were meant to teach us that we end up lacking in Christ-like character.

Paul had this to say about tribulations in **Romans 5:1-5**: ¹“*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,* ²*through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* ³*And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;* ⁴*and perseverance, character; and character, hope.* ⁵*Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

James 1:5-8

⁵ *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.* ⁶ *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.* ⁷ *For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;* ⁸ *he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

James goes on to say that if anyone lacks wisdom, he can ask God for wisdom. At first reading this might seem like a totally disconnected thought from the previous thought, on developing patience through trials, but this is really connected and we’ll see how.

Every believer will go through trials on account of their faith in Jesus, but this does not mean that every believer will handle the trials well enough, to learn the lessons the trials were meant to teach. It’s only those who have the wisdom to recognize the lessons that trials were meant to teach, that learn them; the others will quit, and learn nothing in the process, and therefore not grow in their relationship with the Lord, and in the likeness of His character. It’s to those people that James says, “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God...*” Notice that he doesn’t ask us to pray our trials will disappear, like most of our present-day prayers are about, but rather that we will have

the wisdom to learn the lessons that these trials were meant to teach us. God is the source of this wisdom, therefore we need to ask Him for wisdom.

He goes on to say that not only is God the source of wisdom, but also adds that God will give wisdom to *all* who ask. There's no indicator here that wisdom is available to a select few – it's available to *all* who ask. Asking for wisdom is a good thing, and so we can be assured that God will give it to us if only we ask.

He also adds that God will give wisdom *liberally* – not with limits. God is liberal in everything He gives – He never holds back anything good from His children, especially when our goal is to love Him, and walk with Him, He will give *liberally*.

He then says, not only will God give wisdom to *all*, and *liberally*, but also that He will do so *without reproach* – without finding fault with us. Very often we assume that God deals with us based on the way we deal with one another. At times, when we've asked someone for something, instead of our requests being granted, we've actually been reproved for the request, or made to feel unworthy of the thing we were requesting. We sometimes think God relates with us the same way people do. But James reminds us that God does not find fault with us when we ask for wisdom – He will give it to us liberally without finding fault.

He then adds a caution to us who ask God for wisdom. We need to ask for wisdom believing that the Lord will give it to us. He reiterates that we should not doubt that He will give it to us. We can be sure the Lord will give us things that are good for us and for our relationship with Him, and for one another, and there's no need to doubt that God will answer that request.

Sometimes we find ourselves faltering between faith and doubt, where one moment we seem to be filled with faith that God will give us what we ask, and another moment, we think or feel that He won't. It's to such of us that James says, "*He who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.*" He uses an analogy of the waves of the sea that roll whichever direction the winds blow. James says that if our faith is not strong and steadfast, then we can be sure we can receive nothing from the Lord. He calls such people double-minded, and unstable in all their ways in life.

James seems to be saying in no uncertain terms that if we are to learn anything from trials, we need to have the wisdom that enables us to learn these lessons, and if we lack the wisdom, we can ask God who will give it to us liberally, and not find fault. And finally that we need to be firm in our faith when we ask for wisdom, because it's the prayer of faith that gets answered.

2 James 1:9-15

For the Audio Version on YouTube, click here – [James 1:9-15](#)

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James 1:9-11

⁹Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, ¹⁰ but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. ¹¹ For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

After writing about wisdom, James then addresses another important aspect that the new believers need to get a new perspective on. It's the perspective of riches. As is the case today, so it must have been back then, where riches were seen as a status symbol, and one's identity stood or fell on it. The more you had the more you were, and the less you had, the less you were. James gives a different perspective here, and later on in his letter as well.

He tells the believers that if someone has come from a financially deprived background and the Lord blesses that person financially, so that he is no longer financially deprived, then that person needs to give God glory for that financial exaltation. He goes on to add, that if a rich man comes to a stage in his life where he is suddenly financially deprived, for whatever reason, that person too needs to give God glory, despite the losses he's incurred.

Just like his suggestion earlier, to *"consider it all joy when you fall into trials of various kinds,"* might have sounded strange at first, so also his suggestion to a rich man to glorify God when he loses his wealth, might sound equally strange. Let's read on for the reason for him writing this way.

He goes on to say that just as a flower of the field fades away over time, so will the rich man pass away in time as well. None of us will remain alive in the flesh with our possessions forever, and this is a great perspective for us to live with, especially when there's so much temptation around to become obsessed with wealth, and with this earthly life.

He goes on to explain that the fading away happens due to a natural process – the sun rises with a burning heat, then it withers the grass, then the flowers fall and its beautiful appearance perishes. Just as the beauty of the grass and flowers last only for a while, and then disappears, so also will the rich man fade away, even while he is busy with his pursuits to make more money. He seems to be telling his readers to look at riches with the right perspective, and not get deceived by its luring and attraction. He also reminds the rich believers to remember that not only are their riches temporary, but so are they, while here on earth. Nothing, and no one will remain on earth forever.

If this is the case where riches and rich people are concerned, then we need to live with this perspective every day of our lives, and learn to give God glory in all circumstances. The apostle Paul said in **Philippians 4:12-13**, *"I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound.*

Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” What Paul was saying is that he had learned to be content in all circumstances – whether he was rich or poor; whether he possessed much or not.

Just as Paul and James did not get their identity from wealth, but rather from God, so also we need to remember that our true identity comes from God, and not from anything else – leastways from money, which is here today and gone tomorrow.

James 1:12

¹² Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

He then turns his attention to another issue that still needs addressing even today – temptation. He says that the person who endures/overcomes temptation is blessed. Temptation itself is not sin, but yielding to it is sin. Every believer will continue to face temptations of various kinds as long as we live on the earth.

Earlier he had talked about trials that come from outside, now he’s addressing temptations, which are like trials that come from within. He says that the person who overcomes temptation is blessed, because such a person is approved by God. As believers, we’re not supposed to live seeking the approval of man, but rather the approval of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

James goes on to say that a person who is approved by God will eventually receive the crown of life. The phrase, ‘*crown of life*,’ could mean that every believer will literally receive a crown called the crown of life. The ‘*crown of life*’ could also refer to being crowned with eternal life itself.

He goes on to say that this crown of life will be given to those who love God. This reminds us of the words of Jesus in **John 14:15**, where He said, “*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*” In other words, those who obey Jesus’ teaching because they love Him, and therefore also overcome temptations, will be approved by God, and receive the crown of life from God. Jesus reminded us of a way of obedience that was not new actually – but one that was forgotten. He taught love-based obedience, at a time when fear-based obedience was popular. Sadly, fear-based obedience is still popular to a large extent even in today’s world, but once we truly come to understand and experience the love that God has for us, then we will want to obey out of love, and not out of fear of punishment or consequences.

James 1:13

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

How often we’ve blamed someone else for the temptations we face, and sadly, sometimes, even God is blamed as the source of temptation. James says that when one is tempted to sin, one should not blame God as the source of temptation. As long as we live on the earth we will all face various

kinds of temptations at different times, and James says in no uncertain terms that God is never the source of temptation, and he goes on to give a reason why.

The first thing he says, is that God cannot be tempted by evil. No one can tempt God to sin – it's an impossibility. God cannot be tempted to sin. The second thing he says is that God does not tempt anyone to sin. Why would a good God tempt someone whom He sent His Son into the world to save from sin, to commit sin all over again? It's illogical a thought to hold that God would tempt anyone to sin.

James 1:14-15

¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."

He then goes on to explain the source of temptation, and the process it takes to lead from temptation to sin, and eventually to death. He says that the process of temptation involves a coming together of desire and enticing, resulting in sin. Every one of us have sinful desires lurking inside of us. The desires we have, vary from person to person and with varying intensity and vary over time as well. I believe that these desires were nurtured by the environment in which we were brought up in, and presently live in as well.

It's when these desires draw us into the direction of fulfilling them, and when they then encounter enticement from another source; when it yields to the enticing, then sin takes place. If the desire did not encounter the enticing, perhaps the sinning would not have taken place. If one continues on in this lifestyle of sinning, then one is choosing the thing that they were saved from, when they came to know Christ – death.

By the word, 'death,' he is not referring to physical death, because all of us will die physically one day (unless the Lord returns before we die), but he's referring to eternal death where one will be eternally separated from God in a place which was prepared only for the devil and his angels. But this choice would be that of the person who chooses a life of sin and rebellion against God and rejects his offer of eternal life.

3 – James 1:16-25

For the Audio Version on YouTube, click here – [James 1:16-25](#)

For the Audio Version on SoundCloud, click here – [James 1:16-25](#)

James 1:16-18

¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. ¹⁸Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

James had just said that God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone with evil. Now James cautions the believers to not be deceived by people who teach falsely about God. There was deception in the early church as there is today as well. In fact Jesus told the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares because He knew that there would be deceivers in the church. (**Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43**). Once we allow ourselves to get deceived concerning the nature of God, it's only a matter of time before we get back into our old life of sin, resulting in death.

Then he goes on to tell the believers that every good and every perfect gift comes from above, meaning, from Heaven, and comes down to us from God Himself. That is something we should never forget. Because God is good and perfect, therefore everything that comes from God is also good and perfect as well. Love, grace, mercy, wisdom, hope, joy, peace, eternal life and the like, all come from God. The opposite is also true – nothing bad or imperfect comes from God.

