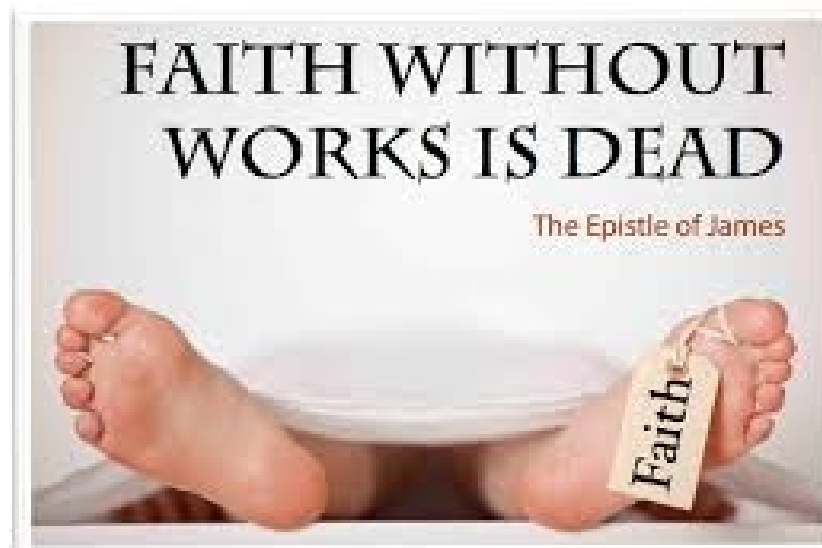


THE EPISTLE OF JAMES



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Beginning Nov 18, 2015

"THE EPISTLE OF JAMES"

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF OUTLINE (adapted from The Teacher's Commentary)

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INTRODUCTION

Date of Writing: The Book of James is probably the oldest book of the New Testament, written perhaps as early as A.D. 45, before the first council of Jerusalem in A.D. 50. James was martyred in approximately A.D. 62, according to the historian Josephus.

Special Feature: There are 22 Epistles and this one is written as an instruction book on Godly living. It is similar to the Book of Proverbs and the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

Key Verse:

“In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

James 2:17

Son of Mary:

1. Mary the wife of Joseph and the mother of Jesus (I believe #1 & 2 are the same)
2. Mary the wife of Cleophas or Alphaeus, who was the mother of James the bishop and apostle, and of Simon and Thaddeus, and of Joseph;
3. Mary Salome, wife of Zebedee, mother of John the evangelist and James;
4. Mary Magdalene.

The book of James has been the book that I often read to be reminded how to live in harmony with God’s will and others around me. I’ve been asked many times *“What is God’s will for my life?”* The best place to find that answer is in God’s Word. **God’s Will IS God’s Word.**

James is much like the scholarly work of the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament. We could call these books *“Practical Godly Living 101.”* Luther stigmatised it as *an “epistle of straw.”* What stands out is that just like an exquisite dessert there is an opportunity to savour each morsel. The word *“dessert”* comes from the French word *“desservir”* which means *“to serve”* or to *“clear the table.”* So lets clear the table of our menial thoughts so we are not cluttered with nonessential issues. There is so much to be gained if we would not only consume it but allow it to transform our thoughts, feelings and actions to become fashioned into the image of God.

“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

II Corinthians 3:18

INTRODUCTION (Contd.)

James clearly shows us how that transformation takes place. It's often not an easy journey. Honesty must prevail over excuses. We are shown that we cannot face the troubles of this world alone. We need each other. No one should see themselves better than the other. It reminds me of how the apostle Paul guided the early church (I Corinthians 12:12-26).

I hope you enjoy this dessert. The unique thing about it is that it is bitter at first and becomes sweet as it nourishes our minds and bodies. It is much like the bitter waters at Marah which the Israelites refused to drink (Exodus 15:22-27).

“The message for us is clear: Whatever the bitter obstacles that we encounter in life's journey we can count on God to transform them, to use/redeem them for good, as God leads us to Elim. When we cry our Marahs out to God, God is able to "sweeten" them, that is, to make them drinkable, to turn them into a resource for the next leg of the journey.”

[Steve Rodeheaver](#)

Just like the Israelites we need more than just deliverance from those who place us in bondage. We need freedom from grumbling, mumbling, bitterness, favouritism, boasting and even impatience to name a few items that are covered in this epistle.

Lets begin our journey into practical Godly living.

I. PRACTISING FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 1:1-2:13)

1:1 - "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ"

*"Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; **James the son of Alphaeus**, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him."*

Matthew 10:2-4

The same root of the word is used for "Jacob, Jake." According to Jerome and Eusebius he served (or was a bond-slave) as the Bishop of the first Christian Church in Jerusalem for 30 years. Scholars believe he was either the full blood brother of Jesus or half-brother. I believe he was a half-brother because I do not believe that Mary Cleophas was a perpetual virgin (Mark 6:1-3). Jerome believed that these were Jesus' cousins not his brothers and sisters and that is what the Roman Catholic teaches today. We agree that he was martyred.

"And James the son of Alphaeus, when preaching in Jerusalem was stoned to death by the Jews, and was buried there beside the temple."

*of Rome, Pseudo-Hippolytus
"On the Twelve Apostles" and
"On the Seventy Disciples"*

According to Fox's Book of Martyrs, James was beaten, stoned and clubbed to death. In another account, in order to make James deny Christ's resurrection, men positioned him at the top of the Temple for all to see and hear. James, unwilling to deny what he knew to be true, was cast down from the Temple and finally beaten to death with a fuller's club to the head.

