

Rushmore's  
Notes on the  
Book of James

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# Introduction

The Book of James is the “...first of the general letters—i.e., those adduced to the Church in general, as distinguished from Paul’s letters, addressed to particular churches or individuals” (*Jamieson*).

## Author

Several New Testament persons bore the name James. Guy N. Woods notes three such Bible characters whereas other commentators suppose that there were at least four or five (Coffman) known as James.

...[T]here are at least three men prominently mentioned in the New Testament named James: (1) James, son of Zebedee and Salome, brother of John and one of the apostles of the Lord (Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19; Luke 5:10); (2) James the Less, son of Alphaeus, and also an apostle (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13); (3) James, a brother in the flesh of Christ (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Gal. 1:18, 19). (11)

By the process of elimination, many students of the Bible ascertain that the author of the Book of James is the fleshly, half-brother of Jesus Christ. The apostle James, son of Zebedee, is not the author of the Book of James since he was slain “...long before the book of James was written. (Acts 12:1, 2.)” (Woods 11). “...James the son of Zebedee was martyred under Herod Agrippa I, not later than the spring of A.D. 44...” (Thiessen 274). Respecting the identity of the author of the Book of James, Woods further observes:

He was *not* James son of Alphaeus, for that James was an apostle. (Matt. 10:2-4). The brothers of Christ—sons of Mary and Joseph—did not believe in him until *after* his resurrection (John 7:5); obviously, James, son of Alphaeus, could not have been an apostle and an unbeliever at the same time. Of those mentioned in the New Testament by this name, but one other “James” remains who could have penned the Epistle; James, son of Mary and Joseph, brother in the flesh of our Lord and of “Jude,” author of another New Testament book designated *Jude*. ...Actually, the issue turns on the

identity of “the brethren” of the Lord (Matt. 13:55), “the Lord’s brother” (Gal. 1:18, 19). The “James” in the list of those thus designated was evidently the author of the book bearing this name. (11-12)

In summary of the foregoing, since he died before the Book of James was penned, James the son of Alphaeus could not be the author of the Book of James. The author of the Book of James who does not claim for himself apostolic authority is commonly believed to be the prominent James of the Jerusalem church. The prominent James of the Jerusalem church is styled as “James the Lord’s brother” in Galatians 1:19. The Lord’s brother James (Matthew 13:55) was an unbeliever (John 7:5) when the apostles were selected by Jesus (Matthew 10:2-4). Therefore, the prominent James of the Jerusalem church was not an apostle of Christ and was rather the fleshly-half brother of Jesus Christ and brother of the Jude who wrote the book bearing his name (Jude 1:1).

Further, early Christian writers who lived in the second century cite James the brother of Jesus Christ, who they distinguish from the apostles of Christ, as the author of the Book of James (Woods 14). Thiessen notes that were the Book of James attributed to an apostle, rather than the non-apostle, brother of Jesus, it would have been more readily accepted. “The hesitation of some to accept the Epistle would be strange, if it had been reputed to be of Apostolic authorship” (274).

One commentator observes that only two persons were ever considered as the possible authors of the Book of James, and it simply was not possible for the one to have authored the epistle.

Of the numerous men bearing this name in the New Testament, only two have been proposed as the author of this epistle—James, son of Zebedee, and James, the Lord’s brother. The former is an unlikely candidate. He was martyred in A.D. 44 AD, and there is no evidence that he had attained a position of leadership in the church that would warrant his writing a general letter. (*Wycliffe*)

The James who wrote the Book of James was prominent in the Lord’s church at Jerusalem in the first century. When the apostle Peter escaped jail with angelic assistance, he assuredly referred to the James who was prominent in the Jerusalem church, who was also the brother of Jesus (Galatians 1:19) as well as the author of the Book of James,

when he directed some brethren to apprise other brethren and James of his freedom (Acts 12:17). He chaired the meeting in Jerusalem respecting the question raised by Judaizing teachers about Gentile converts (Acts 15:13-29). James and the elders of the Jerusalem church advised Paul prior to Paul's visit to the Temple mount (Acts 21:18-24). Jesus Christ appeared to James after his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7). "About A.D. 35 or 36 this James was still in Jerusalem and had a visit from Paul when the latter returned from his three years' stay in Damascus and Arabia (Gal. 1:18, 19; cf. Acts 9:26)" (274-275). "Later some Jews, professing Christians, came to Antioch in Syria in the interests of a Judaistic Gospel; they represented themselves as coming 'from James' (Gal. 2:12)" (275).

## To Whom Written

The addressees of the Book of James compares to the addressees of 1 Peter: "...to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad..." (James 1:1); "...to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1). Especially in the Book of James, reference "to the twelve tribes" has a decidedly Jewish tone; yet, are the addressees in these two books scattered persons of Jewish descent (a literal application) or do they represent *spiritual Jews* irrespective of Jewish or Gentile descent (a figurative application)? Guy N. Woods observes that the Book of James is remiss if it were penned to unbelieving Jews since the epistle makes no attempt to convert unbelieving Jews to Christianity, and the volume is remiss if it were penned to Gentile pagans since it makes no attempt to convert them to Christianity either. Therefore, the Book of James must be written for Christians, and Christians by the time the epistle was penned represented converts from among Jews and Gentiles.

On the whole, the most reasonable and satisfactory view of the matter is that the Epistle was addressed to Christians, many of whom were of Jewish descent and perhaps widely scattered. ...We thus regard the statement, "the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion," to be a figurative significance, comparable to Paul's "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), and to embrace Christians, whether of Jewish or Gentile descent. (Woods 16-17)

*Wycliffe*, likewise, understands James to be addressed to first century Christians, though perhaps predominately to Jewish Christians. “James was writing to the entire church, considered as the New Israel (cf. Gal 3:7-9; 6:16; Phil 3:3), dispersed in an alien and hostile world (cf. 1 Peter 1:1,17; 2:11; Phil 3:20; Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22; 13:14). There are many indications in the epistle, however, that it is addressed primarily to Jews who are Christians. Especially the following passages identify the Israel today in whom God has an intense interest—not merely physical Israel.

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. (Rom. 2:28-29)

Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. (Rom. 9:6-8)

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal. 3:26-29)

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. (Gal. 6:15-16)

Reference in the New Testament to the twelve tribes with then contemporary application is accommodative and figurative. Ten of the twelve tribes of Israel vanished into Assyrian captivity in 721 B.C., from which as a unit they never returned. Instead, those captives were settled amidst Gentiles among whom they integrated and lost their ethnicity as well as their national identity; remnants of the northern

kingdom of Israel still in Canaan intermarried with Gentile immigrants and gave rise to the Samaritan race. Therefore, when Jesus responded to Peter's query in Matthew 19:28 and referred to "the twelve tribes of Israel," our Lord used figurative language and did not acknowledge the literal existence of the twelve Jewish tribes. Hence, there will not be twelve literal thrones in heaven over which the 14 apostles of the 13 apostleships rule. Likewise, "the twelve tribes" of James 1:1 could not refer literally to tribes of Israelites that no longer existed—then or now.

## **Canonicity & Inspiration**

The canonicity of the Book of James was certain soon after it was penned, at least to those who were best qualified to evaluate it most critically—Jewish Christians. MacKnight observes that this general epistle was embraced not long after it was written and before other general epistles attained wide acceptance as the Word of God.

That the epistle of James was early esteemed an inspired writing, is evident from the following fact: That while the second epistle of Peter, the second and third of John, the epistle of Jude, and the Revelation, are omitted in the first Syriac translation of the New Testament, which was made in the beginning of the second century for the use of the converted Jews, the epistle of James hath found a place therein, equally with the books which were never called in question. This is an argument of great weight. For certainly the Jewish believers, to whom that epistle was addressed and delivered, were much better judges of its authenticity than the converted Gentiles, to whom it was not sent, and who, perhaps, had no opportunity of being acquainted with it till long after it was written. (583)

Coffman notes that the Epistle of James was recognized by contemporaries of the apostles as divinely inspired as well as quoted by them. "Clement of Rome, who was contemporary with the apostles, quoted from it three times in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, referring to James 1:8; James 2:21-24 and James 4:6,7."