He then refers to God as the Father of lights, perhaps referring to God being the creator of the lights in the sky – the Sun the Moon and the stars. These lights serve mankind – no matter who we are, and how we live, depicting the good nature of God, irrespective of our lifestyles. Earlier Jesus had said, in **Matthew 5:45**, *“That you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”*

At the time that these words were spoken, the only lights that were prevalent in the world would have been the sun, the moon and the stars. Other lights would have been those created by fire. It's only 18 centuries later that the light bulb was invented and the word, *'light,* ' took on new meaning. So until then, the light that shone always caused shadows that were never stationary, as the source of the light was also not stationary. So what James seems to be saying here is that though the light that God created seems to be constantly on the move (though they really don't move, but the earth does), yet the God who created them is unchanging. So if God is known to be good all the time, it means that His gifts too are good, and perfect all the time as well.

The quicker we come to this realization that all that God gives us is good and perfect, the quicker we will stop grumbling at or questioning what He gives us, and we will become grateful for his gifts and blessings in our lives. It's a tragedy when we look at blessings and interpret them as anything other than blessings.

James goes on to say that God brought us new life, and this was His will/plan/thinking, meaning that He was not influenced by anyone to do this. This reminds me of what the Apostle John said in **John 1:12-13**, “¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John too was making a reference to the fact that our being born again had nothing to do with man’s will/planning/thinking but it was part of God’s plan. James says that God raised us to a new life through faith in the Word of Truth. The Gospel is the message of the truth of God’s love and salvation to the world. It’s the message of Jesus who was the *Word made flesh*, who was full of Grace and Truth (**John 1:14**) and also, ‘*The Way, The Truth and The Life.*’ (**John 14:6**). Those of us who put our faith in the work of Jesus on our behalf through his death, burial and resurrection, are now born of God (**John 1:12-14**).

Now we who have been born again are the firstfruits of a harvest as it were, and the hope is that many more millions will come to faith in God through Jesus just like we did. It is God’s will that all men be saved and that none perish, and so James refers to those early Christians who had come to faith in Jesus, as the firstfruits of a much larger soon-to-be, harvest.

James 1:19-20

¹⁹ So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰ for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James then goes on to encourage the believers to learn a very important tip while communicating with one another. Remember how the world had one language and they decided to pursue a futile endeavor to build a tower that would reach the heavens? What did God do at the time? Instead of destroying the building or destroying the builders, He decided to break the lines of communication between them, by causing them to speak different languages. That’s how the world began speaking different languages initially. With no understanding of each other, the work came to a standstill – such is the power of communication. Therefore, if we are to be united, we need to learn how to communicate well with one another.

Communication seems to be the main reason for most conflicts in relationships. We need to learn to listen carefully, speak carefully and control our anger if we are to build and maintain healthy relationships.

James suggests a great formula that serves us even today while communicating with one another. *Firstly*, we need to be swift / quick to hear, meaning that we need to take the time and effort to listen actively – not passively. It’s only when we take time to listen to someone – even one with whom we might have a difference of opinion or might be in conflict with, that we have the chance to understand their point of view. Understanding another’s point of view might itself resolve the conflict before it flares out of control. For some people, listening comes easily, and almost naturally, while for others, it might take a lot more effort to do, but James seems to be saying that it’s worth the effort, if we are to build and maintain healthy relationships.

The *second* thing he encourages them to do is to be slow to speak. By ‘*slow to speak*,’ he is not necessarily saying that we change the pace in which we speak as much as suggesting we take time

to respond to what's being said, so as to give ourselves time to think through our responses. How often problems arise because we react too quickly and in haste, without taking time to think through our response. Taking time to think before responding can prevent unnecessary conflict and hurts in the process.

The *third* thing that James suggests is that we be slow to getting angry. It seems that he is suggesting the absolute opposite of what most of us do – we are usually slow to listen, quick to speak and quick to getting angry. This might be the reason why we have so much conflict amongst ourselves, both in our families, amongst one another as members of the Body of Christ, and with those outside the faith as well. If we can but change the way we communicate and follow James' advice, we will avoid a lot of uncalled-for conflict, hurt and strained relationships as well.

Getting angry takes no effort – holding it back takes a lot of effort, that's why King Solomon said in **Proverbs 15:18**, "A wrathful man stirs up strife, but *he who is slow to anger allays contention.*" Again he says in **Proverbs 16:32**, "*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*" If only we can master the art of holding back our anger we'll find ourselves preventing a lot of conflict as well.

If we look at this verse in the light of who God is, we will realize that it's just a reflection of Him. He is very quick to listen to us when we talk – He's never too busy, nor does He hurry us on in our prayers. He's never quick to speak even in situations when we might find ourselves questioning Him. He takes time to respond to us - at a time when we're able to listen to Him. Finally He is never quick to getting angry. He is extremely patient with us. If not for God being slow to anger, where would we all be by now? We'd have been wiped out a long time ago.

James goes on to give a reason why one should be slow to wrath. He says, "*For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*" When we react angrily to someone who offends us, we are not reflecting the life that Jesus came to teach us to live. We are not to retaliate wrong-doing with wrong-doing – that would make us no better than those who are self-righteous and try to work out their own justice. Instead, we are to love the way Jesus taught us to and thereby reflect the righteousness that He bestowed upon us when we put our faith in Him.

In His sermon on the mount Jesus said in **Matthew 5:20** – "*For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*" What was the righteousness of the Pharisees? It was eye for an 'eye and a tooth for a tooth,' way of life. Jesus went on to say in **Matthew 5:38-48**,³⁸ "*You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'*"³⁹ "*But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.*"⁴⁰ "*If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.*"⁴¹ "*And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.*"⁴² "*Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.*"⁴³ "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'*"⁴⁴ "*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,*"⁴⁵ "*that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*"⁴⁶ "*For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?*"⁴⁷ "*And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do*

more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? ⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Jesus gifted us His righteousness but it was not to be merely received but to be lived out as well, much like a person who is trained in a skill needs to use the skill to prove he possesses it. The righteousness that God gifted us was meant to be lived out, and by exercising wrath, we are negating the gift, and going back to a life of retaliation and hatred, instead of demonstrating the love that we ourselves received from God.

James 1:21-25

*²¹ Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

James goes on to give the believers a few more tips on how to relate with, and love one another. He tells them to, *“Lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness.”* He seems to be saying, *“Now that you’ve been raised to a new life, you need to live out the new life as well, and the first thing is to lay aside, put off or stop indulging in all filthiness, and any form of wickedness.”* That’s the way we lived earlier, but now that we are saved, we need to stop living like that.

Merely laying aside filthiness and wickedness is not sufficient, yet so often that’s exactly what we find ourselves describing ourselves by – the things we don’t do, instead of the things we do. If a Christian was only known by the things we don’t do, and not by the things we do, then we’d soon find ourselves doing nothing, and worse still, before we know it, we’d be doing more evil than we did before we came to know Christ, because that’s our nature. If we don’t find something good to do, we will find something bad to do.

So James goes on to tell them that after laying aside filthiness and wickedness, they need to then put something else on instead. He tells them to receive the word of God that was implanted in their hearts as it has the power to save their souls. When tempted by the devil in the wilderness to turn stones to bread, in **Matthew 4:4**, Jesus quoted from **Deuteronomy 8:3**, which said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.”*

What God seemed to be saying through Moses, and later through Jesus too, seemed to be that just as the physical man needs food to nourish his body, and grow strong, so also as believers, we need to feed on God’s word, so that our souls that were saved may indeed remain saved, and not get lost on account of sin all over again.

Later Jesus said in **John 15:7-8**, *“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”* What He was saying very clearly, is that we need God’s word in our hearts and minds to lead us to live this new life – not to merely memories and reproduce it,

but rather to remember it, to live it out in our daily lives, because that's the only way we can grow spiritually, and in our intimacy with God and Christ through the Holy Spirit.

He goes on to say that anyone who merely hears the word of God, and does not obey it, is deceiving himself. Imagine knowing the recipe for a dish, and never using it to prepare the dish. Merely knowing it serves no purpose. Likewise, the word of God was meant to teach us to transform the way we live our lives. By proclaiming to know God's word, and not living by it might impress people and even deceive people for a while, but ultimately the person who would be deceived is the one deceiving – not anyone else. Others will discover the true person eventually, and the deceiver will be left to regret his life of deceit.

He then uses an object lesson to make his next argument regarding a person who hears the word of God and does not put it into practice. He uses the analogy of a mirror. All of us look at the mirror more than once a day, and the reason we look at ourselves usually is to ensure that we look presentable – no one wants to look shabby. But James asks the readers to imagine with him for a moment, a person who looks at himself in the mirror, and then walks away from the mirror forgetting the kind of person he is. Perhaps the mirror will reveal things on our face that were not meant to be there, like water, dirt, stains, etc. Once we discover that on our face, we don't usually walk away from the mirror without doing something about it. We clean it off, don't we? He says that when a person reads God's Word, and sees himself for who he is, then he must do something about it and change wherever the Lord is asking them to change. But if, after reading God's Word, though we discover areas of our lives that need to change, we forget what the Lord reveals to us, and we leave the time of study of God's word unchanged, we make that of study time futile. If we don't do anything to bring about the changes that need to take place in our lives, then we are deceiving no one but ourselves.

He goes on to tell them a few things that we too need to pay close attention to. Firstly he says that we need to look into the perfect law of liberty. Let's explore the meaning of that phrase, '*perfect law of liberty.*' We know that we were not saved by works, but by faith, that results in works of obedience. We do not get saved by anything we do, but through the faith in Jesus' work on our behalf. This means that we are no longer depending on the law to help us attain righteousness, because no one can be made righteous by keeping the law. Now that we've been made righteous through faith in Jesus, and not by the observance of the law, we are free from the control of the law. That's what is meant by liberty – we are free from the law. He uses the phrase, '*law of liberty,*' to contrast with the phrase, '*law of Moses,*' which was not only impossible to keep, but also got us more enslaved in sin.