James used our Lord's full name, **"the Lord Jesus Christ."** "Jesus" means "Saviour" and "Christ" is the Greek for "Messiah," "the Anointed."

"To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations" - This was also known as the dispersion. They were the Jewish Christians (Jews who accepted the teaching of Christianity) and lived in areas outside of Palestine. It also includes those who remained Jewish. They were scattered (not lost) because of the intense persecution that was targeted toward them. So they had become proselytized into the growing Christian church but they also remembered and respected their Jewish heritage. The twelve tribes are listed at the end of the final book (Revelation 7:5-8).

I. PRACTISING FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 1:1-2:13) (Contd.)

“Greetings” - This was a common form of salutation. It meant good will, a wish for prosperity, and a reminder to rejoice.

A. Personal implications: 1:2-18

1:2-4 - **“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything”**

“For a Christian, adversity bears a purpose, includes a provision, and possesses a glorious potential”

Kathy A. Hagan
“Passing Faith’s Tests with Love and Joy”
p. 11

“Consider it pure joy” - this is not just referring to joy but rather the highest level of joy (Gr. - grotius). This is quite a response to expect from us. Pleasure is not synonymous with Christian joy. Paul wrote the same thing in his epistle to the Romans,

*“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;
4. perseverance, character; and character, hope.
5. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”*

Romans 5:3-5

“face trials of many kinds,” - The word for **“face”** means to **“fall into”** by something that is surrounding us. The word for **“trials”** does not mean “temptations.” Our faith is not being tested because it is weak but rather because God knows our faith is strong enough and He is giving us (and those who watch us) another opportunity to prove the validity of our faith. A faith not tested has no way of being measured.

James tells us that **“whenever”** trials come NOT “if” they come. They WILL come! We will be tested in all areas of our lives (i.e. - financial, physical, spiritual, mental and social). No one will escape these trials. You may face one area more than the other but you can be assured that you will face trials.

I. PRACTISING FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 1:1-2:13) (Contd.)

A. Personal implications: 1:2-18 (Contd.)

When problems come our way we need to approach them with a seasoned judgement not just some flippant thought or remark. We gain experiential knowledge with these trials. We are not to focus so much on the trials as we should upon what we can benefit from them.

The difference between God's trials and the devil's temptations is that God endeavours to improve our graces while the devil tries to destroy them.

It will produce "*perseverance*" which means "*to hold one's ground in conflict, bear up under adversity, hold out under stress, persevere under pressure.*"

"But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."

Luke 8:15

"Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete" - The word used for "**mature**" is sometimes translated "*finished*" or "*perfect.*" Unfortunately some people who think they are mature are not. The word "**complete**" is made up of two words one meaning "whole" and the other meaning "part." A person can only say that they are "complete" if every part of their life is whole. It is our goal but like the Old Testament Law it cannot be fulfilled 100%. So all of us can improve on perseverance.

The word of "**complete**" is sometimes translated "**lacking in nothing.**" Scholars mention that it refers to not regressing or falling back into our old ways.

1:5-8 - "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do."

"you should ask God" - For those of us who feel frustrated trying to reach what continues to appear as an unreachable goal we are told to keep on asking from God. God loves to give us His precious gifts. Wisdom is one of His best gifts. Asking is just the beginning of receiving (Matthew 7:7-8).

I. PRACTISING FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 1:1-2:13) (Contd.)

A. Personal implications: 1:2-18 (Contd.)

“Make sure you don't go to the ocean with a teaspoon. At least take a bucket so the kids won't laugh at you.”

Jim Rohn

“who gives generously to all without finding fault” - God doesn't judge when we ask for wisdom unless we have an ulterior motive behind it (James 4:3). We could all use a generous dose of the wisdom of God each day.

“The knowledge of ignorance is the beginning of knowledge.”

Ancient Greek Maxim

“and it will be given to you.” - There are many scriptures that substantiate this truth but there often are conditions that need to be met (Jeremiah 29:12,13; Matthew 21:22; I John 3:22; 5:14).

“But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt” - Here are a few more prerequisites that we need to consider. The word for **“doubt”** means **“not to vacillate.”** It also means not to be divided against yourself. We must be careful not to waver in our belief that God will answer our prayers when we pray according to His will. Luther called this the best verse in this letter (cf. - Hebrews 11:6). This attitude of faith will release the powers of Jesus to make anything possible.

“like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.” - There are different types of “waves” in the Bible. This one is the kind that can cause us to be overwhelmed with unbelief and doubt (Luke 8:24). They are the dashing and surging type of waves that can come without warning. They work like a rogue wave. They can destroy belief like a tsunami does to land. This wave can change its direction without notice. This type of person either delays or never makes a choice to head in the direction God sets for them.

“That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord” - Belief is much more than just wishing for something. A wavering person receives very little and especially wisdom so they continue to create problems for themselves and others.

“Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.” - This kind of person is described in commentaries as having two souls or two minds (one led by faith while the other is led by the worldly influences). They are often wrongly controlled by passion and influenced by popular opinion. Their conduct changes with their surroundings like a chameleon.

I. PRACTISING FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 1:1-2:13) (Contd.)

A. Personal implications: 1:2-18 (Contd.)

1:9-11 - “ *Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10 But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. 11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.*”

“*Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position.*” - There are millions of Christians today who have little earthly possessions but yet are still a joint-heir with Christ. We can have a joyous pride based upon the right foundation. These people would be seen by the world as being poor both economically and socially. It is sometimes difficult for others to understand the spiritual riches within us.