Thiessen speaks to the probable authenticity of the Book of James respecting it as an unsuitable candidate for counterfeiting. "There is no adequate reason for a forgery; for the Epistle is without much doctrinal

content and a forger would far more likely have chosen the name of an outstanding Apostle than that of the more obscure name of James, the Lord's brother" (273).

The reformer, Martin Luther, doubted the authenticity of the Book of James nearly 1,500 years after it was written. His reason for dismissing the epistle was theological; he thought that James and books written by the apostle Paul contradicted each other. "Luther's objection ('an letter of straw, and destitute of evangelic character') was due to his mistaken idea, that James 2 opposes justification by faith, not by works, taught by Paul. But the two apostles, while looking at justification from distinct standpoints, harmonize and mutually complement the definitions of one another" (*Jamieson*).

The inspiration of this James, the author of the Book of James, is apparent from his prominence in the Jerusalem church, in which were the inspired apostles, and the reference by James to the collaboration with the Holy Spirit respecting the question occasioned by the Judaizing teachers (Acts 15:19, 28). Further, the Book of Acts, written by Luke, author also of the Gospel According to Luke, attests to the inspiration of James through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit with which Luke recorded the actions and statements of James in Acts 15.

The Book of James shows remarkable harmony with both the recorded teachings of Jesus Christ as well as the writings of the apostle Paul (despite Martin Luther's complaint and imagined contradiction between Paul and James). In the introduction in his commentary to the epistle, Burton Coffman painstakingly parallels the Jesus and James, plus Paul and James.

Perhaps the most frequent complaint lodged against the Book of James is that it mentions neither the resurrection nor the Second Coming of our Lord; the criticism, though, is shallow and remiss in not recognizing the implications of some things that do appear in the volume. Others protest that too little reference to Jesus Christ occurs in the volume. "The resurrection of Christ is inherent in the promise of his coming again (James 5:7,8); the doctrine of the deity of Christ is inherent in James 1:1" (Coffman). Some would shortchange the Book of James, when, as Coffman observes, it is as varied on Christian doctrine as any Bible book, plus it has the most thorough treatment of some subjects anywhere in the Bible (e.g., temptation, faith).

## Date and Martyrdom

Woods notes the futility of precisely identifying the date the Book of James was written, and that the date of writing is immaterial compared to the obvious divine content of the volume.

It is not possible to fix the date of the Epistle of James with any degree of certainty, and any effort to this end is little more than surmise. ...Evidently written between A.D. 40 and A.D. 65, and perhaps between A.D. 44 and A.D. 65, any effort to fix a definite date therein is no more than a guess. Fortunately, the truth of the Epistle and its value to us are not dependent on the date when it was written, and it is therefore not necessary for us to determine it exactly. (18-19)

The most outstanding event in the first century in Palestine respecting the *secular historical record* was the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. Consequently, every other event affecting Palestine in the first century is dated with consideration of its occurrence before or after that date.

There is no reference to the fall of Jerusalem in the Epistle, which means that it must have been written before that event occurred or a considerable time after it. If James wrote the Epistle, then we must date it before A.D. 62 or 63, for according to Josephus that was the time when he was killed. The internal evidence points to a date still earlier than this. (Thiessen)

James was martyred at the Passover. The letter was probably written just before. The destruction of Jerusalem, foretold James 5:1, etc., ensued a year after his martyrdom, (69 AD) Hegesippus (quoted in Eusebius, ii., 23) narrates that he was set on a pinnacle of the temple by the scribes and Pharisees, who begged him to restrain the people, who were in large numbers embracing Christianity. ...James was cast down headlong by the Pharisees, ...he was stoned and beaten to death with a fuller's club. (*Jamieson*)

Barnes also notes the hopelessness of discovering the exact year when the Book of James was written, only that apparently the epistle was penned before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (10).

## **Where Written**

The analysis of Guy N. Woods respecting the location from which the Book of James was penned is compelling.

Though the place of composition is not specifically indicated by the author, certain incidental allusions enable us to determine with a fair degree of certainty where the Epistle of James was written. The reference of the writer to the “early and latter rain” (James 5:7), is a strong intimation that it was written in the land of Palestine. This division of the rainy season was characteristic of the land, and quite familiar to all who lived, or ever had lived, there. The “early rain” generally came during the period from October to February, and following the fall sowing of wheat; the “latter rain” came during March and April, and just before the grain ripened for harvest. It was a land which often suffered droughts, with accompanying famines from insufficient rainfall. (5:7, 8) There were springs which produced sweet water; others gave forth only salt water (3:11); and the land produced wine, figs and oil (3:12). It was a country located near the sea (3:4; 1:6); and the dreaded simoon, a scorching, blasting east wind from the deserts was well known to author and readers. These considerations point to Palestine as the land in which the author lived; and, inasmuch as James is prominently mentioned in connection with the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13-21), it seems reasonable to suppose that the Epistle was written from Jerusalem in the land of Palestine. (19)

Albert Barnes makes the same observations respecting the likelihood of the Book of James having been written from Jerusalem in Palestine (Barnes 9-10).

## Purpose of the Book

Thiessen outlines the purpose of the Book of James respecting various subjects in order throughout the five chapters.

(1) he admonishes his readers to take a right attitude towards trials and temptations (1:2-18) and (2) exhorts them to receive the Word properly (1:19-27); (3) he forbids them to show partiality to others (2:1-13); (4) he demonstrates to them the insufficiency of faith without works (2:14-16); (5) he warns them against the sins of the tongue (3:1-12); (6) he sets forth the nature of true and false wisdom (3:13-18); (7) he rebukes them for quarrelsomeness, worldliness, and pride (4:1-10); (8) he instructs them to be considerate toward their brethren (4:11, 12) ; (9) he upbraids them for their attitude and conduct in their business life (4:13-5:6); (10) he exhorts them to patient endurance of the ills of life (5:7-12); (11) he tells them what to do in times of affliction (5:13-18); and (12) he points out the importance of restoring an erring brother (5:19, 20). (278)

The Book of James is one of those especially pragmatic or practical books of the Bible that lend themselves to immediate application in godly living. Consequently, it has been called “the Gospel of Common Sense” (Woods 18). Like the Book of Proverbs, numerous topics with no obvious organizational pattern are daisy-chained together. “In the true spirit of the Wisdom literature, James handles many different subjects. His short, abrupt paragraphs have been likened to a string of pearls- each is a separate entity in itself. There are some logical transitions, but for the most part transitions are abrupt or missing entirely. This phenomenon makes an outline in the usual sense impossible” (*Wycliffe*).

# Topics/Events Per Chapter

Chapter One: Temptation explained, 13-15.

Chapter Two: Royal law, 8; law of liberty, 12; dialogue on faith, 14-26.

Chapter Three: Caution for teachers, 1; dialogue about the tongue, 2-12.

Chapter Four: Faulty prayers, 3; friendship with the world, 4; resist devil and he will flee, 7; brevity and frailty of life, 13-15; moral obligation to do good, 17.

Chapter Five: Patience, 7-11; fervent prayer, 14-18; second law of pardon, 19-20.

# James Chapter One

**1:1** “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting” (KJV).

The humble attitude with which the fleshly, half brother of Jesus Christ began his epistle is evident since he did not rely on name recognition of his famous sibling to promote the Book of James. (Refer back to the introduction to these notes for treatment of the identity of the author of this epistle.) Rather, as Guy N. Woods observed in his commentary, James essentially permitted the obvious canonicity of the writing to vouch for itself. “Though a brother of Christ, in the flesh, he chose to identify himself simply as ‘a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ’ (James 1:1), and to urge acceptance of his message on the grounds of inspiration and truth, rather than only any fleshly relationship to Christ” (16).