He then says that, not only are we to commence living out this '*law of liberty*' in our lives, but we are to continue on in it. Just as an athlete is awarded not when he begins a race and discontinues mid-race, but rather only when he completes it, and well. We too are to continue on in this new way of life, and not quit along the way.

He goes on to add another detail concerning our attitude to the word. Not only are we to hear it, and obey it, and continue in it, but we are to not be forgetful hearers. A person who forgets the

word cannot obey it, and he who cannot obey it, turns back to his old life. We need to learn to meditate on, and memories God's word, so that we are reminded of it, so that we may obey it.

He then goes on to say that if we hear the word, look into the perfect law of liberty and then don't forget it, the next thing we should do is to actually do the work the word tells us to do. Any instruction if not obeyed, was wastefully given in the first place.

If we hear the word, look into the perfect law of liberty, don't forget the word, and do what it says, then we will be blessed in what we do. There lies a lesson we should never forget. If we are to be blessed by God in what we do, then the best thing we can do is to follow God as He speaks to us through His word, and reminds us by His Holy Spirit at appropriate times.

4 - James 1:26-2:13

For the Audio Version on YouTube, click here – [James 1:26-2:13](#)

For the Audio Version on SoundCloud, click here – [James 1:26-2:13](#)

James 1:26

26 “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless.

After speaking about trials, seeking wisdom, money, temptations and obeying the word of God, James now turns his attention to what it means to be religious or in other words, a person who considers himself a true believer, living out his faith in every possible way. He says that if anyone considers himself religious, then there’s one very strong evidence of that – it’s the way one communicates. He will be able to control the use of his tongue. He uses the word, ‘*bridle*,’ as that was something that everybody would have been familiar with, since horses were used much back in the day, and a horse was controlled by a bridle that was connected to the bit in its mouth. In other words, James was saying that just as a bridle was used to control the direction a horse moved, so also if a person who considers himself religious, is unable to control the way he speaks, then he is deceiving none other than himself. James says that such a person’s profession of faith is useless or futile. It doesn’t benefit anyone.

James 1:27

27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”

James then goes on to explain what pure and undefiled religion really is. The first thing he seems to mention, is that the only One who can truly judge pure and undefiled religion is God Himself. He says that what God considers pure and undefiled religion, is when someone visits or takes care of the needs of those who have no parents (orphans) and those who have no husbands (widows). The Lord is our Heavenly Father and all through the Bible He refers to His people as His children.

Since we, The Church have now been adopted into His family, He is our Heavenly Father, and we are God’s children. (James already mentioned in **James 1:18**, the fact that God brought us forth by His own will through the word of truth). If God cares for those of us who have earthly fathers, how much more will He care for those who don’t have earthly fathers. God cares much for them, and wants us to care for them as well. Only a fatherless child knows the ill-effects of not having a father bringing him up. There’s so much a child misses when they have no father in their lives – a sense of confidence, security, direction, stability, and much more. So if we are truly living out our faith, then we need to be taking care of those children who have been deprived of this basic human need.

The other group of people James says we need to be mindful of, and caring about are the women who lost their husbands (widows). Back in the day (and even today, in several cultures across the globe), the husband was the sole breadwinner of the family, so if he had passed away, then the

family had no means of sustenance, and were at the mercy of other people's kindness. Further, if a woman lost her husband, she lost, not just the most important person in her life, in fact, she lost a very significant part of her life. She would be ill-treated by society (as is the case in many a culture even today). So a widow's suffering was more than a mere lack of sustenance – it was social, emotional and physical suffering that she went through. In certain cultures it would even seem like a curse from God, which would mean that she even went through spiritual suffering – all because she lost her husband.

So what James seems to be saying is that if one considers himself to be living out his faith to the letter, then he needs to be able to control the way he communicates, must take care of the needs of the most deprived people in society – orphans and widows. Our faith cannot be limited to merely sitting with God's word, praying and attending church – it needs to be seen in action, as we, in love, take care of the needs of those around us. In fact, during these days of the pandemic, there are a lot more needs that have opened up like never before, and these are opportunities for us to demonstrate the love we profess.

The third thing James says would be an evidence of a person who lives out his faith, is in the way he lives his life in comparison with that of the world around. He says that such a person should keep himself unspotted from the world. By this he means that such a person would not seek to please himself with the pleasures of this world; he would not hold to the values and morals that the world around subscribes to, he would not seek the things the world seeks after – fame, power, money, fulfilment of lusts, etc. Such a person's life would be free from a craving for any of those things. Once again James seems to be saying that a truly spiritual man is not one who lives a solitary life, but is both concerned for people, and at the same time, living out the kind of life that Jesus taught us to live – holy, pleasing to God, and righteous in every way.

James 2:1-4

“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. ² For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, ³ and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” ⁴ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?”

James then goes on to address another issue that was prevalent in the early church, and we can certainly learn a lot from, in our present day churches as well. It was the issue of partiality. Believers were respecting the rich and looking down or neglecting the poor. James begins by telling them to not show partiality while professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he also refers to as the Lord of glory. We should never forget that the Lord of glory was willing to come down to our sinful earth, just to save us from our sins. After coming to faith in such a Lord, we have no reason whatsoever to look down on anyone who is less fortunate than us financially.

James goes on to give an example of how we should not behave toward the poor. If a rich person, wearing gold and costly clothing walked into church, and at the same time a poor person, dressed in dirty clothes walked in, and we gave special attention and a front-row seat to the rich man, and

if on the other hand we showed no respect to the poor man, and had him sit in an obscure place or on the floor, then we would be demonstrating partiality. We should not discriminate amongst ourselves in any way – not even on the basis of one’s financial standing. James calls such discrimination a judgment with evil thoughts. It’s an evil thought to look up to one person and look down on another, when the Lord Jesus died to save both of them, irrespective of their financial standing. If we were to do that, then we are giving importance to money more than to God, because God does not priorities money over people. Jesus said, ²⁴ “*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (wealth/money).*” (**Matthew 6:24**) If God doesn’t priorities money over people, we have no right to do so either. If we do, James says, our thoughts are evil.

James 2:5-7

⁵ “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?”

James goes on to ask a rhetorical question that we need to ask ourselves even today, because it’s relevant in the Church even today. He says, in essence that God has chosen the poor in this world, to be rich in faith in God, and to be heirs of the Kingdom, which He promised to those who love Him. That’s a loaded statement.

The first thing he seems to be saying is that the poor (though they may not have much money) have great faith in God. That’s evident in the world today, as it was back then. It’s the poor who respond better and quicker to the Gospel, and who grow in their faith and relationship with the Lord much more than the rich do. It doesn’t mean that the rich don’t respond, but it’s mostly the poor who respond better and quicker. It’s perhaps because they don’t have money to distract them from trusting in the Lord. When one’s faith and trust is in money, they can’t trust God. But if there’s little or no money to trust in, then it’s easier to put your trust in God.

The second thing that James says is that it’s the poor who will be heirs of the Kingdom of God. They may not have property, inheritance or wealth here on earth, but they have been promised riches that this world could never provide, and could never take away either. Is that not an amazing thought that the poor who are side-lined here on earth, not looked at the second time on the street, if they have faith in Jesus, are going to inherit eternal riches from the greatest giver of good gifts - from God Himself?

The third thing he says is that the Kingdom will be given to those who love God, not just to those who come to believe in God. Our faith calls for far more than an intellectual assent to a set of beliefs or doctrines – it calls for a relationship with God that stems from a deep love for Him with one’s whole heart, soul, mind and strength. This love will be evident in the way we live our lives – the things we value, the people we value, our priorities, our choices, etc.

He then goes on to say that by discriminating against the poor person, one is dishonoring them. Dishonoring the poor, and only honoring the rich has become so commonplace today that it's not even seen as sinful anymore.

He then reminds them that it's actually the rich who oppress the people and take them to court. Back in the day, (as in many countries even today), it's the rich who oppress the poor, and never the other way round. Also, the poor could not afford to go to court against anyone (as is the case today), as he wouldn't have had the means to do that, so it was only the rich who would take people to court, demanding justice or compensation or whatever it was they took people to court for. At the end of the day, they would take people to court to gain something from them, so that they increased what they already had, at the expense of the poor who already had hardly anything.

The second thing he reminds his readers is the fact that the rich are the ones who blaspheme the name of Jesus. If it was bad then, it's even worse today – the name of Jesus is used as a by-word so freely, and it's even considered a cool thing to do so. Once again, it's more the rich who do that, than the poor. So in essence he's asking his readers if they realize that the ones that they are showing special favor, and attention to, are the ones who oppress them, take from them and even reproach God's name. The question we should be asking ourselves is, should we be honoring people who dishonor the poor, and dishonor God as well?

James 2:8-13

8“If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; **9**but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. **10**For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. **11**For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. **12**So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. **13**For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

James then goes on to say that one will do well if they live by the *'royal law,'* which the Scripture refers to – love your neighbor as yourself. The 10 Commandments can be divided into two – the first four commandments concern our relationship with, or love for God, and the remaining six concern our relationship with, or love for people. Therefore the Ten Commandments can be summed up into, what I refer to as, *'the twin' commandments* – “Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.” These two are inseparable. You can't love God without loving your neighbor and you can't really love your neighbor without loving God. Since James is referring to our relationship with people, he is referring to the commandments pertaining to our relationship with people. He seems to be saying that if we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, then we will not show partiality to the rich, and discriminate against the poor. He says that if we do show partiality to the rich, and discriminate against the poor, then we are committing sin, and are transgressing God's laws, which are based on love.