“*since they will pass away like a wild flower*” - The hills around Bethlehem are carpeted with beautiful flowers in February but by the time May arrives they are nowhere to be found. It is a reminder that our wealth will separate from us at our time of death (Psalm 49:16f; Luke 12:13-34). The emphasis is upon a future event that will be totally completed.

“*For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed*” - The area of Palestine experiences a scorching wind called “a sirocco” which blasts the inhabitants with a scorching southeast wind both day and night. It dries up the wild plants even though the temperatures don’t rise that much.

“*In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.*” - The fading of the flowers is a yearly reminder of what can happen to our riches. It never seems to take long to dry them up (sickness, war, famine, robbery etc.). A rich person is impoverished without Christ in their life.

1:12 - “*Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.*”

Have you experienced the approval from God during your times of trials? God will prove to you who you really are by using trials (II Corinthians 10:18; 13:7; II Timothy 2:15). Just like during the Olympic games our Christian life is like a competitor. We are always striving to improve not with others but actually to pass our own records.

As a Christian it is vital that we learn to stand up and gain victory over our sinful ways. We gain this “*crown of life*” by overcoming through not only the **gift of salvation** but also the **life of sanctification**. To love God is to obey Him and His Word (I John 2:5,6; 5:3).

I. PRACTISING FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 1:1-2:13) (Contd.)

A. Personal implications: 1:2-18 (Contd.)

1:13-15 - *“When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”*

“For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone - God is invincible to sin and therefore sin has no part or control over Him. Tempting others to do evil requires a delight in evil. What bait is being used to lure you into a life of sinful words and action? Temptation needs a desire or as the Bible calls it “a lust” which entices us to take its bait.

“but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. - Just as one type of lure doesn't work with all fish the same applies with in our lives. That's why there are so many ways to fall away from God. We need to deal with both the **attractions** and **distractions** surrounding sin.

“Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” - Everything that is born will eventually die. It's vital that we don't give birth to anything that we don't want to see grow and eventually bring death to us.

“At first it is a mere thought confronting the mind, then imagination paints it in stronger colours; only after that we take pleasure in it, and the will makes a false move, and we give our ascent.”

Ronald A. Knox & Michael Oakley
“The Imitation of Christ” [1959]
p. 32

1:16 - *“Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.*

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,” - All the gifts we get in life are not good for us. Not all good gifts we receive are from God but God never sends us a bad gift - His are always good and perfect and sent by our Father in heaven. This *“perfect gift”* is given in response to a petition and is habitual by God.

I. PRACTISING FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 1:1-2:13) (Contd.)

A. Personal implications: 1:2-18 (Contd.)

“who does not change like shifting shadows” - Even in the heavens, though there is a variation of the planets, moons and sun's rotation there is still a constant or consistent orbit. The ERV puts it as *“shadow that is cast by turning.”* God does not change (Hebrews 13:8). He remains consistent like the noon day sun.

“He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.” - There is no doubt that all life comes from God but James is referring to the new life that we have when we are regenerated. We owe the beginning as well as the continuation of our spiritual life to God.

So just as God doesn't change no matter what circumstances He faces, then we should also remain stable especially during the times we believe our faith is being tested.

B. Interpersonal Implications: 1:19-2:13

1:19 - *“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. 21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.*

There is an old rabbinical saying *“The righteous speak little, and do much, the wicked speak much, and do nothing.”* God has given us two ears so we can hear more than we speak. Our ears are always ready to receive but God placed our tongue behind two rows of teeth to keep it properly encased. Solomon gave his generation and ours great wisdom in Proverbs 10:19; 13:3.

True righteousness is sown in an attitude controlled by peace not wrath (James 3:18). Wrath for the most part does not add any excellence to our character. Christians who are impatient with instruction and quick to pass judgement unto others do little to build up themselves, others or the kingdom of God. God does not give us the gift of anger or criticism to do His work. Anger uses up precious time to put out the fires it creates.

Just as we remove dirty clothes and wash them so do we need our soul to be continually washed through the Word of God. God's Word needs to be rooted into our lives with strong roots and kept nourished.

The book of James emphasises **deed over creed** and Godly example over our profession of faith. Becoming an actor of our faith is not something that is endorsed in the Word. We don't receive an **academy award** but rather a **crown of righteousness**.

I. PRACTISING FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 1:1-2:13) (Contd.)

B. Interpersonal Implications: 1:19-2:13 (Contd.)

1:22 - “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.”

There is no a thing as inactive faith. Faith is a verb. It is vital that we learn the Word of God and not bypass any of its truth if we expect to mature in our Christian walk. What parts of the Bible do you find the most difficult to obey?

Christians have been known to reason themselves into a state of carnal security. They try to twist God’s word to accommodate their sinful behaviour by foolishly saying that we serve a loving God. We also serve a just God. We need to not only mark our Bibles but also have our Bibles mark us.! Our society believes that everything is acceptable as long as the majority gives its approval.

It takes much more than attentively hearing the Word of God. We must practice what it says without trying to change it to accommodate the rapid decline of God’s unchanging standards. The Bible works as a mirror in three ways. First it helps us to examine ourselves to a standard that God has assigned for each of us. Secondly, the Bible is able to bring us to a place of restoration (John 15:3; Ephesians 5:26). Thirdly, a transformation can take place much like it did to King David when the prophet Nathan exposed his sinful action (II Samuel 12:13).

It is not just a **transformation** that takes place (Romans 12:2) but also a **transfiguration** because the same word is used in Matthew 17:2. The glory of our Lord Jesus Christ was not **reflected** on the Mount, it was **radiated** from Him. This brings a great happiness to our lives.