Though James was prominent in the Jerusalem church (see the introductory notes), he nevertheless was only a humble servant of the King. Fream denotes by James’ reference to himself as “servant” he intended to *demote* himself and *promote* Jesus Christ. “It is thus not a means of elevating the author above other men because of his relationship with God” (12).

No one today either, irrespective of his or her attainments or the prestige with which he or she may be esteemed, ought to think more of himself than the way in which James represented himself in this opening verse of the Book of James. Our Lord Jesus so instructed and the apostle Peter, among others, inscribed the same heavenly principle in his inspired writing. “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10). “And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all” (Mark 10:44). “...be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:5-6). The New Testament writers commonly referred to themselves and other Christians as servants of Christ (Acts 4:29; Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Col. 4:12; Titus 1:1; Jude 1).

“**James**” Woods notes that the name, James “...is the equivalent of the Old Testament name *Jacob*... (23).

**“Servant”** The *New King James Version* (NKJV) instead of the word “servant” has the word “bondservant,” signaling the degree of servitude equivalent to being a “slave.” The Greek word for servant here is *doulos* (doo’-los), which means, “a slave (literal or figurative, involuntary or voluntary; frequently, therefore in a qualified sense of subjection or subserviency)” (Strong). Woods adds that it “...means one ‘who gives oneself up wholly to another [sic] will,’ serving to the complete disregard of one’s own selfish interests” (23-24). The word *doulos* appears 127 times in the New Testament and is translated in all instances as “servant” except in 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 6:8, Colossians 3:11, Revelation 13:16 and Revelation 19:18 where it is translated “bond.”

*Barnes’ Notes* records of *doulos* at Romans 1:1: “It expresses the condition of one who has a master, or who is at the control of another. ...The apostle [Paul in Romans 1:1 as does James in James 1:1] uses it here evidently to denote his acknowledging Jesus Christ as his master...he intended to assume no authority of his own, but simply to declare the will of his master...”

Likewise, all conscientious Christians never forget that Jesus is their Master for whom they gladly and tirelessly serve as slaves. Slaves do not attempt to negotiate with their masters, and they are not at liberty to decide for themselves matters that their masters have specified already; Jesus Christ is the Lawgiver (Jam. 4:12) and we mortals are either lawbreakers (1 John 3:4) or those who abide in “the perfect law of liberty” (Jam. 1:25). Further, zealous Christians are slaves to Christ willingly! However, many contemporary Christians appear to regret that they voluntarily indentured themselves to their Master, Jesus Christ. Fream descriptively contrasts the sometimes-involuntary slave of the first century world with the voluntary Christian slave to Jesus.

Bondslaves in the Roman empire were sometimes bound by an iron neckband. The iron collar was welded around the neck. Only a blacksmith could remove it - and no blacksmith dared remove it for it was the mark of a slave! Wonderful Jesus: I am His bondslave, with the band of His love about my heart. Only I have the key. No one, other than myself, can remove it. “Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate

us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39). Although no creature can steal me from my Lord, yet, I may, if I so desire, unlock the band and slip away to the pigpens of this world. Of my own free will, I am His bondslave. He made me, and He purchased me. This is fact. I choose to recognize His ownership. This is my will. (12)

**“Of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”** Both testaments of the Bible contain and especially the New Testament contains ample declaration of the deity of Jesus Christ (e.g., Gen. 1:26; John 1:1-17; Matt. 3:16-17; 17:1-5; 28:19). Coffman observes that the association of God and Jesus Christ in the opening verse of the Book of James also unapologetically states the deity of our Lord. “The manner in which James here bracketed the names of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ carries the affirmation of the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**“The twelve tribes”** (See comments in the introduction respecting “To Whom Written.”)

**“Scattered abroad”** The Greek word here is *diaspora* (dee-aspor-ah’), which appears as “scattered” also in 1 Peter 1:1, but as “dispersed” in John 7:35. (See the introduction of these notes respecting the addressees of this general epistle.)

**“Greeting”** James opened his epistle with a cheerful salutation embodied in the word translated here as “greeting.” Most of the 74 times the Greek word behind “greeting” here is translated with the word “rejoice” or “glad.”

**1:2 “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” (KJV).**

**“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials” (NKJV).**

**“Brethren”** The Greek word for brother is *adelphos* (ad-el-fos’). It is a compound word where *delphus* refers to the womb. It can be used literally referring to siblings born of the same womb, or it can be used figuratively to represent a close, family-like relationship between persons (Strong). One Lexicon explains the primary meaning of *adelphos* as: “a male having the same father and mother as the reference person” (Louw 117). Another Lexicon says: “properly *sons of the same mother*” (Liddell I:12)

The word *adelphos* appears in the Greek New Testament 348 times and is translated in the KJV as brother or brethren in each

occurrence. Vine notes a number of ways in which adelphos is used in the New Testament, along with some the passages reflecting these usages.

(1) male children of the same parents, Matt 1:2; 14:3; (2) male descendants of the same parents, Acts 7:23,26; Heb 7:5; (3) male children of the same mother, Matt 13:55; 1 Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19; (4) people of the same nationality, Acts 3:17,22; Rom 9:3. With “men” (aner, “male”), prefixed, it is used in addresses only, Acts 2:29,37, etc.; (5) any man, a neighbor, Luke 10:29; Matt 5:22; 7:3; (6) persons united by a common interest, Matt 5:47; (7) persons united by a common calling, Rev 22:9; (8) mankind, Matt 25:40; Heb 2:17; (9) the disciples, and so, by implication, all believers, Matt 28:10; John 20:17; (10) believers, apart from sex, Matt 23:8; Acts 1:15; Rom 1:13; 1 Thess 1:4; Rev 19:10 (the word “sisters” is used of believers, only in 1 Tim 5:2); (11) believers, with aner, “male,” prefixed, and with “or sister” added, 1 Cor 7:14 (RV), 15; 15, male as distinct from female, Acts 1:16; 15:7,13, but not 6:3.

Vine also includes references to related and compound words associated with *adelphos*:

Associated words are adelphotēs, primarily, “a brotherly relation,” and so, the community possessed of this relation, “a brotherhood,” 1 Peter 2:17 (see 5:9, marg.); philadelphos, (phileo, “to love,” and adelphos), “fond of one’s brethren,” 1 Peter 3:8; “loving as brethren,” RV.; philadelphia, “brotherly love,” Rom 12:10; 1 Thess 4:9; Heb 13:1; “love of the brethren,” 1 Peter 1:22 and 2 Peter 1:7, RV.; pseudadelphos, “false brethren,” 2 Cor 11:26; Gal 2:4.

*Wycliffe* observes that the way in which James employed the term “brother” referred to the common heritage James and his readers entertained as brothers in Jesus Christ or Christians. “James frequently (at least sixteen times) addresses his readers as brethren. He and his readers were bound together by a common loyalty to Jesus Christ.” *Barnes’ Notes* emphasizes that the relationship entertained as James writes is not the Jewish relationship or any other that might be

supposed, but only the relationship that James sustained to other Christians. “Not brethren as Jews, but as Christians. Compare James 2:1,” which reads: “My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.”

Woods writes that the Holy Spirit inspired James to write, using such terms that portray equality among Christians, say for instance, instead of a clergy and laity, etc.

It is noteworthy that the inspired writers uniformly avoided the use of terms and designations which would establish class distinctions among the disciples. The terms used, such as disciple, believer, brother, saint, fellow-laborer, beloved brother, etc. denote characteristics, relationships, dispositions, activities, etc. ...

**“Count it all joy”** Coffman compares James here with the words of Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount. “Did not Christ say, ‘Blessed are ye when men shall persecute you ... rejoice and be exceeding glad?’ (Matt. 5:11,12). This is exactly the thought of James here.” The question immediately arises regarding both the passage in Matthew and the passage in James: “In what manner is it a good thing to be buffeted by difficulties in life?” Obviously, the buffeting with difficulties itself is not a joyful experience; however, the potential Christian growth attained through endurance certainly is the import of James’ divine commentary on the words of our Lord.