He seems to say that if we claim to love our neighbor as ourselves, and if we are found guilty of showing partiality to the rich, and discriminating against the poor, we are actually breaking all the other laws as well. He goes on to explain. The One who gave the 7th commandment (against

committing adultery), also gave the 6th commandment (against murder). So if we uphold the 7th and break the 6th, we are sinning against God anyway, and are guilty of breaking all, because God did not give us a choice to uphold some and break some – He expected us to uphold all or be considered sinners.

Now we know that the law that came through Moses could not save us, because no one could keep the entire law, but we are saved through faith in Jesus, who Himself upheld the law on our behalf, and eventually paid the price for our sin of breaking the law. We are now governed by *'the law of love, as it were* or *'the law of liberty.'* This law is not restrictive, as much as it is constructive and liberating, and enables us to be all that God intended for us to be. And now we have His Holy Spirit living inside of us, empowering and leading us on in His ways of love.

He goes on to tell the believers to speak and behave as people who will be judged by the law of liberty. On the Day of Judgment when Jesus returns, we will all have to give an account, not only for the bad things we did and said but also for the good things we didn't say and do, when we had the opportunity to do so.

In verse 4 James speaks to a person who shows partiality. He says, *"Have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?"* He refers to such partiality as passing judgment on people. So if one judged and discriminated people based on their wealth or financial standing, that person would be committing sin, and secondly, that person would be breaking the law of liberty, which demands that we love all people equally, irrespective of their financial standing.

He goes on to say that a person who judges another based on the criteria of wealth, is being merciless, and will be judged the same way by the Lord when He returns. It's so easy to find fault with and judge someone who has little or nothing when he is in the wrong, as compared to with the wealthy man, with whom we are usually so lenient. But James says that if we don't show mercy, we will not be shown mercy on the Day of Judgment, and if we allow mercy to triumph over our judgment then we will receive mercy on the Day of Judgment.

5 - James 2:14-26

For the Audio Version on YouTube, click here – [James 2:14-26](#)

For the Audio Version on SoundCloud, click here – [James 2:14-26](#)

James 2:14-17

“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? ¹⁷ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

After addressing the issue of partiality to the rich and discrimination against the poor, James then turns his attention to another very important aspect – one that is being misunderstood in The Church even today – it’s the aspect of faith. When the word, ‘*faith*,’ is used, there can be different understandings of the word that spring to mind. Some understand faith to refer to one’s level of belief in God, to the point of seeing miracles happen – more faith means more miracles; no faith means no miracles. To others, faith would refer to one’s belief and trust in Jesus as Lord. To another it would mean believing all of God’s promises and commands. While there’s an element of truth in all the above, let’s look at what James is trying to teach about faith in this passage.

He starts off with a question to make his readers (or hearers) think. He asks what one would gain if he professed a faith in God that did not demonstrate itself in action. I’d like us to imagine a painter who wants to prove to everyone that he’s a great painter, but never sets out to painting. Of what use would all his talk be, if it was not followed up by action? Likewise, James asks of what use faith would be that does not demonstrate itself in action. He goes on to ask if such faith could save a person. Mere talk, not followed up by walk is no faith at all.

He then goes on to give a real-life scenario to help demonstrate his point. Imagine a fellow-believer lacking both clothing and food and coming to you for help, and you, instead of helping him with clothing and food say to him – “*Depart in peace, be warmed and filled.*” Of what use would that be to the person in need? Likewise, talking the faith without walking it, is of no use – in fact, James refers to it as dead faith.

If we believe in a loving God who loves us, and meets our needs, should we not also love others and help meet their needs as well? But if all we do is talk, and tell people that we will pray for them, without helping them in any way, we are not being real followers of Jesus, and all that we profess concerning our faith in Jesus, is futile.

James 2:18-20

¹⁸ “But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! ²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

Understanding how people might try to find a loop-hole around actively demonstrating their faith, He says that some people may argue that it's alright if one person demonstrates faith, while another demonstrates the works that the faith talks about. He says that he would respond to such a person like this, *"Show me your faith alone that is not followed up by action, and I'll show you my faith through my actions."* What he means to say is that faith cannot exist in isolation without a practical demonstration of it, through love – it needs to be followed up by action. In fact, faith that is not followed up by action is not faith at all – it's mere talk.

James then goes on to address the concept of faith that is merely intellectual and that has no connection with one's life in any way. So often we hear people talking about believing in Jesus, and without a proper understanding of what believing in Jesus really means. One can easily understand faith to mean giving intellectual assent to the teachings of Jesus without changing anything about the way we live our lives. He gives another scenario. He says that if we believe that there is one God, we are on the right track, and we do well, but he hastens to add that even the demons, not only believe that there is one God, but they even tremble before God – something most of us don't do ourselves. So it seems that if our faith is only at an intellectual level, and has no connection with the way we live our lives, then demons do a better job at faith than we do. This means that there's something missing from such faith. He goes on to say that such thinking is foolish, and such faith is dead.

James 2:21-24

²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²² Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? ²³ And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

James then begins to make reference to people in the Old Testament who had faith in God, and uses them as examples, to explain the true faith, we need to possess in our lives. He begins with Abraham and refers to the time when Abraham willingly took his son Isaac to sacrifice him on the altar, in obedience to God. He says that Abraham's faith in God was so evident by his obedience, and it was this kind of faith that justified Abraham, when it says in **Genesis 15:6**, *"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."* Abraham was justified (made righteous) on account of his faith that resulted in action – even to the point of being willing to sacrifice his own son.

So when it says that Abraham believed in the Lord it means that He was willing to do anything the Lord asked him to do, on account of his belief and trust in the Lord. It was not a faith that was merely intellectual, and totally disconnected from his life – it was one that was completely connected with every area of his life, including his choice to obey God.

He goes on to say that Abraham's faith was being accompanied by his actions (works), and it was his action (works) that made his faith complete – else it would have been incomplete. He seems to be saying that faith and action are like two sides of the same coin – we can't separate one from the other, and there's no room for dichotomy either. If we believe, we must also follow up by action,

else we don't really believe. It's this kind of faith that made Abraham righteous, and it's on account of this kind of faith that he was referred to as a friend of God (**2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8**). James then concludes that one is saved not just by intellectual faith, but by a faith that is followed up by actions as well.

James 2:25-26

²⁵“Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? ²⁶For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

James then goes on to refer to another person who demonstrated the same kind of faith of Abraham – Rahab. She too had faith. Read what she said in **Joshua 2:9-13**. *“I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. ¹² Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, ¹³ and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.”* She didn't just believe all that she said she believed, she also did something to prove her faith – she hid the spies with an anticipation that stemmed from her faith in the God she had heard about. She asked that they would spare, not just her life, but also the lives of her entire family, and their possessions as well. That was true faith in action.

James then uses an analogy to explain how faith without works is dead. He says that just as the human body without the spirit inside of it is dead, so also faith that is not accompanied by action is dead too. He has taken the pains to establish that one cannot afford to merely possess an intellectual faith, that has no connection with the way one lives their lives, but instead, faith in Jesus should affect every area of our lives – our choices, our priorities, our values, our ambitions, our relationships, and more.

6 – James 3:1-12

For the Audio Version on YouTube, click here – [James 3:1-12](#)

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James 3:1-2

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. ²For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he *is* a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

After talking about the importance of possessing a faith that results in works or action, James then goes on to talk about another important aspect, which is connected with communication and he goes into great detail to explain how we can actually do something about it if we want to. It concerns the use of our tongue, which is the main tool in verbal communication.

He begins by saying that not all of us should strive to become teachers because we who teach will be held accountable far more than those who are taught. We who have received more instruction and teaching, and teach others, will be judged more strictly than others who have received less. Since we are teaching, we should be the ones who lead by example. We cannot afford to teach one thing and practice the total opposite of what we teach. We would be hypocrites and though it might seem like we are deceiving those we teach, the only ones we are really deceiving are ourselves.

James goes on to say that we all make mistakes and commit sin in various ways, but if a person does not commit sin by the things he says, such a person is considered a perfect person and able to control the whole body. He seems to be saying that the most difficult thing to control in our bodies is our tongue. We can control the use of every other part of our bodies much easier than we can control the use of our tongues.

James 3:3-4

³Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. ⁴Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.

James then begins to draw analogies from horses and ships, the two main modes of transportation back in the day. The horse was a fast means of transportation on land and the ship, a means of transportation at sea. Both these are powerful and bigger than man and yet man can control the direction both these move in a very simple way.

Bits are used in horses' mouths to control the direction the horse moves. If we want the horse to obey us, we use a bit placed in its mouth to do that. That small little piece of metal helps turn the whole body of the animal in whichever direction the rider chooses. Be it a race or a battle or just

moving from one place to the other, the direction the horse moves, can be controlled by that small bit in its mouth.

Likewise, ships are huge vessels, and back in the day were driven by winds and not by engines as they are today. But yet the direction of such mighty ships, both then and now, is controlled by a rudder. When it comes to airplanes, the pilot uses the control wheel to turn the plane to the right or left, but that happens with the use of a small section on the planes' wings called *ailerons*, which causes the turn in the aircraft. It's similar with other modes of land transport that we use today, where it's either a steering wheel or a handlebar that helps turn a car, bus, motorbike, cycle, etc. Wherever the ship captain, plane pilot, or car or bus driver chooses to turn the vehicle, all he does is turn one small part of the vehicle and the entire vehicle turns.

James 3:5-6

⁵ Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! ⁶ And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

In our bodies, there's a small little member that can alter the direction our lives take – it's our tongue. It can make boast of great things. How easy it is for us to boast about things we accomplish, or about the knowledge we possess or the things we possess, or the people we know, the skills we possess, etc. Before we know it, we've given rise to envy, coveting, fighting, and a whole lot of trouble.