1:26 - “Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

The word used for “religious” is referring to an outward practice based upon an inward change. It is translated as “worship” in other areas. So we cannot pretend to worship God and not bridle our tongues or will be heading in all kinds of misguided directions – many of them leaving a trail of people who’ve been hurt. It becomes a worthless religion.

I. PRACTISING FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 1:1-2:13) (Contd.)

B. Interpersonal Implications: 1:19-2:13 (Contd.)

Pure religion is not surface deep. It does not deceive like fools gold or a cultured pearl can do in the hands of someone without an experienced eye.

Pure religion will lead us to become involved in the lives of those around us who are in need. This is repeated throughout the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 10:18; Isaiah 1:17). It only takes a casual glance in our world to see that many and perhaps most of the work to care for the orphans and widows is done by Christian organizations.

The final indication that we are truly Christian is that we keep ourselves (keep on keeping) from living the way that those who have rejected Christ live. The worldly system is full of greed, selfishness, ambition and pleasure. These things tend to pollute our soul. But this is not the end of the list of James makes. Let's see what else he cautions the church to be aware of.

2:1 - "My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?"

In that time (as in our time) there has been a desire to be noticed. We want to be honoured and praised for what we do. Jesus dealt with the problem in Luke 14:7-14. These verses actually forbid favouritism as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

The illustration used depicts someone having been "gold-fingered" which indicated many rings on his hand. The man would also have glittering, bright and shining garments. These could only be purchased by the rich. The contrast between the rich man and the poor man is significant. We should see each other as precious souls that Christ died for.

Our reaction to the poor man should not be glaring for everyone to clearly see. We should not isolate the poor man to a back seat while offering the head table to the rich man. This was also not to be done in the synagogues (and Messianic synagogues) according to Jewish custom where the court of law was held. Both men had to be dressed equally so there was no distinction between the rich and the poor and possibly given a different sentencing. A synagogue was a place of gathering for all people despite their standing in the community. Jewish writings also indicate that one was not suppose to sit while the other was left standing. God looks down on those who attempt to stand above us. Anything less than equality is considered evil.

I. PRACTISING FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 1:1-2:13) (Contd.)

B. Interpersonal Implications: 1:19-2:13 (Contd.)

2:5 - “Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?”

Salvation is not something we merit. It is by grace that we are saved (Ephesians 1:4-7; 2:8,9). God does not show favouritism (Acts 10:34) so neither should we who are created in His image. God has chosen many more who are poor in this world to be rich in their faith in God (I Corinthians 1:26-27). There is a way for those who are rich to act (I Timothy 6:17-18).

Jesus was betrayed by Judas who received 30 pieces of silver for his wrongdoing. King David was also rebuked by Nathan the prophet for taking Bathseba and having her husband killed (II Samuel 12:1-14).

The rich would often exploit the poor in the courts where they would influence the decision of the sentencing and make themselves even richer. We often are blasphemed along with the Lord because we are followers of Him (I Peter 4:14,16; Acts 18:6; I Timothy 1:13).

2:8 - “If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11 For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.”If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

The “*royal law*” could refer either to a law that would be fitting for a king or one that a king would make for his subjects. It could also refer to the king of all laws.

Loving our neighbour is taught throughout the Bible and given a high level (Leviticus 19:18; Romans 13:8-9; Galatians 5:14). The word for “*neighbor*” was expanded in meaning by Jesus to be anyone who is in need (Luke 10:25-37).

2:12 - “Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

I. PRACTISING FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 1:1-2:13) (Contd.)

B. Interpersonal Implications: 1:19-2:13 (Contd.)

Even though we are no longer living under the Law of Moses it led us to the freedom that we now live through Jesus. We need to live responsibly and be accountable for our words and actions (Romans 6:1-4).

Just because we are Christians doesn't mean that God won't judge us for our unmerciful acts. In fact, we should expect more judgement because we have a higher standard of living that Christ helps us to achieve. We have received so much mercy that we should also be merciful (Matthew 18:15-35).

Merciful living has overcome judgement. It is superior to any type of judgement. Mercy wins in the end. We can expect to earn mercy because we are merciful. But God also doesn't want us to be soft on sin. God is both merciful and just. Liberty is not a license to sin. Our beliefs should guide and control our actions. Some people live like Jonah with an exceptional theology against sinful actions but are lacking in forgiveness and mercy like Jonah was to those who repented in Nineveh.

II. PRINCIPLES OF FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 2:14-26)

2:14 - "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

We now come into a critical part of this epistle. Martin Luther condemned it by calling it a "letter of straw" that should be burnt in the fire. Those like Luther thought that it was teaching a false doctrine of Justification by Works instead of by Faith. The apostle Paul made it clear that a person is justified by faith without the works of the Law (Romans 3:28; Galatians 3:1-5). It seems much better to recognize that James was addressing the abuse of those who boasted they were living by faith but showing no fruit from what they believed. True faith does not subsist without works. James is not referring to a person's action before they are saved but rather the actions they take once God is given preeminence in their lives and they follow His will.

The illustration is of a person who actually becomes in need is used to further explain his thought of how we need to get involved with the needy around us. Food and clothing are basic necessities of life (I Timothy 6:8). We are told to especially be involved with others who have turned to God and are in need (Galatians 6:10; Matthew 25:40; I John 3:17,18).

II. PRINCIPLES OF FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 2:14-26) (Contd.)

“It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone.”