Robertson remarks that the sense of “count” here is to “consider.” The Greek word for “joy” here is *chara* (khar-ah’) and means, “gladness.”

There are several instances in New Testament Scripture where the child of God is called upon to exhibit joy in the face of adversity for the faith, or where the narration indicates that the children of God in the first century demonstrated joy when persecuted. “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:41). “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9). “Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all” (Phil. 2:17). “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church” (Col.

1:24). “But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified” (1 Pet. 4:13-14).

At least, there is a certain amount of joy fixed to the recognition that if we suffer similarly as did our Lord for pursuing righteousness, our heavenly habitation or reward will be comparable as our Lord’s—in heaven forever with the Father. “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:17-18; see also 8:35-37).

**“When”** Vincent astutely says of the word for “when” here, “Literally, ‘whenever:’ better, because it implies that temptation may be expected all along the Christian course.” At all times in all places, during every waking moment, the child of God must be on guard against the overpowering nature of the countless details of life, failure in which may get the better of us under the best of circumstances and may in the worst cases lead us to commit sin; how much more must the child of God give attention to the willful efforts of our fellows to oppress us, and maybe only because we take Christianity seriously.

**“Fall”** The Greek word for “fall” here is *peripipto* (per-ee-pip’-to) only appears three times in the Greek New Testament. It is a compound word. “The preposition peri... ‘around,’” suggests falling into something which ‘surrounds’” (Vincent). This lends the idea of how all encompassing sometimes circumstances may seem to us when we realize that we cannot control the situations in which we reluctantly find ourselves in this world. Especially when a child of God perseveres in the face of overwhelming trials in life, all the while relying on God, he cannot help but become stronger and increase his faith in God, plus magnify his willingness to trust in God.

**“Divers”** According to Strong, “divers” means, “various in character.” The Greek word *poikilos* (poy-kee’-los) appears 10 times in the New Testament: “divers” 8 times; “manifold” twice. The kinds of trials in life may be many and vary regarding approach, quantity and intensity.

**“Temptations”** “Temptations” comes from the Greek *peirasmos* (pi-ras-mos’) and appears 21 times in the Greek New Testament; The KJV renders it “temptation” 20 times and once “try” (1 Pet. 4:12).

Woods noted the similarity of expression respecting temptation or trials in either Greek or English. “‘Temptations’ (peirasmois) in both Greek and English can mean (a) inward temptation; (b) outward trial. Here, it is the latter—outward trial—which is meant” (34). MacKnight notes that “temptations” in this verse refers to “trials by affliction and persecution” (587). *Wycliffe* comments, “The RSV renders more adequately, when you meet various trials. The word peirasmos (‘trial’) has two meanings. Here it means ‘external adversities,’ whereas in verses 13,14 it means ‘inner impulse to evil,’ ‘temptation.’” It is true that casual readers of James Chapter One may become easily confused respecting references to “temptations” here and reference again to “temptation” in verse 12. “Although the same word is used in James 1:12, below, it is the inner propensity toward evil that is meant there, outward trials and hardships being the thing in focus here” (Coffman). Burton Coffman quotes another commentator respecting the different applications of “temptations” in James 1:2 and “temptation” in James 1:12: “The word [peirasmos] (trials) has two meanings: external adversities here, and inner impulse to evil in James 1:12-14... The true view of temptation or trial [beginning in verse 2] is that it is an opportunity to gain new strength through overcoming.” *Barnes’ Notes* adds the following to further contrast the “temptations” of James 1:2 with the “temptation” of James 1:12:

It is now commonly used in the sense of placing allurements before others to induce them to sin, and in this sense the word seems to be used in James 1:13-14 of this chapter. Here, however, the word is used in the sense of trials, to wit, by persecution, poverty, calamity of any kind. These cannot be said to be direct inducements or allurements to sin, but they try the faith, and they show whether he who is tried is disposed to adhere to his faith in God, or whether he will apostatize. They so far coincide with temptations, properly so called, as to test the religion of men. They differ from temptations, properly so called, in that they are not brought before the mind for the express purpose of inducing people to sin. In this sense it is true that God never tempts men, James 1:13-14.

The sentiment of James 1:2-4 appears in the divine commentary of 1 Peter 1:6-7: “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the

trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” God’s people, especially his prophets, have always been the object of persecution (Heb. 11:36-38). It seems remarkable, but the apostle Peter, through inspiration of the Spirit, wrote: “But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled” (1 Pet. 3:14). The child of God has a degree of happiness that pervades his life and lifts the troubled soul above and beyond the temporal disarray of one’s earthly habitation; after all, what good or bad in this old world can compete with the glorious and heavenly hereafter forever with our heavenly Father (Rom. 8:18)?

**1:3 “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (KJV).**

**“knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience” (NKJV).**

Obviously, the apostle Paul and James the brother of Jesus were on the same (inspired) page theologically, here regarding “patience.” Paul wrote: “...we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience” (Rom. 5:3). Likewise, it is apparent that the same Spirit of God guided both the apostle Peter and James respecting patience and how it is derived. “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:6-7). Especially the early Christians, owing to Jewish and Roman persecution of the church, needed insight into the ordinary as well as the special tribulations that they met in their pursuit of the Christian faith.

**“Knowing”** The Greek word for “knowing” comes from *ginosko* (ghin-ocē’-ko), which appear 224 times throughout the New Testament. “The ordinary use is for intelligent comprehension (‘to perceive,’ ‘to understand,’ ‘to know’)... emphasizes understanding rather than sensory perception... the dominant concept is that of knowledge by objective observation” (Kittel and Bromiley 119).

**“Trying”** The Greek word for “trying” comes from *dokimion* (dok-im’-ee-on), “a testing; by implication, trustworthiness” (Strong). Woods compares the “trying” here (“proving” ASV) to “...the crucible

through which ore is made to pass so that the heat thereof separates the genuine ore from the dross, and possibly here the *result* of the smelting...Trials become a furnace through which the Christian passes, and thus demonstrates the genuineness of his faith” (36). Fream remarks, “God allows our faith to be tested with the expectation that we shall be approved when the test is completed. ‘Proving’ here has that meaning. It is this successful trial of our faith that results in a bulldog tenacity to hang on” (18).

Clarke summarizes the benefit of trials that result in patience. “Trials put religion, and all the graces of which it is composed, to proof; the man that stands in such trials gives proof that his religion is sound, and the evidence afforded to his own mind induces him to take courage, bear patiently, and persevere.”

**“Faith”** The usual Greek word for “faith,” as it is here, too, is *pistis* (pis’-tis), meaning, “persuasion, i.e. credence; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially reliance upon Christ for salvation; abstractly, constancy in such profession; by extension, the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself” (Strong). Vincent says of “faith,” “primarily, ‘firm persuasion,’ a conviction based upon hearing...used in the NT always of ‘faith in God or Christ, or things spiritual.’” Woods notes, “Thus faith involves (a) unquestioned acceptance of the truth revealed regarding Christ and God; (b) full unreserved obedience to their commands; and (c) humble and unreserved reliance on their promises...” (38).

*Pistis* appears 244 times in the Greek New Testament and is translated “faith” 239 times, “assurance” once, “believe” twice, “belief” once and “fidelity” once. The significance of faith cannot be overstated and is expressive of the frequency of the appearance of faith in its various forms in the New Testament. “In the NT faith is exceedingly prominent. The Gk. noun *pistis* and the verb *pisteuo* both occur more than 240 times, while the adjective *pistos* is found 67 times” (Douglas 366).

**“Worketh”** The Greek word for “worketh” is *katergazomai* (kater-gad’-zom-ahee), which means, “do work fully, i.e. accomplish; by implication, to finish, fashion” (Strong).