James uses another analogy – this time a destructive one – it's that of a forest fire. A very large forest fire usually starts off with a very small spark or small fire. This left unchecked can rage out of control causing destruction of lives and property in its path. We hear of so many forest fires happening across the globe today, some of them explained and some unexplained but all of them caused by a spark or a fire.

He goes on to say that just like a forest fire is destructive, so also the tongue can be very destructive. James calls it a fire and a world of iniquity, meaning that it can set fire to a lot of good things in life like marriage, relationships among friends, it can start war between nations, and it can cause businesses to close due to losses incurred due to words. A single word like, 'Nuclear,' can cause the markets to plummet. It can also be the cause of all kinds of sins.

The tongue is placed inside our body as one such member that has the potential to cause much harm as it has the potential to do much good – it all depends on how we choose to use it. It can cause the entire body to become defiled, by the words that are spoken. It can cause others to feel defiled as well. It can change the entire direction our lives were meant to move in from a good direction to an entirely wrong and destructive direction; from the direction to heaven, to the direction of hell, and eventually the tongue itself will be set on fire in hell.

James 3:7-8

⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. ⁸ But no man can tame the tongue. *It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

James then goes on to talk about how, not only can horses and ships be controlled by bits and rudders respectively, but adds that all kinds of wild animals, birds, reptiles, and sea creatures have been able to be tamed by man. Imagine that – creatures of the land, sky, and sea can be tamed. He goes on to lament that despite all this taming that's been done, no one has learned to tame the tongue. We have not learned the art of controlling the way we use our tongues. We use it as we wish, to say what we want, to whom we want, when we want, and however we want – much like an untamed beast of the wild.

He goes on to call the tongue an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. The tongue seems to be unwilling to follow any rules and regulations – it's like an evil law to itself. It's got the capacity to hurt people and destroy relationships much like the poison of a snake can kill a person.

James 3:9-12

⁹ With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both saltwater and fresh.

With the same tongue we can both praise God through songs, and prayers, and praise, and also curse men who have been made in the image of God. We can't afford to be dichotomous. If the same person is saying totally contradicting things, one to God and another to man, who's created in the image of God, it means that we are not being ourselves - we are playing dual roles. We don't always take into account this important fact that James points out here - that the people we hurt with our words are also created in the image of God as we are, and speaking ill of them is like speaking ill of the One who created them – God. So, in a sense, we speak well of God on the one hand and speak ill of God on the other.

The same tongue, in the same mouth, can bring forth both blessing and cursing – how sadly true that is. James says that this is not supposed to be so. James goes on to ask a question to make us think. He uses the analogy of a spring. Can a spring bring forth both fresh water and bitter water at the same opening? The answer is an undeniable, 'No.' As if to reiterate, he says, that just like a fig tree cannot bring forth olives, and a grapevine figs, but each tree brings forth its own fruit, so also, the same spring cannot bring forth both fresh and salty water. So, if that's not possible then it should not be that the same tongue should produce both good words and bad words, both helpful and hurtful words, both blessing to God and cursing of men.

7 – James 3:13-18

For the Audio Version on YouTube, click here – [James 3:13-18](#)

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James 3:13-16

¹³ Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that his works are done* in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.

After addressing the issues of communication, with specific reference to the use of the tongue, James then addresses another issue that is not disconnected from communication, but in fact is the source from which communication stems – wisdom.

He begins by both asking a question as well as making a statement. He speaks to those who consider themselves wise. When referring to wisdom, let's remember that he is not referring to knowledge about facts and information, but is rather referring to the ability to make choices that are good and honoring of God. In fact, that's what King Solomon asked for from God and God gave him both wisdom and knowledge as well.

James then goes on to tell those who consider themselves wise to demonstrate that wisdom by the way they live and by their humility that comes from wisdom. Often, wisdom is seen as something to be proud of and boast about, but James seems to say the opposite – it will result in humility, not pride. He goes on to say that though one may profess to possess wisdom but demonstrates certain characteristics in his life, then its proof that the person does not possess wisdom. Let's look at those characteristics.

If one is filled with bitter envy or self-seeking, where he's always comparing himself with others and desiring to have what they have and being envious of them, or if he's at the center of his own world, then he cautions such a person to not boast about possessing wisdom because that's not true wisdom. Such a person would be speaking ill of the truth of who God is and giving a false message about God to the world.

He goes on to redefine what the person might call wisdom. He says that the person could still refer to it as wisdom, but it won't be the wisdom that comes from God, but rather is *firstly* of the earth. Such wisdom is no different from that of the thinking of the world around us, where it's all about self, and wanting what others possess, wanting to be the best, even if it means at someone else's expense. We have been redeemed from that old way of life, and to want to emulate that self-centered way of life again is to desire to undo all that the Lord began in our lives.

Secondly, he refers to such wisdom as sensual. When all one wants to do is to satisfy his own fleshly desires – no matter what they are, then this is not spiritual but sensual. Once again, is this

not what we were redeemed from – living to gratify the lusts of the flesh, which Paul makes mention of in **Galatians 5:18-21** – “*Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*” Paul too said in no uncertain terms that if one seeks to live sensually, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, then such a person cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.

The *third* thing James says about such falsely proclaimed wisdom is that it is demonic. When you look at the characteristics of this so-called wisdom, it is self-centered and sensual and has nothing to do with honoring God in any way and therefore it can be referred to as demonic, since that’s what the devil seeks to do – to tempt us to fulfil our selfish and fleshly desires, that gratify none but ourselves and don’t bring glory to God in any way.

James goes on to qualify why he refers to such wisdom as demonic – it’s because it is filled with envy, self-seeking, which makes the possessor of this so-called wisdom the center of his life. It also results in confusion and every evil behavior. Though on the surface, this might seem like a wisdom to aspire after, this has nothing to do with God and is neither constructive nor beneficial to anyone – including ourselves.

James 3:17-18

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

He then goes on to talk about another kind of wisdom that is from above (from God). True wisdom comes only from God who is wise. He goes on to describe what this wisdom is like and how we need to aspire to possess this wisdom in our lives. In fact, it’s this wisdom that he referred to in **James 1:5-8**, when he said that whoever lacks wisdom, could ask God for it and it would be given them both liberally and without finding fault.

The *first* thing he says about this wisdom is that it is *pure* – it’s pure in its motives, with no ulterior motives or hidden agendas. In **Matthew 5:8**, Jesus talked about the importance of being pure in heart (in our desires), when He said, “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*” Since God is pure, His children too should seek to be pure and holy like Him, and if one is to live in God’s presence forever, then one needs to be pure, just as God is.

The *second* term James uses to describe this wisdom is ‘*peaceable*.’ A person possessing this wisdom lives at peace with others, not seeking his own rebellious ways that are at odds with others around. Once again, Jesus too, in the same Sermon on the Mount talked about the importance of us as believers living at peace with one another when He said in **Matthew 5:9**, “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called, Sons of God.*” Since God is peaceable and seeking to make peace with sinful man through His Son Jesus Christ, we as His children should also seek to live at peace with one another and seek to help reconcile others with God.

The *third* term James uses to describe this wisdom from God, is 'gentle (meek).' A person possessing wisdom from God will be gentle and not rude or hurtful to others. This again is an attribute of God – He is gentle and not rude. In fact, Matthew quotes from **Isaiah 42:3** when he says about Jesus in **Matthew 12:20**, “*A bruised reed He will not break and smoking flax He will not quench,*” meaning that Jesus did not hurt anyone, especially those who were already hurting and weak. He valued everyone alike. Jesus was the perfect example of gentleness. As followers of Jesus, we too are called to be gentle. Once again, Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, mentioned gentleness (meekness) as one of the attributes we need to develop in our lives. In **Matthew 5:5**, Jesus said, “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*”

Later, the Apostle Paul in **Galatians 5:23** mentioned gentleness as one of the fruit (evidences) of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. Since God is gentle, we as His children need to be gentle as well. Jesus promised that those who are gentle will enjoy the earthly blessings that God gives them without having to fight or strive for them. And eventually, they will live to inherit the new earth that the Lord brings into existence.

The *fourth* thing that James says about the wisdom from God is that it is *willing to yield*. This is the opposite of fighting for one's own way and wanting to prove that one is right – something that comes naturally for most of us. True wisdom realizes that justice will eventually prevail and so it does not seek to prove itself to be right but is willing to yield to those who might want to dominate or want to prove themselves right. This is similar to what Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount when He said in **Matthew 5:10-12** – “*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹²Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*” Jesus Himself was willing to yield to the injustices of men on behalf of the whole world when He went to the cross to bear the penalty for our sins. We, therefore as His followers must be willing to yield even when we are in the right, thereby demonstrating the wisdom of God in our lives.

The *fifth* term that James uses to describe the wisdom from God is, 'full of mercy.' Such a person would be merciful to others at all times and not demand punishment for wrongs done against them. They are willing to forgive those who ask forgiveness of them and don't hold grudges either. Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, said this in **Matthew 5:7** – “*Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.*” Jesus Himself was merciful and forgiving at all times and He taught much about being merciful. One of the very powerful demonstrations of his mercy was when the Scribes and Pharisees brought Him a woman caught in adultery wanting permission from Him to stone her to death, but Jesus chose to show her mercy instead. Once again, Jesus demonstrated mercy when on the cross He prayed, in **Luke 23:34** - “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*” As His followers, we too need to be merciful and forgiving and we need to remember the parable of the unforgiving servant that Jesus told in **Matthew 18:21-35**.