John Calvin

Our faith in God is useless if it is all talk and no walk. If our faith does declare itself through proper actions then it is a false declaration. We must not only know the doctrines of salvation but also submit to them and practise them. The life of every Christian should be one of balance. James reminds us three times of this truth (James 2:17,20,26). This is not insinuating that everyone who does good in our world is justified before God. Many philanthropists will spend eternity in hell.

The Bible tell us that Simon Magus “*believed and was baptised*” (Acts 8:13) but his actions proved that he had ulterior motives (Acts 8:14-23).

2:18 - “But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”

*** An old Scotsman operated a little rowboat for transporting passengers. One day a passenger noticed that the good old man had carved on one oar the word “*Faith*” and on the other oar the word “*Works*.” Curiosity led him to ask the meaning of this. The old man, being a well-balanced Christian and glad of the opportunity for testimony, said, “*I’ll show you.*”

So without saying another word, he dropped one oar and plied the other called “*Works*,” and they went around in circles. Then he dropped that oar and began to ply the oar called “*Faith*,” and the little boat just went around in circles again - this time the other way around, but still in a circle.

After that part of the demonstration, the old man picked up “*Faith*” and “*Works*,” and plying both oars together, sped swiftly over the water, explaining to his inquiring passenger, “*You see, that is the way it is in the Christian life. Human Works without Faith are useless, and Faith without works is also dead, getting you nowhere. But faith and works pulling together make for safety, progress, and blessing.*”

Bible Friend

II. PRINCIPLES OF FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 2:14-26) (Contd.)

A person can believe all they want that their money will make interest if they put it into a savings account but believing and acting upon it is much different. It takes action by starting up an account instead of keeping the money in our mattress. Some people think they're fine with faith "apart from deeds." God did not give us hands to sit upon them. He also didn't give us feet to be inactive (Romans 10: 15).

A person can be enlightened and understand about God and even be stirred in their heart but yet still be lost in their sin. We also must not be neither agnostic (nothing can be known about the existence of God) or atheistic (believes God does not exist). It is interesting that James explains that even demons believe in God and tremble.

2:20 - "You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. 24 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone."

James has a name for the kind of people who do not practise the works of God through faith. He calls them "**foolish.**" The word means "**empty**" as being void in understanding. It was a mild word that would still get the meaning across.

Abraham was a great example of someone who put his faith in action. It more than proved that he had faith in God. His faith was demonstrated by his unwavering act of obedience. Paul explained the **priority of faith** while James argued for the **proof of faith**. Faith finds fulfilment in our actions. Paul emphasized that Abraham was justified by his faith in God while James added the fact that his faith was evident by his works.

He was called a friend of God. A friend is not just one who declares loyalty but also proves it by his actions as David did with Jonathan (I Samuel 18:1). Our greatest love is shown if we are willing to lay our life down for our friends (John 3:16; 15:13,14).

2:25 - "In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."

Rahab was even a greater example in some ways because she acted on behalf of God and His people before her conversion. Jewish writers say she was a prostitute for 40 years from the age of 10 years old. She put her life in danger by hiding the spies and sending them off safely.

II. PRINCIPLES OF FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 2:14-26) (Contd.)

She proved she had a genuine faith not only by her clear statement of whom she believed God was (Joshua 2:11) but she demonstrated her faith through her actions. She was one of the four women included in the ancestry of the Messiah because of her active faith (Matthew 1:5) along with Tamar, Ruth and Bathsheba.

Christians are not the only ones who believe that our body without our spirit is dead. I found it interesting when I had my heart attack on Dec 29, 1995 that my heart did stop. When I asked the trauma nurse if I had died she told no, that just my heart had stopped before they used a defibrillator to get it going again. There must be a short period of time after our heart stops and before our spirit departs from our body.

III. PROBLEMS FOR FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 3-4)

A. Taming the tongue: 3:1-12

3:1 - “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. 2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.”

Some “teachers” need to learn more before taking on the role. I’ve met a number of people who declare that they have THE truth and they unfortunately draw disciples after them and their false teaching.

Teachers need to be careful what they teach because God will hold them even more responsible for the words they speak and the things they do. Due to the fact that this warning has not always been followed is why we have witnessed the media mocking the ministerial office.

The word translated “*perfect*” does not mean without fault. It is referring to someone who is an adult Christian who has been thoroughly instructed in the doctrines of the gospel. Paul refers to these mature Christians often (I Corinthians 14:29; Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:15; Colossians 4:12).

Nothing seems to trip up believers in God more than their tongue (Proverbs 12:18; 18:21). The word used to keep our body in check is to “bridle it.” This word is used to lead or guide, to rein in, to check and to restrain. Our tongue gives expression to our thoughts and passions that is why Jesus said it reveals what is in our heart (Matthew 12:34; cf. Matthew 5:8).

III. PROBLEMS FOR FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 3-4) (Contd.)**A. Taming the tongue: 3:1-12 (Contd.)**

3:3 - “When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”

In the context of those who wish to be teachers, James instructs them on how they should control their tongues. The illustration of a bit in a horse’s mouth is a captivating illustration. Horses are powerful animals especially when they are teamed up like the Clydesdale horses are. This breed grows anywhere from 1,800 - 2,200 pounds. It’s amazing that a small bit in its mouth can guide it and even stop it from going any further.

The same is true of large ships that are guided by a simple rudder. The largest cruise ships are Oasis of the Seas and the Allure of the Seas. They are both 332 metres in length, over 225,000 tons, they hold over 8200 passengers and cost around 1.4 Billion dollars to design and build. Yet it is both propelled and steered by 3 rotating Azipods each with a 20 foot propeller at the stern of the ship. It also uses 4 thrusters at the bow of the ship to help it dock in a parallel parking format. This elaborate navigational system allows it to manoeuvre through locks with just inches to spare on each side.