**“Patience”** The Greek word for “patience” is *hupomone* (hoop-om-on-ay’), meaning, “cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy” (Strong). *Hupomone* is a compound word, “lit., ‘an abiding under’ (hupo, ‘under,’ meno, ‘to abide’), is almost invariably rendered ‘patience’ (Vine). Regarding patience, Woods observes, “It denotes

the ability to exhibit steadfastness and constancy in the face of the most formidable difficulty” (37). Fream makes a valuable observation respecting the anticipated outcome of trials in the Christian life, whereby the child of God can muster a reluctant appreciation for even the adversities that we do not want that nevertheless come in this life.

Intense pressure on common carbon makes diamonds. Likewise, the trial of one grace may produce another grace of even more value. While producing patience in you, God may be producing a diamond for this darkened world; and through the trial of your faith, He thus forms one of the most valuable jewels in His kingdom! ... No wonder I am asked to look upon affliction as if it were nothing but joy! ... “Patience” is the concept of hanging on with a grip that will not let go. It is much more than longsuffering, and has no connection with a humble submission to any circumstance. Rather, it is the *I-shall-not-be-moved* attitude. If we continue to hold out under all circumstances (literally, the word patience means to “hold out under”), without wavering, but hanging on unto the end, then, patience will have its complete (perfect) work. This will result in our gaining approval and being purified, as with a trial of fire. It will result in our gaining the crown of life. Its result will be that we shall gain every bit of the spiritual blessing and heavenly promise God has in store for us. (17-18)

Coffman concurs that “patience” is not merely survival by happenchance: “The meaning of ‘patience’ here is that of courageous endurance, and not merely docile submission.” *Barnes Notes* concisely explains the correlation between trials and patience: “...the grace of patience is worth the trial which it may cost to procure it.” Earlier trials of faith harden the resolve with each trial successfully endured to persevere when the next, harder trial buffets the child of God. Wuest observes that the trial of one’s life “produces a patience which bears up and does not lose heart or courage under trials.”

Patience is one of the Christian graces of 2 Peter 1:5-8, which if we acquire, we can persevere. Beyond perseverance, the Christian graces provide the wherewith that a child of God can be fruitful (John 15:1-8) and abound or be more of what Jesus Christ wants one to be than would be possible otherwise. We must have this patience, and it

only comes through successfully navigating the troubles of life. These troubles will come irrespective of how noble a life one lives or what other advantages one may claim for himself in the Christian pursuit. Remember, Jesus said, “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19). Therefore, we must be “patient in tribulation” (Rom. 12:12).

**1:4** “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (KJV).

Other Scriptures portray sequences of virtues daisy-chained together. “See Rom 5:3 f for a like chain of blessings” (Robertson). Likewise, the so-called Christian virtues appear in 2 Peter 1:5-7, the consequence of which is stability of Christian faith (2 Pet. 1:8-9).

**“Perfect”** The word “perfect” here comes from the Greek *teleios* (tel’-i-os) and once is translated as “of full age” (Heb. 5:14). Woods observes, “The word translated ‘perfect’ in this passage does not denote sinlessness, but completeness, wholeness, maturity” (38). Kittel records of “perfect,” “*telos* first means ‘achievement,’ ‘fulfillment.’”

**“Work”** The word “work” means to work or to toil and represents the act of working, a deed (Strong). Vine observes that “work” from *ergon* means “employment or task.” Dictionaries define the English word “erg” as “a unit of work,” relating directly to its Greek counterpart.

**“Entire”** The New King James Version has “complete” in place of “entire.” Strong notes that the Greek here means “complete in every part,” and it is also translated “whole.” It differs from the Greek word in this verse translated “perfect” twice, though “entire” and “perfect” are synonyms (Vine). Vincent says, “The two words express different shades of thought. ... ‘perfect,’ from *telos* ...denotes that which has reached its maturity,” whereas “entire” from “...holos...” refers to the “‘entire allotment,’ and is, therefore, intact in all its parts.”

**“Wanting”** The word “wanting” in this verse means, “to fail” and sometimes is translated in the New Testament as “lack” or “destitute.”

**“Nothing”** The word “nothing” means “not even one (man, woman, thing)” (Strong). Vincent notices the tendency of James to emphasize points by presenting from positive as well as negative perspectives. “Note James’ characteristic corroboration of a positive statement by a negative clause: ‘entire, lacking in nothing; God that giveth and upbraideth not; in faith, nothing doubting.’” Woods presents an interesting shade of meaning for “nothing”:

Basically, the word is a racing term, and points to the fact that those who develop into mature Christians are not outdistanced by any. This emphasizes the fact that the most advanced children of God may not relax their efforts, but must ever remember that they are engaged in a race which is won only when the entire distance is covered. There is no place in life where one may suspend effort and no longer strive for the victor's laurels. (39)

Woods further remarks in the same place that such is the message of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:24.

**1:5** “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (KJV).

The connection of this verse with the preceding verses has to do with the acquisition of sufficient wisdom of divine origin, whereby one may have a spiritual outlook on the trials and adversities that buffet the child of God. Accordingly Woods observes:

It would appear that, at this point, he must have anticipated this question: “How is it possible for me to see in my difficulties a blessing? Surely, the ability to do this requires a much greater wisdom than I possess.” ...The ability to see great blessings in sore trial is not an inherent one, and must, therefore be acquired. ...The wisdom which we need, and must have, to turn our trials into triumphs is available only from God. (40).

The object of this verse is the acquisition of divine wisdom, but wisdom and knowledge are not the same. The Christian Church writer Fream appropriately distinguishes between knowledge and wisdom.

“If any man lack knowledge, let him go to college.” But wisdom is an entirely different matter. Good teachers may impart to us facts of life, whether of this earthly life or of the spiritual life, in such a way that we can recall these facts and repeat them when necessary. Having learned these facts, we may be enabled to make good grades in school, or to carry on a fascinating conversation. We may be enabled to use the facts in such a way as to demonstrate our ability to recall them. But this is not wisdom. ...Wisdom is more than just the

use of knowledge... it is the *practical* use of knowledge. Thus, wisdom is the ability to use knowledge in such a way that it brings benefit to the kingdom of God, to our fellow man, and to our own way of life. (21)

Woods simply differentiates between knowledge and wisdom: “Knowledge is the possession of facts; wisdom the ability of judging soundly and correctly regarding them.

**“Lack”** This is the same Greek word of the previous verse translated “wanting”; there it referred to possible deficiencies respecting godly patience, whereas here it pertains to possible deficiency respecting godly wisdom. James 2:15 translates the word that here appears as “lack” with the word “destitute. Robertson notes that an accountant’s term appears here to signal a deficit: “A banking figure, to have a shortage of wisdom (not just knowledge, gnoseos, but wisdom *sofias*, the practical use of knowledge).”

**“Wisdom”** The Greek word for the English word “wisdom” is *sophia* (sof-ee’-ah) and appears 52 times in the New Testament with no other rendering. Our English word “sophistication” is obviously related to *sophia*. The apostle Paul contrasted the wisdom of this world with the wisdom of God and encouraged the latter upon Christians (1 Cor. 1:18-21).

**“Ask”** The Greek for this word is variously rendered in English as “ask,” “beg,” “call for,” “crave,” “desire” and “require.” The Greek word appears 70 times in the New Testament. The shade of meaning affixed to this word for “ask” “...more frequently suggests the attitude of a suppliant, the petition of one who is lesser in position than he to whom the petition is made; e. g., in the case of men in asking something from God, Matt 7:7; a child from a parent, Matt 7:9-10; a subject from a king, Acts 12:20...” (Vine). Robertson detects the verb tense respecting “ask” means, “let him keep on asking.”

God blesses all humanity alike with blessings pertaining to his *general providence*, such as sun and rain (Matt. 5:45). However, there are special blessings reserved for the children of God and that pertain to the *special providence* of God. “Wisdom” is one of these blessings, but the special blessings of God reserved through his special providence for the children of God are obtained only upon request of God through prayer.