The *sixth* term James uses to describe the wisdom from God is, 'full of good fruits.' Not only is a person who possesses God's wisdom merciful in that he doesn't seek revenge but is merciful, but he goes one step further in being good to all people – including those who wrong them. Everything about the person with God's wisdom is good – in short, their life is full of goodness. They impact people wherever they go in a positive way, much like the light and salt Jesus talked about in the

Sermon on the Mount when He said, in **Matthew 5:13-16** - “*You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.*”¹⁴ “*You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.*”¹⁵ “*Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*”¹⁶ “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*”

Jesus was saying, in effect, to both His disciples (and us) to be so good in the way we live our lives, that when people see us and are impacted by our lives, they will give glory to God because of us. We need to live life being full of good fruits.

The *seventh* thing James says about the wisdom from God is the fact that it’s *without partiality* when it comes to dealing with people. We already looked at this earlier in **James 2:1-13**, when he gave a scenario of a rich man and a poor man entering the church and how we are to not favor the rich and discriminate against the poor. God is not partial towards people – He does not look up to one and look down on another and since we are His children, we too need to have the same attitude when dealing with people. We are to love all people equally and with no bias, discrimination or favoritism. It might be difficult, given the fact that this is the way of the world around us and also within The Church to a large extent; but this is something that James says, is an evidence of possessing the wisdom from God – without partiality.

The *eighth* thing that James says describes the wisdom from God is that it is *without hypocrisy*. Everything about God is genuine – there’s nothing fake or false about God. God does not need to impress anyone and so does not need to pretend to be someone He is not. One of the main reasons for hypocrisy is on account of the need for people’s approval, and instead of seeking God’s approval, if we begin to search for man’s approval, we will find ourselves pretending to be who we are not and faking genuine love, instead of being real and genuine in our love for one another.

One of the biggest problems with hypocrisy is the fact that no one knows who the real person is, as he’s one thing to one person and another to another, and all for the same reason – the need for the approval of men. We know that the Bible talks against us seeking the approval of man because when we seek people’s approval, it’s only a matter of time before we begin to deviate from God’s ways. But on the contrary, when we seek God’s approval, there’s no need to fake who we are – we can just be ourselves and not fear man’s reactions or disapproval.

James then goes on to end this topic by saying that when one seeks to live a life of peace, he bears the fruit of righteousness. In **Matthew 5:6**, Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger or thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” This means that if a person so desires to live the righteous life he was saved to live, one of the most important things he should seek to do is to live in peace with people in as much as he can, as Paul said in **Romans 12:18** – “*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*”

8 – James 4:1-10

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James 4:1-6

Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members? ² You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. ⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”? ⁶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

After talking about the need to be agents of sowing peace amongst one another, James goes on to address the issue of conflict. He begins by asking what the root of wars and fights are, and that’s a great question to ask. So often we try to deal with the symptoms without getting to the root cause for it. When we deal with the root, we are able to deal with the issue itself.

He then goes on to answer his question saying that the conflicts arise from the desires we have for pleasure and adds that these desires themselves are at war within our bodies. It’s this internal battle that results in external battles. Most of us are unconscious of these battles that rage within us and so don’t do anything about them.

James says that the first thing about these desires is that they are those of pleasure. We desire to please ourselves in every way, have the best that this world has to offer, and to satisfy our sensual and temporal desires, that we are willing to do anything to have them satisfied. We are never satisfied with what we possess – we always want more, thinking that we will eventually reach a place of contentment with possessions. The sad truth is that possessions will never bring us to the point of contentment – we will always want more.

James goes on to mention various things people do to possess things. *Firstly*, he says that they lust (desire) to have things but don’t have, meaning that merely desiring something does not mean that one can possess it. *Secondly*, he says that they take one another’s lives to possess and they even covet their things and with all that, they still do not have. *Thirdly*, they fight and go to war to possess, and yet they do not have. How many battles and wars have been fought with the intent of colonizing someone else’s lands and how much blood has been shed in the process?

He then gives the reasons why they do not have. One might be expecting a rather complicated answer to the question, “*Why do I not possess what I desire?*” But the answer James gives is rather simple. “*You do not have because you do not ask.*” Is that all it takes to receive something – ask? Ask who? He’s referring to asking God, who is the giver of all good gifts.

He then goes on to say that even those who do ask, do not receive, and the reason for them not receiving is that they ask for things with wrong motives. They merely want to use their possessions on themselves, to satisfy their own sinful pleasures and not to bring glory to God through them. He seems to say that even though the method of wanting to possess things might have changed, where one is seeking God for the things he desires, one thing has not changed and that is the selfish desires behind wanting to possess things.

James then gets a bit strong with them calling them adulterers and adulteresses, and goes on to give a reason why calls them so. When we hear the words, '*adulterers and adulteresses*,' the first thought that comes to our minds is that of infidelity in marriage. But let's look at what James is using these terms to refer to.

He asks them whether they don't know that if one desires to be in a friendly relationship with the things of this world, then that person is at enmity with God. What he seems to be implying is that people have chosen to have a relationship with the things of this world, instead of with God. So in that sense, they have forsaken their covenant with God and entered into another covenant with the things of this world, much like a person who forsakes the relationship with his spouse to enter into a relationship with another person instead – hence the name, '*adulterers and adulteresses*.' He is saying that if one chooses to be friends with the world, he is simultaneously choosing to be an enemy of God. This is a very serious issue and something we need to take to heart in our day and age, when life is all about possessions and so often, God is the One we seek to increase our possessions. Have we traded our relationship with God for a relationship with money and possessions?

No wonder Jesus said in **Matthew 6:24** - "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*" The Lord Himself was teaching His disciples (and us), that one cannot serve both God and money. Isn't it interesting that Jesus goes on in **Matthew 24:25-34** to tell His disciples (and us) that God is able to meet our needs for food, water and clothing if only we seek Him, much like James is teaching here, that we can have what we need if only we ask God?

James goes on to make reference to a quote from Scripture that is not explicitly found anywhere but there are passages that allude to it though. He talks about the Holy Spirit of God in us that so longs for us to be in relationship with God that He will do all He can to help us grow in that relationship. He loves us with a jealous love, meaning that we belong to God and should never belong to another.

When the Lord gave the Ten Commandments to Moses to give to the people of Israel, the fourth commandment in **Exodus 20:5-6** reads like this, "*You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;*⁵ *you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,*⁶ *but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*" From this passage, it's evident that God was saying that we were not to replace our worship or reverence for God with anything and we were not to bow down to it or serve it. And so, if one was making an idol of money or possessions and '*worshipping or serving*

it, ' as it were, then one was choosing to walk away from his relationship with God and was entering into a relationship with the things that God provides. So, if one were to choose to reject God and rather embrace the things He provides instead, then one was choosing to receive the punishment that God gives to such people who reject Him.

On reading this passage by James it might seem to some of us that these are difficult things to live by, since most people around us live this way and even in the church today, the love for things seems to be so prevalent. To such of us, James goes on to say, that God gives us the grace to live the life He has called us to live, even if it is difficult. It's similar to the incident in **Matthew 19:16-30** when Jesus was approached by a rich young ruler who asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus then had this conversation with him where it was discovered that this man was so obsessed with his possessions that he was not willing to part with them to follow Christ. At that time Jesus said these words in **Verses 23-24**, "*Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.*" When the disciples heard this statement, they were shocked, (much like some of the readers of this letter of James would have been), and they asked Jesus this question in **Verse 25**, "*Who then can be saved?*" It seemed like the love for things was so prevalent even back in the day that they felt that no one would qualify to be saved because everyone loved money and possessions more than God. It's at this time that Jesus said in **Verse 26**, "*With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.*"

James seems to be saying that though this might be a difficult thing to do, given the influence of the world around us, God is able to give us the grace to live this life, where we choose Him over everything else. James goes on to make a reference to several scriptures, but closest to **Proverbs 3:34**, when he says, "*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*" This verse seems to say that if one is humble enough to come to the Lord, acknowledging his inability to resist the love for money and possessions, and seek His help to develop a love for God, that God is willing to help that person to do so, but if one chooses to pretend that he does not love pleasure, money or possessions over God and so does not seek God's help, then such a person cannot receive help from God.

James 4:7-10

⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

Since a love for pleasure, money and possessions is such a big problem that even children of God have to deal with, James then goes on to offer a solution to this problem – one that's noteworthy for us even today, where many of us are caught up with the same sin of idolatry.

The *first* thing James suggests is that we submit ourselves to God. We need to move from a position of rebelling against God and choosing things that make us at enmity with God, to submitting to God in every area of our lives. It's only when we submit to God, that life takes on new meaning, purpose, and direction. He is not talking about merely believing in God, but rather bringing every

area of our lives into submission to God's authority and will, where doing what God desires is our only desire.

The *second* thing James suggests we do is to resist the devil so he will flee from us. Notice that this is not the first thing, but rather the second thing, as none of us can resist the devil in our own strength. We can only do it with the strength that the Lord provides and this strength is available to us when we submit to God and walk in obedience to Him. He tells us that once we submit to God and then resist the devil, he will certainly flee from us. We should never forget that the temptations to possess things is always from the devil so as to lure us away from God.

Remember the temptation of Jesus in **Matthew 4**, when "*the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."* Notice he was trying to lure Jesus with pleasure, money, and possessions, if only he would bow down to him. Notice how Jesus resisted the devil with these words, "*Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'*" Jesus made reference to worshipping and serving no one but God. Jesus overcame the temptation by the devil to become a slave to pleasure, money or possessions – a temptation each of us needs to overcome in our daily lives even today.

Notice what happened when Jesus resisted the devil with this 3rd and final temptation. "*The devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.*" The Lord is able to strengthen us to resist the devil's temptations to become enslaved and the devil will flee from us.