Our tongue, although a small part of our body, can cause destruction equal to that of a forest fire created by a single spark. One of the largest fires in our world took place in China along the Amur River which was called the Black Dragon. It burned 72,884 square kilometres. An unprecedented fire in East Sumatra, Indonesia claimed 97,000 square kilometres in 1982-83. The saying is true *“it only takes a spark to get a fire going.”* Our son Matthew said when he was young, *“I’d like to be a firefighter and a pastor when I grow up.”* I responded by saying *“They are kind of the same thing.”*

Our little tongue can defile our whole body so we are warned to use it wisely (Ecclesiastes 5:6; Psalm 39:1,3) . Many a church has been split apart by the unwise use of words that lead to gossip (Proverbs 12:18).

3:7 - “All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.”

III. PROBLEMS FOR FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 3-4) (Contd.)**A. Taming the tongue: 3:1-12 (Contd.)**

Many four-footed animals such as lions and bears have been tamed and used to entertain in circuses. Even birds have been trained to talk and perform certain actions. Anyone who has visited Seaworld have been amazed at how seals, dolphins and even killer whales have been trained to do various flips and turns and obey simple hand gestures.

Yet none of us can say we have tamed our own tongue. Only God can tame our speech. That's why we need to surrender our tongues to God (Psalm 39:1; 141:3). It is like a wild animal pacing back and forth and always wanting to escape from its cage. It also is able to bring death much like that of a venomous snake when it strikes its prey.

3:9 - *“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.”*

First of we need to see that use of the word “*we*” is all-inclusive. Both the Jews and Christians were used of blessing God. It meant to worship, to praise and to give thanks (Ephesians 1:3). Yet we can also fall into the lowest use of our tongue and curse others and thereby curse God because He made all of us. Have you ever thought that when you curse others you are also cursing God who created them? It is just not fitting for any of us to do. I've heard some say “*it's just me.*” Well then it is time to ask God to fill you with more of His image.

James now uses three illustrations from nature. The first is the clear distinction between sweet water and bitter water. There can only be one source from which any water flows from (lit - bursts from). The second illustration is that of a fruit bearing tree. God made every tree to bear the fruit He originally made for it (Genesis 1:11-12). Fig trees are meant to bear figs and olive trees are to bear olives. The same is true of a grapevine. He ends by repeating the thought of salt and fresh water in a reverse order.

B. Subduing the self: 3:13-4:10

3:13 - *“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”*

III. PROBLEMS FOR FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 3-4) (Contd.)

B. Subduing the self: 3:13-4:10 (Contd.)

The “*wise*” person is not referring to someone who has intellectual knowledge. This person has a moral insight on the practical manners of life. The “*knowledge*” describes someone who is sensible. These type of people carefully consider before they speak or act.

We must demonstrate or show forth or give evidence of what we believe. It IS proper for others to be “*fruit inspectors*” of our lives. Hopefully they don't find sour grapes. We are told by the Lord to walk through a narrow gate and walk upon the straight or narrow pathway (Matthew 7:13,14).

The kind of life we should be displaying is one of humility (meekness - Matthew 5:5) which is the opposite of being arrogant. It is a genuine humility with an awareness that we all stand unworthy before God. He makes us worthy. It is power under control like a horse that has been broken in.

God does not accept a spirit of contention. Nothing makes a teacher more unfit for God to use than someone who boasts or denies that they are contentious and forcefully unkind to others. This kind of wisdom comes from carnal, ungodly thinking. It is devilish. It produces strife and brings division to the body of Christ. It is part of the seven detestable things that God hates (Proverbs 6:16-19).

These things lead to an unsettledness and agitation instead of bringing peace and harmony. It also tends to bring instability and selfishness. It brings the works of God to a halt because of its evil foundation. History has proven the disastrous outcome that takes place when the Church becomes arrogant and self-centred. It brought about the dark ages.

"Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.
Great men are almost always bad men."

[John Action](#)

3:17 - “*But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.*”

God's wisdom begins with purity or holiness. It not only make us peace makers (Matthew 5:9) but also lovers of peace. It also makes us gentle, not stubborn, full of mercy, containing good fruit, not easily swayed and not hiding behind a mask.

III. PROBLEMS FOR FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 3-4) (Contd.)

B. Subduing the self: 3:13-4:10 (Contd.)

“The meaning here is, that the first and immediate effect of religion is not on the intellect, to make it more enlightened; or on the imagination, to make it more discursive and brilliant; or on the memory and judgment, to make them clearer and stronger; but it is to purify the heart, to make the man upright, inoffensive, and good.”

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Peace is sown in peace. It has little harvest in the midst of contentions, uprisings and strife. It is just like a farmer. Farmers don't sow into their fields if they expect an army to use it as a fighting field. They know that their work will be in vain because their fields will be destroyed and all their hard work in preparing the fields and sowing the seed will be lost.

The opposite is true for those who sow peace into peace. The seed whose fruit is righteousness will blossom in the midst of God's peace.

4:1 - “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

History records that the Jews of this time period were divided between themselves and they often arose in violent contentions where they massacred and plundered. They also had many insurrectionists who rose up in Alexandria, parts of Egypt, Syria.

Today as we live in a world filled with contention and strife it makes it much more difficult not to get involved at least to a certain level to object to injustice. This was also true during the time of the early church. It was difficult to change from their old habits. Jesus came to demonstrate remarkable changes but these could only begin once they accepted Christ in their lives and allowed the Holy Spirit to guide them into a new life. The best way to reduce the battles within is to invite the Prince of Peace into our heart.