...the promise should be regarded as restricted to those who ask. The object of the writer was to encourage

those who felt their need of wisdom, to go and ask it of God; and it would not contribute anything to furnish such a specific encouragement to say of God that he gives to all men liberally whether they ask or not. In the Scriptures, the promise of divine aid is always limited to the desire. No blessing is promised to man that is not sought; no man can feel that he has a right to hope for the favor of God, who does not value it enough to pray for it; no one ought to obtain it, who does not prize it enough to ask for it. (Barnes)

**“Giveth”** Among the ways in which the Greek for “giveth” is translated is the word “bestow.” Vincent observes that “giving” is cited as an attribute of our God: “The Greek puts it so that giving is emphasized as an attribute of God. Literally, ‘Ask of the giving God,’ or of ‘God the giver.’” Also, a subtle shade of meaning adds: “to give an object, usually implying value” (Louw). Christians can rely on God to be a gracious Father who gives good gives (Matt. 7:7-11).

The way that mortals ask anything of God is through the avenue of prayer. Those prayers are answered, howbeit, sometimes when we do not like the answer, we say that God did not answer our prayers. God may say yes, exactly as we prayed and on the timetable we requested; that is what we typically acknowledge as the answer to our prayers. We are reluctant to acknowledge that our prayers have been answered if we do not receive exactly what we requested in prayer—the according to the quantity, type and timeliness we supposed. However, one’s prayers may be answered, “No!” A negative response from God is as much as a response to our prayers, even if we do not care for the reply. One’s prayers may be answered effectively also as, “Maybe,” “Later” or “Conditionally.” All these are answers to prayers that because they are not the answers we desire, mankind frequently accuses God of not answering prayer.

There is, indeed, no such thing as an unanswered prayer ever uttered by God’s faithful children. He answers every prayer his children pray! True, he does not always say, “Yes.” Often, he says, “No.” But the “No” is as much an answer as “Yes”... (Woods 42)

**“All”** The Greek word for “all” is *pas*, which means, “all, any, every, the whole” (Strong).

**“Men”** This is a transliterated word, not appearing in the Greek, but added by the translators because they thought it would enhance the

understanding of the reader. The “all” of the previous verse in the context in which the verse appears refers to humanity. That is, the “all” does not refer to goats, cows, planets, rocks or vegetables; mankind is meant.

**“Liberally”** The word “liberally” means, “bountifully” (Strong). The Greek for this word appears only here in the Greek New Testament.

**“Upbraideth”** The word “upbraideth” means, “to defame...chide...revile” (Strong). The NKJV translates it “reproach.” The Greek here appears 11 times, once translated “cast in his teeth” (Matt. 27:44). Barnes sees here that “He [God] does not coldly repel us, if we come and ask what we need, though we do it often...when we ask a favor of God... we shall never be reproached in an unfeeling manner, or meet with a harsh response.” One commentator remarks on how freely God bestows gifts on his children. “God gives to the suppliant without upbraiding him with past ingratitude, or future abuse of God’s goodness” (*Jamieson*).

Fream expands the concept involved in “upbraideth not” with contemporary references.

Since God gives without any hidden and subtle motivations of a selfish nature, then He is not thwarted in His giving. He has no reason to “rub it in” once He has given. He “upbraideth not.” Upbraiding is a selfish, human trait that is ungodly, unlovely, and unbecoming of any man. This is the practice of ““throwing it up” to the man who received the gift. Upbraiding seems to say, “I wanted something to hold over your head. . . . and now I have it, and I’m not going to let you forget it!” Upbraiding seems to say, “I have a great psychological need so that I can feel superior. I am not superior until I have given to you; but now that you have received of me you owe me the privilege of gloating.” (22-23)

**1:6** “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (KJV).

**“But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed” (ASV).**

The readers of James 1:6 are cautioned not to harbor misgivings about the likelihood of God answering their prayers. Children of God can offer faulty prayers, here lacking faith. Jesus said: “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24). Regarding those praying with doubts, *Wycliffe* notes: “He is a double minded man, i.e., a man of divided allegiance. He has mental reservations both about prayer itself and about the requests he makes of God.” Barnes adds: “In regard to the matter under consideration, there is to be no hesitancy, no doubting, no vacillation of the mind. We are to come to God with the utmost confidence and assurance.” Fream describes the poor specimen of a child of God and his prayer: “The doubter is here at variance with himself, unable to decide whether or not, or to what extent, he should put personal confidence in God” (24).

**“Faith”** Faith by the child of God is a *prerequisite* to having God answer prayers, or favorably affect Christians in any ongoing way. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). God is faithful and expects those petitioning him in prayer to fully accept God’s faithfulness by reflecting it in their prayers to him (1 Cor. 1:9). “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

Coffman notes, in agreement with commentators of yesteryears, the faith in the context of James One pertains to *faith in Jesus Christ*. This is not to distance the Father or the Holy Spirit, but for the Gospel Age, faith is especially applicable to Jesus Christ and is a must respecting prayer (Col. 3:17).

**“Wavering”** Vincent says of “wavering” (“doubting” ASV): “Not equivalent to ‘unbelief,’ but expressing the hesitation which balances between faith and unbelief, and inclines toward the latter.” The child of God must have the attitude exhibited by the apostle Peter when God called upon him to take the Gospel to non-Jews: “And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting...” (Acts 11:12; 10:20). The apostle Paul also cautioned regarding *doubting prayers* (1 Tim. 2:8).

Coffman makes the valid application that often defective faith is the precursor of failed discipleship across the board. “Not only does the doubter forfeit all legitimate expectation that his prayers may be answered, but something else appears in this verse, namely, that that

one who is a wavering Christian, or unfaithful in the area of his highest responsibility, will also prove to be unstable and undependable in all other areas likewise.”

**“Wavereth...a wave of the sea”** A literal use of such a reference to a “wave” (“surge” ASV) occurs respecting the tempestuous sea that imperiled the boat in which the Lord and his disciples were (Luke 8:24); another figurative use (in a verb form) appears in Ephesians 4:14. James (and the Holy Spirit who inspired him) illustrated the hopelessness of doubt in the life of a Christian by appealing to an unruly, large body of water.

He who doubts is one beset by contradictory notions. The inspired writer compares him to the ceaseless and wild surge of the sea which, at one moment, moves shoreward, and at another moment, in the opposite direction, but always aimlessly and without intelligent direction. (Woods 43)

The inspired Isaiah used the tempestuous sea to represent the wicked, and it is certain that from James 1:6 that God counts double-mindedness in prayer as a wicked and sinful thing. “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt” (Isa. 57:20).

**“Driven with the wind and tossed”** The violent sea is acted upon by the wind (from without of the sea) and acts out from its depths as well (from within the sea). Likewise, the child of God whose prayers are clouded with doubt is one who is moved from a rock solid faith in God, both by outward influences and inward misgivings (See *Jamieson*).

**17** **“For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.”**

**“For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord” (NKJV).**

Only blessings owing to God’s *general providence* (Matt. 5:45), not owing to God’s *special providence*, legitimately can anything be rightfully expected from God. The child of God who does not seek God with his whole being is at first stagnant and ultimately may also return to the gutter world of sin from which the Gospel once called him. The type of Christian described in this context is susceptible to apostasy (2 Pet. 2:20-22). Appropriately, Coffman comments, “A firm and unwavering faith in God and in Christ Jesus underlies every

Christian hope, every gospel promise. Waverers must inevitably forfeit their enrollment among the saints in light.” Woods notes that such a Christian “...eliminates himself from all special favors of God” (44).

**“Man”** The Greek word for “man” in this context is *anthropos*, meaning a human being irrespective of sex. Both male and female Christians pray, though male Christians lead the public prayers (1 Tim. 2:8, where the Greek *aner* appears, referring to male). In the context of James 1:7, Vincent observes regarding the phrase “that man”: “Emphatic, and with a slightly contemptuous force.” Robertson concurs.