The *third* thing, James suggests is that we draw near to God, and adds that if we do so, then God will draw near to us. It isn't sufficient that we merely enter into a relationship with God, as is the case with an earthly marriage relationship as well – we need to move into deeper intimacy so as to enjoy the relationship to its fullest. So also, we need to move into deeper intimacy in our relationship with God so that we may gradually and eventually be transformed into His image, and thereby reflect His character/nature.

The *fourth* thing James suggests is that sinners cleanse their hands. Let's remember he's talking to believing Christians when he mentions all that he does in his letter, which means there were sinners within the church then, as there are even today. And to such, he says, "*Cleanse your hands.*" We know he's not talking about the external washing of our hands as is the norm during this global pandemic but is rather talking about changing the way we use our hands in our everyday living – in our dealings, in our actions, and in every possible use of our hands. We need to use our hands to bring glory to God and not to gratify our sinful desires like we used to before we came to know Christ.

The *fifth* thing James suggests is that we cleanse our hearts, and he refers to such who have sinful hearts as being double-minded. Let's look at those two phrases separately. We know that when the word, '*heart*,' is used, it's used with reference to the seat of all desires. He seems to be saying that we need to ensure that our desires are clean, pure, and holy and not selfish, evil, and sinful. When our desires are clean, then our thoughts will be clean. When our thoughts are clean, then our words

and actions will be clean as well. So here too, he's getting back to the root of our behavior – our hearts.

He goes on to refer to such people who have sinful hearts as being double-minded because at certain times, they appear to have good desires, while at other times they appear to have evil desires. They are never steady in the way they think in life – they lack in integrity of character. Earlier James said that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. (**James 1:8**) Since we are children of a God who does not change like shifting shadows, we too cannot afford to be double-minded.

The *sixth* thing he suggests is that they lament and mourn and weep. The enormity of their sin is such that they need to be so deeply convicted of their sin to the point of lamenting, mourning, and weeping so that God will have mercy on them. It appears that there were believers then as there are now, who had gone so far from the Lord that their sinful lives were no different from those of the world around them. He was calling them to repentance – to a complete turning back into an intimate relationship with God. If this pandemic has taught some of us one thing – it's that we need to get back into a deep intimate relationship with God.

The *seventh* thing he suggests is that they exchange their laughter for mourning and their joy to gloom – both expressions of repentance on account of sin. He was not saying that there was anything wrong in laughter or in joy per se, but for the people he was writing to then, and for many of us today, this is exactly what is needed. We cannot afford to pretend all's well between us and God when our relationship is so strained and distant, on account of our selfish and rebellious ways. We need to turn back to God in repentance.

The *eighth* thing James suggests that they (and we) do is to humble ourselves before the Lord and adds that if we do so, the Lord will lift us up. The opposite of this would be that we exalt ourselves before God and portray ourselves to be in an intimate relationship with Him and stand in danger of being put down by Him. We need to come before the Lord with honest hearts that are open to the searching of the Holy Spirit and let Him convict us of areas of our lives where we permit sin to dwell. Some of these sins are conscious, while others maybe not so conscious, but all the same, we need to let the Lord reveal these areas of our lives to us and we need to turn away from this sinful, selfish lifestyle. If we come before the Lord with such an attitude of humility, seeking His forgiveness, He will forgive, restore, heal, and exalt us once again to where we used to be in our relationship with Him. Let's not understand the word, '*exalt*' to mean that we will begin to possess things of this world as if that were a sign of the intimacy of our relationship with God or as our sign of godliness, as Paul said in **1 Timothy 6:5**, to be careful of those who consider godliness as a means to financial gain.

9 – James 4:11-17

For the Audio Version on YouTube, click here – [James 4:11-17](#)

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James 4:11-12

¹¹ Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

In continuation of his addressing the issue of conflict, which he said, stemmed from a desire for worldly pleasures, James goes on to address a very connected issue - speaking ill of one another – a problem that existed in the church back then, as it does even today. He begins by telling his readers to not speak ill of one another, and he uses the word ‘brethren,’ as if to remind them that they all belong to one family of God.

He then goes on to give reasons why we should not speak ill of one another, and adds another aspect that is connected with it, which is concerning judging one another. The first reason he gives why we should not speak ill of one another and judge one another is because if we do so, we are indirectly speaking ill of, and judging the law as well. How is that so? Just like he said earlier that when we show partiality, we are breaking the royal law, which says that we should love our neighbor as we love ourselves, he makes the same connection here too. If we speak ill of, or judge one another, we are in effect saying that we disagree with the law that tells us to love one another and we are setting ourselves up against the law itself.

Let’s keep in mind, when he talks about the law, he’s talking about the law of liberty/freedom, that he referred to earlier, which refers to the law of love which now enables us to live the way God wants us to live. It does not mean that we are permitted to live as we wish but rather how God desires we live. So if we choose to disobey that law and slander one another and pass judgments on one another, then instead of us abiding by this law, of love and freedom, we are actually breaking this law and taking the place of judges and judging, not only one another but also the law of God, that was meant to teach us to live in harmony, and not in conflict.

He goes on to remind them and us, that there is One Lawgiver, referring to God, and adds that it is He alone who is able to save us or destroy us. We do not, and will never have the authority over anyone’s life. He then concludes this thought with the question, “*Who are you to judge another?*” We are all called to be subject to God’s authority to judge, and not make anyone else subject to our authority and judge them, and if we do so, it begs the question, “*Who do we think we are?*” or in other words, “*Who gave us this authority to speak ill of others, or to judge them?*”

James 4:13-17

¹³ Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; ¹⁴ whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead you *ought* to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin.

James then goes on to address another issue, which pertains to the uncertainty of this earthly life and how we need to always bear this in mind. He begins by referring to those who boastfully talk about their plans to go places, settle down for a while and make money, and reminds them that they cannot really be sure that their plans will succeed - not on account of the nature of their plans, but rather on account of the uncertainty of this earthly life. He reminds his readers (and us) that we do not know what will actually happen the next day.

He goes on to describe the nature of this earthly life – no matter how long it might seem, at the end of the day, it’s like a vapor that appears for a little while and then disappears. This analogy of vapor was as powerful and relevant to them in their day as it is for us today. Vapor appears and then disappears in a few seconds, and that’s how this earthly life is too.

So given the nature of this life here on earth, he suggests that we change the way we talk about plans we make in life. He tells us to submit all our plans to God instead, and work accordingly. If God wills (desires) that we go to a place, spend time there, do business there, make money there, then we do so. It’s really important that we pray about every decision we take in life.

Today we travel for a lot more reasons than at the time this letter was being written. Then the travels were mostly related to business, but today, purposes of travel are so varied - education, vacation, business, world tours, performance, sports, music, art, exhibitions, conferences, training, etc. Though it’s important we make plans to do all of the above, we need to always subject our plans to God’s will, and talk the same way about our plans.

James says that if we refer to our plans without acknowledging the will of God in our decisions, we are then being boastful and arrogant, thinking that we are in total control of our lives, and therefore don’t need God to guide us. He calls such boasting evil because it is in total rebellion of God’s control over our lives.

He then concludes his writing on this issue with the words, “*Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*” By this, he means, that if we know how to submit our lives to God’s authority and seek His guidance in everything we do, but we choose to not do so, but rather choose to live our lives as we wish, then we would be committing sin. If we don’t know how to do good and so we don’t do it, we can be excused, but if we know how to do good and we don’t do it, then we are going against our own beliefs and we are sinning against God.

10 – James 5:1-12

For the Audio Version on YouTube, click here – [James 5:1-12](#)

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James 5:1-6

Come now, *you* rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon *you!* ² Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. ⁴ Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. ⁵ You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

After talking about not speaking ill of, and judging one another, and about the need to make plans according to the will of God, and not boast about our plans as if we are sure they will happen, James then turns his attention to the rich people who are not living the way the Lord wants them to live. Let's look at what James has to say to them. It seems like he is talking about the rich people who are not Christians, because later he addresses the believers in verse 7 when he tells them to be patient. Let's see what he tells the rich people of the day.

He begins by telling the rich to weep and howl in advance of the miseries that are to come upon them. He talks about this misery they will suffer with a tone of certainty, and not as if it were a possibility. It seems that the rich are going to suffer in a way that's going to result in them weeping and howling and he tells them to do that even before that misery comes upon them.

He goes on to talk about the nature of their riches and uses terms to describe how useless and empty they are to save one from God's judgment and eternal condemnation. He uses the words, '*corrupted,*' '*moth-eaten*' and '*corroded,*' meaning that they will not hold any value on that Day of Judgment. He then says that these riches will be a witness against them and will consume their flesh like fire would. He goes on to say that the rich had heaped up or stored up treasure in the last days. The riches that the rich people possessed were not being earned well or used well, but were rather being hoarded for a rainy day, but instead a Day of Judgment was coming when that wealth would have been of no use.

James goes on to explain the process by which the rich made their wealth. They did so by not paying their laborers what was due them, which means they were either not paying them or they were under-paying them for their labor. He says that two cries were going up to God – that of the wages that were not paid the laborers and that of the reapers themselves. He adds that these cries had reached the ears of the Lord of the heavenly armies, making it clear that the Lord will certainly pay heed to those cries and deal with the rich.

James goes on to tell the rich that they have lived on the earth in luxury and pleasure and have made themselves fat as a result, and adds that it is in preparation for the day of slaughter, thereby

making reference to oxen and cows that are made fat for the slaughter. This further strengthens his warning that judgment is coming upon the rich. He then goes on to say that they had condemned and murdered those who were just and upright in order to amass more wealth, and adds that though they did that, they did not resist them. So it appears that the rich people had got rich at other people's expense, including their very lives and it was a certainty that God was going to deal with them for all their ill-gotten gain.