III. PROBLEMS FOR FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 3-4) (Contd.)

B. Subduing the self: 3:13-4:10 (Contd.)

When we consider the reason for most wars we see that much of it is because one nation covets what the other has. They will kill, loot, burn and destroy those they attack. It becomes a vicious circle of hardship and pain.

Even though most wars have been done in the name of God, He seldom is ever called upon in our day and age until we get ourselves into a mess that we can't escape. Every leader convinces their people that they are good ones and they need to overcome the evil of the other nations.

*“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil,
who put darkness for light and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.”*

Isaiah 5:20

God will not answer our prayers the way we hope He would if we have an ulterior motive. That does not mean that we won't get what we don't desire. Mankind is very creative in getting that we want and convincing ourselves that it is a direct result of our faith when it is rather our foolishness. We have built many a tower that has fallen. The word used for “*pleasures*” is the same word used in verse one translated “*desires*.” It refers to our sensual pleasures and carnal appetites which will lose their pleasure over time.

4:4 - “You adulterous people don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

“How strange it is that people professing Christianity can suppose that with a worldly spirit, worldly companions, and their lives governed by worldly maxims, they can be in the favour of God, or ever get to the kingdom of heaven! When the world gets into the church, the church becomes a painted sepulchre; its spiritual vitality being extinct.”

Adam Clarke's Commentary
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III. PROBLEMS FOR FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 3-4) (Contd.)

B. Subduing the self: 3:13-4:10 (Contd.)

“The "friendship of the world" (filia tou kosmou) is the love of that world; of the maxims which govern it, the principles which reign there, the ends that are sought, the amusements and gratifications which characterize it as distinguished from the church of God.”

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The description of an adulterous person is often associated with those who worship idols and forsake God. So these people had left their love for God and broken the marriage covenant we had with Him like the church in Ephesus did (Revelation 2:4). We cannot be lovers of the world and its evil ways and be a lover of God at the same time (I John 2:15; Colossians 2:8).

In fact, we will be in a hostile war against God. Just like a hockey player we cannot play on both sides at once. We can only wear one jersey at a time and represent the team we play for. Once we're "traded" it doesn't take long for work to get around. Our commitment needs to move with us.

“There are four dangerous steps that take the believer into a wrong relationship with the world: (1) friendship with world, James 4:4; (2) being soiled by the world, James 1:27; (3) love with the world, 1 John 2:15-17; (4) conformity to the world, Romans 12:1-2.”

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It seems right to believe that the spirit spoken of is our spirit that has been reborn and is in unity with God's Holy Spirit. There is no known Scripture that James is quoting from but the truth is shown (Psalm 42:1-2; 63:1; 84:2).

As in Proverbs 3:4 we are reminded that God loves those humble themselves before Him and He will lift them up (James 4:10).

III. PROBLEMS FOR FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 3-4) (Contd.)

B. Subduing the self: 3:13-4:10 (Contd.)

4:7 - “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Submitting to God is a military term meaning to **“get into your proper rank.”** People who are unsubmitive and uncommitted never do well in a church. We should stand against the things the devil tempts us to do and stand up to the things that God wants us to do. We should not let the devil get a foothold in our lives (Ephesians 4:27) so he can gain ground on us. King David allowed the enemy to find a foothold of power over others and lust for another man’s wife. It removed God’s peace and even brought about physical pain (Psalm 32; 51).

God draws near(er) to those who decide to draw near(er) to Him (II Chronicles 15:2).

“The more we are Like God, the nearer we are to God. I may be sitting in my living room with my Siamese cat on my lap, and my wife may be twenty feet away in the kitchen; yet I am nearer to my wife than to the cat because the cat is unlike me. We have very little in common.”

Quoted from Dr. A.W. Tozer
“*The Bible Exposition Commentary*”
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The Israelites were used of washing their hands as an indication of being cleansed of the sin in their lives (Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 21:6; Psalm 26:6). The washing of the hands means nothing if someone doesn’t allow God to purify their hearts. Internal secrets and corruptions within our heart will just make us a hypocrite if we try to act like someone we are not.

Anyone with a double mind is wavering between two opinions. They are not fully attached to either so they can be pulled in many directions. These types of people are unstable in all of their ways (James 1:8).

There is a time when mourning is more appropriate than joyfulness is (Ecclesiastes 3:4). The word to describe **“gloom”** speaks of a cast down countenance as it were on the ground.

III. PROBLEMS FOR FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 3-4) (Contd.)

B. Subduing the self: 3:13-4:10 (Contd.)

“All who feel true sorrow for sin, do so voluntarily; but it is not intended by this assertion to insinuate that repentance is not the work of the Spirit. He operates on men without destroying their freedom, or doing violence to their will.”

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Humility can be likened to a tree that must have a deep root system in order to grow up and spread its limbs. Otherwise it will not endure when the winds blow against it. Humility is often linked to being lifted up but the order is very important (I Peter 5:6).

The lifting up that we receive from God in this life is incomparable to what will happen when we receive our eternal rewards in heaven.

C. Judging the judge: 4:11-12

4:11 - “Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?”

Speaking evil of someone else is closely linked to the same attitude that exalts itself above another person. Jesus taught us to love our neighbours as ourselves (Mark 12:31) even if they are a Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

There is a big difference in maintaining a Christian discernment of what is evil (I Thessalonians 5:21-22; I John 4:1-6) and becoming judgmental of others and questioning their motives (Matthew 7:1-5). God is the only one who can truly judge others and yet He doesn't become judgmental (Genesis 18:25). We should also not fall into the trap of becoming an investigator of other people's sins. Lawgivers never make close friends for long.