**“Think”** The Greek word for “think” means “imagine” (Strong) or “suppose” as the NKJV renders it.

**“Anything”** The “anything” here refers to the stated object of prayers in this context, namely wisdom wherewith a child of God can properly assess (with joy) the trials of life, etc. The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* astutely notes, “He does receive many things from God, food, raiment, etc., but these are the general gifts of His providence. Of the things specially granted in answer to prayer, the waverer shall not receive ‘any thing,’ much less wisdom.”

**1:3 “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (KJV).**

**“he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (NKJV).**

The translators of the *New King James Version* added the words “he is,” which are not in the original language, to emphasize the relationship of this verse to the preceding verses, namely verses 6-7. Vincent notes, “The sentence is a comment and enlargement upon ‘that man.’ ‘Let not that man think,’ etc.”

He who wavers in his faith and is like the restless waves of an angry sea is unstable in his thinking, about prayer and God’s response to prayer—**and ever other facet of Christianity.**

That is, not merely in regard to prayer, the point particularly under discussion, but in respect to everything. From the instability which the wavering must evince in regard to prayer, the apostle takes occasion to make the general remark concerning such a man, that stability and firmness could be expected on no subject. The hesitancy which manifested on that one subject would extend to all; and we might expect to find such a man irresolute and undetermined in all things. This is always true. (*Barnes* ’)

Bauer, Gingrich and Danker also indicate the extent to which double-mindedness applies, despite in this context prayer for wisdom is primarily under consideration: “unstable in all his actions.”

**“Double minded”** James Strong defines the Greek for “double minded” as “two-spirited, i.e. vacillating (in opinion or purpose).” Vine remarks that the Greek means “twosouled” or “unsettled...disorderly...restless.” Only James uses the term “double minded,” twice—once here and also in James 4:8. Vincent portrays the man under consideration as “undecided.” Robertson quotes another who represents the man in this context under consideration as “Mr. Facing-both-ways.” In keeping with the context in which verse eight appears, *Wycliffe* says of “double minded,” “a man of divided allegiance. He has mental reservations both about prayer itself and about the requests he makes of God.” Barnes comments regarding the “double minded” person: “It is applicable to a man who has no settled principles; who is controlled by passion; who is influenced by popular feeling; who is now inclined to one opinion or course of conduct, and now to another.”

Bauer, Gingrich and Danker essentially summon a vision of a two-headed monstrosity: “double-headed people, who stagger helplessly here and there in their thinking) doubting, hesitating...a doubter.” Adam Clarke astutely observes the heart of the problem underlying double-mindedness: “The man of two souls, who has one for earth, and another for heaven; who wishes to secure both worlds; he will not give up earth, and he is loth to let heaven go.” Double-mindedness is a conversion and conviction problem! Double-mindedness manifests misplaced priorities (Matt. 6:33; 10:37; 22:37). The *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* contrasts double-mindedness with singleness in Christ (Matt. 6:22, 24).

**“Man”** The word for “man” here refers to the male. Vine notes regarding the Greek, “aner is never used of the female sex; it stands (a) in distinction from a woman...”

**“Unstable”** Vincent defines “unstable” with “confusion,” as it is translated and appears as “confusion” in James 3:16. Robertson characterizes the word thus: “It means unsteady, fickle, staggering, reeling like a drunken man.” Kittel notes, “The ‘unstable’ person cannot pray effectively...” Woods writes, “A double-minded man is in conflict with himself; this situation makes him unstable, a word used to describe a drunk man unable to walk a straight course, swaying now

this way, now that, without definite direction in his course, and thus unable to get anywhere” (45).

**“Ways”** The word “ways” literally means a highway or road, but figuratively, as here, refers to “modes or means” (Strong). Vine observes that the Greek means “a natural path...a traveler’s way” and “metaphorically, of ‘a course of conduct,’ or ‘way of thinking...”

Unfortunately, the divided affections of humanity, including the people of God, have characterized mankind throughout his habitation on earth. This double-mindedness began in the Garden of Eden when Eve believed Satan’s lie and disobeyed God. An outstanding example of this fickleness appears in 1 Kings 18:21: “And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.” Israel of old attempted to worship God and idols contemporaneously (2 Kings 17:33, 41). God accused his people of possessing a divided heart (Hos. 10:2). Regarding James 1:8, MacKnight denotes the corresponding conflicting activity that springs forth from such indecision: “...consequently is ever changing his resolutions and actions, according to the passion which happens to have the ascendant of the time” (587).

So, there are two figures in James 1:5-8 respecting the person whose faulty prayers to obtain divine wisdom are fruitless, a stormy sea and a person with two conflicting minds or dispositions.

**1:9 “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted” (KJV).**

The Greek text has the word “but,” introducing a contrast between the double minded man and the persons described in verses 9-11 (Vincent); the ASV retains the word “but.” The important of these three verses respecting the former verses is as *Wycliffe* states: “This paragraph arises out of James’ discussion of trial. Poverty is an external adversity. The poor Christian is to rejoice in his new status in Jesus Christ. This relationship has brought him true wealth. He is an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ!”

**“Brother”** The Greek word for brother here is adelphos (See notes on Verse 2).

**“Low degree”** These two words derive from a single Greek word used as an adjective (Vine).

**“Exalted”**

**1:10 “But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower**

## **of the grass he shall pass away” (KJV).**

*Wycliffe* quotes Tasker and says respecting the relationship of the rich to the poor and the relationship of both to the context in which these three verses appear: “A rich Christian, on the other hand, is to rejoice ‘that in Christ he has been brought down to a level where the ‘deceitfulness of riches’ (Mark 4:19) and the anxiety to amass and retain them are no longer primary or even relevant considerations.”

**“Rich”** Strong equates the Greek for this word with “wealthy.” Vine notes the Greek for “rich” here is an adverb, meaning, “richly, abundantly.”

**“Is made low”** The Greek for this word belongs to the same family as the Greek word for “low degree” in verse 9. Vine denotes that the Greek word here is a noun. Robertson observes respecting verse 9-10 that “[t]he Cross of Christ lifts up the poor and brings down the high. It is the great leveler of human beings.” The idea is that of a Christian experiencing humble or meager circumstances in this material world, as opposed to the rich person sustained with an abundance of material goods in verses 10-11. Woods astutely states: “Only a brother (a child of God) can see in financial disaster a blessing” (48).

**“Flower”** Strong defines “flower” as “blossom.” Woods believes the “flower” “...does not refer to the bloom [of the grass] but to wild flowers which often grow up in the midst of the grass in Palestine” (50).

**“Grass”** First, the Greek word here refers to a “court” or a “garden,” may refer to a “pasture” or “vegetation” and also is translated as “blade” and “hay” (Strong). Vine says of the Greek for “grass” here, “...primarily denoted ‘a feeding enclosure’ ...then, ‘food,’ especially grass for feeding cattle...” Several biblical references respecting brevity appear in the Word of God (Isaiah 40:6-8; Job 14:1-2; Psalm 103:15-16).

**“Shall pass away”** These three words come from a single Greek word, the definition of which depends on how it is used in its context. For instance, it can mean to come or to go, to pass by, to pass away as to perish or to pass over as to disregard (Vine).

**1:11** **“For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways” (KJV).**

**“For the sun ariseth with the scorching wind, and withereth the grass: and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his goings” (ASV).**

**“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” (NKJV).**

The riches of verse 10 are depicted by the illustration in verse 11 to be temporary in nature, therefore, unworthy of primary concern and pursuit.

**“Burning heat”** The KJV and the ASV differ here, the former attributing the heat under consideration to the glaring heat of the sun, while the latter alludes to the east wind from the desert just east of Palestine as in Ezekiel 17:10. Robertson notes that the Greek words under consideration are translated either way, depending upon the context in which it appears. Though several commentators prefer the reference to the sun as it appears in the KJV, *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* observe that not the morning sun but the noonday sun scorches vegetation, whereas the east wind began buffeting Palestine daily as soon as the sun rose (more in harmony with the verse).