Though it does seem like he's talking to the rich people of the world, the world has changed a lot since then, and there are many in the church today who are as guilty of the same things as these people were back then. So many live for none but themselves, making money at the expense of other people, taking lives of people so as to increase their wealth, under-paying or not paying laborers who work for them, and for all this, such rich believers can be sure that the same fate awaits them as well.

Let's examine our own hearts to see if we find ourselves guilty of the above sins of selfishness and greed, and repent if we have to, lest we find ourselves awaiting the same fate that James warned the rich about.

James 5:7-12

⁷ Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. ⁸ You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! ¹⁰ My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. ¹¹ Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. ¹² But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and *your* “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment.

James then turns his attention to the believers, whom he refers to as brothers and sisters and encourages them to remain patient as they wait for the return of the Lord Jesus. This verse seems to indicate that it's perhaps these people were the ones being exploited by the rich people. He seems to be telling them that the Lord sees and knows, and will repay their oppressors in due time – when the Lord returns and though it might be hard for them to undergo the oppression they undergo, they need to remain patient and wait for the Lord's return, when both they will be rewarded for their labor, as well as their oppressors will be recompensed for their oppression.

He then makes reference to the patience exercised by farmers, who wait patiently for the harvest as they wait both for the early and latter rains. No one knows for sure whether the rains will come, yet they wait in hope. He says, that they too, need to wait, but their waiting is in hope or assurance of the Lord's return.

He then encourages them to set their hearts/desires firm and strong in preparation for the coming of the Lord, meaning that they need to desire God and His ways deep down in their hearts because it's those desires that lead to plans and a lifestyle that is either godly or ungodly. Every believer

needs to live life with this perspective in mind – the Lord’s return is close at hand. We are not going to live on this earth forever – our life here is short-lived, and we need to live life with that sense of reality, using all we have to love and serve the Lord. No one knows exactly when the Lord will return but one thing we do know is that none of us has too long to live on the earth, and when our time on earth is done, then the Lord’s return is as good as come for us, because when He does return we who die in the Lord will be resurrected to meet Him in the air, and then those who are alive and remain will also be caught up together with the Lord in the air. **(Read 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18)**

James then goes on to caution the believers to not grumble against one another and warns them if they do, they will be condemned. Though this might seem like a very hard statement to make – that we will be judged for grumbling against one another, we need to remember that the Lord looks at us as His Church quite differently than the way most of us look at ourselves. The Lord redeemed us to be His very own, and we are His Body, His Family, part of His Kingdom, and more, and so God expects us to respect one another and take care of, and love one another. Grumbling against one another is the first step towards hurting and harming one another and when we do that, we are going against the Lord Himself who is trying to build us up. We are trying to tear down what the Lord is trying to build up. Grumbling against one another is almost like grumbling against God Himself. He cautions those who grumble against one another that they will be judged/condemned by Jesus whom, he says is standing at the door, meaning that His return is close at hand.

He then goes on to encourage them to remain patient in the midst of their suffering and makes reference to the prophets who spoke on behalf of the Lord and suffered but remained patient in their suffering. Those prophets were considered blessed because they endured the suffering they went through patiently and he encourages them to go through the suffering they go through with the same kind of patience.

He then makes reference to the one man who is referred to in the Bible, and even today as the one who endured tremendous suffering but still remained patient through all of it – Job. He reminds them that Job persevered through this suffering and was able to live to see the wonderful things the Lord brought forth for him, after his suffering was over. He goes on to remind the believers that the Lord, who sees their suffering is both compassionate and merciful, meaning that the Lord feels what they go through, and will help them through it and reward them accordingly later, and He is also merciful, meaning that He will not punish them according to their wrongdoings.

James then goes on to address another issue that is related with the issue of being patient – it’s that of trying to convince someone of one’s honesty by swearing on heaven or on earth or on anything else. Perhaps the believers were being falsely accused of things by those who oppressed them, and in an attempt to prove their innocence, they perhaps were sometimes being tempted to swear on something. But James talks about taking oaths, just like Jesus did in **Matthew 5:33-37** that one should not take oaths and that a mere ‘Yes,’ or ‘No,’ should suffice, and anything more than that would be considered a sin. James goes on to say that if anyone takes an oath, then he will fall into judgment. In the above verses James starts off by addressing the rich people who were oppressing the poor and cheating them of their wages, then he goes on to encourage those who are being persecuted or undergoing suffering to remain patient, and finally he discourages them from taking oaths for any reason whatsoever.

11 – James 5:13-20

For the Audio Version on YouTube, click here – [James 5:13-20](#)

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James 5:13-16

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

After warning the believers against swearing by anything in earth or in heaven, James then begins to conclude his letter with some very specific instructions pertaining to various situations they might find themselves in. He begins by telling those who are going through any kind of suffering, to pray. While this might seem like an obvious thing to do for some, it's not common for all people to pray when they suffer. Many of us choose to not pray when suffering comes our way. We display anger against God as if He were the cause for our suffering, and as if our anger at God was going to change our situation in any way.

We should never forget that we are on a spiritual journey that involves spiritual battles as well, and that the enemy of our souls - the devil, is out to destroy our faith. He will often use suffering to try to do just that. During those times of suffering, the one thing we should actually do is get closer to God, and seek Him. The one thing we should never do, is walk away from Him in those difficult times. James already talked about the one main thing that can result from the trials we face – the transformation of our character to reflect the nature of Christ, and that's why he asks us to consider it pure joy when we face trials of various kinds. **(James 1:2-4)** If, during our times of suffering, we choose to walk away from God, we're choosing the path of defeat, we're choosing to not be transformed into the character of Christ, we're allowing the enemy to have his way in our lives, and to destroy our faith in God.

He then says that if anyone is cheerful, he must sing psalms (songs). There's something that happens to the attitude of those who are happy when they sing songs. It takes their happiness to a whole new level. It simultaneously does something to the person's attitude going forward the rest of the day. Let's never forget that we need to take care of our attitudes, mental states and emotions, and when we take care of them, we are able to help others in so many ways.

He then goes on to talk about what to do when one is sick. Back in the day, there would not have been as many doctors as we have today. So he suggested that if one is sick, they do something else, apart from what most of us would immediately do today. Before we look at that, let's remember that most illnesses are psycho-somatic, meaning that the state of the mind has an effect on the functioning, and the health of the body, and if this is so, then James' suggestion below

seems a lot more meaningful to us today, who live in quite different times than when he wrote this letter.

He goes on to suggest that a sick person send for the elders of the church to come and pray for them in faith, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord, as they do so. This is something that is hardly popular in the church today. Elders in the church were meant to serve as guides, as leaders, who helped people grow in their faith, and who managed the affairs of the church.

When the elders come and pray for the sick person, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord, and in faith, then the sick person will be healed, and the Lord will raise up that person back to normal health. This does not seem like an expensive option at all, and yet, it's hardly practiced in the church today. Let's seek to get back to the basics of our faith – perhaps we will see a lot more miracles happening today, and as a result, this will build both our faith, and that of others who witness these miracles.

James goes on to make a connection between illness and sin, and adds that when the elders pray in faith, anointing the person with oil, not only will the sick person be healed, but also his sins will be forgiven him. Does this not remind us of the time when Jesus healed the man who was paralyzed? Not only did He heal him, but He also forgave his sins. Not all illnesses are connected with sin, but it does look like sometimes sin is closely linked to illness.

James goes on to add that we are to confess our sins to one another, and to pray for one another, so that we may be healed. This again, is something that is hardly practiced in the church today. He is not talking about confession to a priest, who then intercedes for that person to God. There's no room for that in Christianity as we have one mediator between God and man - Jesus (**1 Timothy 2:5**). He's talking about being as open in our relationship with one another as believers that we are able to talk about our faults and failings with each another, and pray for each another, so we can experience the healing from the hurts or illnesses that sin causes. Often, unconfessed, un-repent of sin has an impact on our minds, and in turn, on our bodies as well, and eventually it takes its toll on our health, resulting in sickness. He adds that when we pray for one another in this way, we will receive healing, both for our sins as well as for our sicknesses.

James goes on to add that when a righteous person (one who has been made righteous by God, and who is in close relationship with God), prays fervently for someone, those prayers are heard by the Lord, and results in God answering those prayers in powerful ways.

James 5:17-18

¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

James then goes on to make reference to a time in the life of the prophet Elijah, whom he says had a nature just like ours, meaning that there was nothing supernatural about Him. He says that when Elijah prayed earnestly that it would not rain on the earth for three and a half years, it did not rain, and when he prayed again that it would rain, it rained and the earth produced its fruit. The only thing that seems to be different between Elijah and most of us today is that he prayed earnestly,

whilst most of us don't pray so earnestly, but apart from that, he was just another ordinary person like we are.

James 5:19-20

¹⁹ Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, ²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

James then concludes his letter with an encouraging note to his readers (or listeners). He tells them to make every effort to help someone who has wandered from the truth, to come back to the fold. He says that if anyone helps a person turn from back his erroneous ways, then that person is actually saving that person's soul from eternal death, and also helping that person find forgiveness for all his sins. When one finds forgiveness for his sins, that's exactly what happens – that person's sins are covered, his life completely transformed, and he is headed for heaven, to live with God forever.

This seems a very good way to end a letter, with an encouragement to the believers to be there to help each other grow in their faith, and to bring those who go astray back to the fold.

If you were blessed by this Study on James, kindly share it with others so they too can be blessed.

May the Lord bless you, and have a good day or night.

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