I remember asking God one time why I should not be judging others. The answer came months later. It is because we cannot pass on the sentence. We need to devote ourselves to obeying the Law of God and stop investigating how well others are following it.

III. PROBLEMS FOR FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 3-4) (Contd.)

C. Judging the judge: 4:11-12 (Contd.)

An alternative translation for this verse is:

“God is the one who gave this law, and he will judge us according to it. He alone has the power to save us or destroy us. So you certainly have no right to condemn your fellow Christians.”

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D. Humbling the haughty: 4:13-17

4:13 - “Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. 17 If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.”

The final area dealt within this chapter is that of assumption. A person would actually point to a place on a map to state how sure they were at going there to make money. Jewish merchants would often travel to other locations to sell or trade their supplies. We should never think that we have control over our day because only God does.

“He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.”

George Orwell, 1984

No one should place the price of things they own over the value of their soul (Matthew 16:26). A mist is very unpredictable because the sun doesn't take long to vaporise it. We should instead place our whole dependency upon God. He appoints the day of our lives and our death (Job 14:5).

We seldom anticipate failures in our lives even though there are numberless casualties that can strike us at any moment. We are never secure in our future if we don't include God. Anyone who thinks they have control over their lives are arrogant in God's sight.

III. PROBLEMS FOR FAITH'S LIFESTYLE: (James 3-4) (Contd.)

D. Humbling the haughty: 4:13-17 (Contd.)

Acting in a good manner entails many things so there are plenty of areas in our lives where we can sin without recognizing it. In the Old Testament there were sins of omission which were sins committed because we didn't do something we should have done. There are also sins of commission which are sins we commit even though we clearly know that we are not supposed to do them. These are outright acts of disobedience.

The reason God has placed these limitations in our lives is for our own good. The sooner we realize it, the sooner we will live a life with more pleasure and less painful experiences.

IV. PROSPECTS AND PROMISES FOR FAITH: (James 5:1-19)

A. Future redress: 5:1-6

5:1 - Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

James is not referring to every rich person but only those who have been unjust and oppressive in this ways. Wealth must be acquired in a proper way before God. Money in itself is not evil but the love of it can lead many astray (I Timothy 6:12). . It is one thing to have riches in our hand while it is something quite different to have riches in our heart.

Those who ***“weep and wail”*** do so because they are expressing a deep distress. They would not just burst into tears but also howl and wail over the condition they found themselves with. Wealth is easily lost because many things can change rapidly that we have no control over.

Charlie Sheen was one of the highest paid actors but he came to an abrupt reality when he had to declare that he had contacted aids and knew about it for two years. He wasted his money on foolish things and thought he wouldn't pay the consequences. Much of this money will be used up in court cases. He was wrong and many others like him have died a terrible death. It is a big mistake to hoard our wealth thinking it will give us security in the last days. Gold and silver are considered as precious metals. Although they will not rust they will corrode.

IV. PROSPECTS AND PROMISES FOR FAITH: (James 5:1-19)(Contd.)**A. Future redress: 5:1-6 (Contd.)**

Those who make money on the backs of those they hire by not giving a fair wage will eventually catch up with them (Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:15). God keeps accurate records of both the right things we do as well as our wrongs that we don't confess and turn away from. Not paying people fairly is condemned by God (Proverbs 3:27,28; Deuteronomy 24:15; Malachi 3:5).

During the days of the harvests the rich would slaughter a lamb. The meat would have to be eaten quickly or it would have to be dried and salted. God is against those who lavish themselves with riches and care not for those who are in need around them (Amos 6:4-7). They are likewise "fattening themselves" for their day when they will stand before God and face the inevitable judgment.

The poor had a disadvantage in the courts over the rich. They would buy a good deal for themselves but the poor would be treated often with disrespect. It even brought about the death of those who were innocent in a way of covered up the ones who were guilty.

B. Present resources: 5:7-19

5:7 - 'Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9 Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! 10 Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

To "**be patient**" means to be "**longsuffering**" in such a way that we don't allow our patience to become exhausted. We need to continue until the Lord comes to bring justice to the entire earth.

Just like a farmer needs to understand that there is a season to plant, followed by a season of waiting before the harvest is ready, so we need to also wait with patience. The farmer plants his seed in the fall as the rain begins to fall lightly but steadily. It is followed by a more intense rain after the fields are planted. Rain or snow continues throughout the winter. As the spring arrives the rain intensifies and bring the crop to its point of harvest. This is why preachers have often spoken about being patient while we wait for the latter rain to fall so God can bring in His harvest of souls.

IV. PROSPECTS AND PROMISES FOR FAITH: (James 5:1-19) (Contd.)

B. Present resources: 5:7-19 (Contd.)

We need to be patient through the “winter” times of our lives. God will be faithful to His promise. He said He would come the first time and He did when He was born of the virgin Mary. He also said He was coming again and we can trust Him to keep His Word.

James tells us not to grudge which also means not to sigh or grumble at others who have more than we do and seem to be given things unevenly. It is wrong to pick a quarrel with them. We need to live a life of contentment no matter what God has given to us (Luke 3:14; Philippians 4:11; I Timothy 6:8; Hebrews 13:5).

A judge who is standing at our door is ready to apply the judgment of the sentencing that has been already determined.

5:12 - “Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.”

5:13 - “Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

5:17 - “Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. 19 My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.