**“Withereth”** The word “withereth” conveys the idea of “to dry up” (Robertson).

**“Falleth”** The word “falleth” means, “to drop away” (Strong). Vincent notes that the Greek for “falleth” here is in the past tense, meaning “fell off.”

**“Grace”** The Greek for the word “grace” here is not the typical word for the grace of God; in this place “grace” means “good suitableness” (Strong). Robertson says “[g]oodly appearance, beauty.”

**“Fashion”** The New King James Version represents the idea intended in this verse with the word “appearance.” Vincent says the literal here is “the beauty of it, face or appearance.”

**“Perisheth”** The Greek for “perisheth” means “to fully destroy” (Strong).

**“Man”** There is no Greek word for the word “man” in this verse; it was supplied by the translators to complement the word “rich.”

**“Fade away”** The words “fade away” mean “to extinguish (as fire)” (Strong).

**“Ways”** According to Strong, “ways” literally means “travel (by land)” and figuratively means “proceedings, i.e. career.”

James 1:9-11 parallel the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:12, “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” The true Christian is less concerned about his material wealth than he is concerned respecting his spiritual standing before God. Either riches or poverty can be a threat (a test) of one’s faithfulness to God. “...give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain” (Prov 30:8-9). Guy N. Woods notes the practical nature of Christianity to outfit the child of God irrespective of his material prosperousness. “...from poverty to riches and from riches to poverty. So perfectly adapted to all of man’s needs is Christianity, it enables the faithful child of God immediately to cope with all of life’s problems, however varied they may be” (45). Job, though he lived long before Christianity, illustrated in his life the child of God’s adaptability in the face of great trial respecting material possessions (and more). Woods further observes: “However great is the difference in their financial standing, they meet on a common level in the Lord. *There are no caste systems in Christ*” (46).

**1:12** “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (KJV).

“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” (NKJV).

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him” (NIV).

“Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him” (RSV).

Woods pictures the context in which the first use of “temptation” for trial going from verse 2 through and ending with verse 12 (56). Fream, though, places verse 12 with the following context pertaining to “temptation” as it pertains to inducement to commit sin (29).

“**Blessed**” The word “blessed” means “happy” and is so translated seven of the 50 times it appears in the New Testament. Guy N. Woods observes about “blessed”: “Blessedness is a condition resulting from a

state of inner peace...” (52). In the same place, Woods reminds that blessedness or happiness is not always the result of trials in life, but only when the child of God successfully endures the adversities and afflictions of life is blessedness or happiness the result. The apostle Peter likewise addresses the same blessedness or happiness that results when a child of God successfully navigates the trials of life and opposition to his Christianity (1 Pet. 1:6-9; 2 Pet. 4:12-14).

**“Man”** The word “man” here is the Greek “aner,” which refers to a male. Certainly, the truth introduced here would apply equally to women as well.

**“Endureth”** The word “endureth” means to undergo as to bear trials. “Perseveres” of the NIV appropriately represents the idea intended here. The fact that the child of God endures in the face severe trial is sufficient reason to be happy. “We may, therefore, rejoice that (a) if we endure, we are by him regarded as faithful; (b) if faithful, we are assured of the life crown at the end of life’s journey; (c) in view of this we may rejoice even in the midst of grievous trial” (Woods 56). One lexicon explains the Greek for the word “endure” as “happy is the man who holds his ground when he is tempted” (Louw and Nida).

**“Temptation”** The word for “temptation” here is the same word introduced verses earlier in James 1:2, but verse 12 begins the second usage of the word “temptation” in James One, where it refers to the inducement to commit sin.

**“For”** The word “for” in this verse means “because.”

**“Tried”** The Greek word here means “tried” or “approved,” i.e. because he has withstood the test (RSV). Bauer, Gingrich and Danker say of the Greek for “tried” that it means, “approved (by test), tried and true, genuine”

**“Crown”** The “crown” in this verse refers to the woven, leafy wreath with which athletes were crowned upon excelling in public games or sports, which allusion the apostle Paul made in 1 Corinthians 9:25. The phrase “crown of life” occurs once more in Revelation 2:10, but a similar expression “crown of righteousness” appears in 2 Timothy 4:8 and a “crown of glory” appears in 1 Peter 5:4. The reference is obviously to the victorious award of eternal life at the end of time and the commencement of eternity, when in either of two possible eternities for all men will be assigned by God, but here heaven for the redeemed is meant.

**“Hath promised”** The words “hath promised” means to have announced. We know through the Word of God for what we strive as

the children of God and have the assurance that God is faithful (2 Tim. 1:12).

**“Love”** Here the word “love” is the verb form of the highest and noblest form of love: *agapao* (ag-ap-ah'-o). The present tense is employed here to emphasize that those who keep on loving God and are loving God when time is no more will be the recipients of the “crown of life.” Proper love toward God means that one obeys God (John 14:15, 21; 1 John 5:3). Obeying God or Christ results in salvation (Heb. 5:8-9) whereas not obeying Jesus Christ results in condemnation (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

**1:13** **“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (KJV).**

**“No man”** The Greek word here is equivalent to “no one” or “no thing” and has reference to male or female—any person.

**“Tempted”** Formerly in this chapter, owing to the context in which it appears, temptation equates to trials that are not themselves solicitations to commit sin. However, temptation as it is used in the context of verse 13 does pertain to solicitation to commit sin. The difference, though the same word appears in both places is the respective, differing contexts. Woods observes that rather than the noun form of the word for temptation used earlier in the chapter, now the verb form of the word is employed, he says, indicating that the way in which the word family is now used pertains to solicitation to commit sin rather than simply trials of life (56).

The Greek word used here is the same family as already introduced in this chapter for temptation: *peirazo* (pi-rad'-zo), and means, “to test (objectively), i.e. endeavor, scrutinize, entice, discipline” and is variously translated: “assay,” “examine,” “prove,” “tempt” and “try” (Strong). *Wycliffe* that in this verse temptation “...carries the idea of luring one into sin.”

Vincent relates that the literal rendering of “cannot be tempted” is “is incapable of being tempted.” Woods states that the Greek word for this phrase in English appears nowhere else in the Bible, because there is no one besides God to whom it could apply. Robertson notes that it is “contemptible” for mankind to blame God for his sins. *Wycliffe* correctly asserts: “Instead of blaming God for evil, man must take personal responsibility for his sins.” Coffman relates the reason for which this verse appears in this context: “The purpose of this verse is to take away from men any excuse for their yielding to sin.”

**“Of God”** The word for “God” here is *theos*. Theology, then, is the study of God. Vine notes respecting *theos*, “...in the polytheism of the Greeks, denoted ‘a god or deity’... Hence the word was appropriated by Jews and retained by Christians to denote ‘the one true God.’” The words “of God” mean coming from God, i.e. temptation to commit sin does not come from God.

**“Evil”** The word evil means, “depraved” or “injurious” and is translated variously as “bad,” “evil,” “harm,” “ill” and “wicked” (Strong). Vine says of “evil” here, “whatever is evil in character, base.”

**“Any man”** Here is still a different Greek word from the one used already in this verse that also has no specific reference to male or female, but means “any man,” “any woman” or “anything.”

**1:14 “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (KJV).**

Commenting on the verse, Guy N. Woods writes:

Christians should never go to any place where there is the possibility they may be tempted to do wrong. They should abstain from all association with those who are disposed to exercise the wrong influence over them. We should not only avoid those places and practices which we know to be wrong; we should shun all of those which we do not know to be right! (59-60)

**“Every man”** The Greek here means “every man” or “every woman” (Strong). This simply means, “The influence of Satan is universal. No one capable of sinning is removed from the area of his wooing. ...His [Satan] first aim is to draw us away from our spiritual defenses, induce us to go where we ought not, and where we are helpless to resist his advances” (Woods).

**“Is drawn away”** The English phrase “is drawn away” comes from a compound Greek word meaning, in its parts, “out” and “drag.” Hence, the word means, “to entice (to sin)” (Strong). MacKnight portrays phrase as meaning “being drawn out when caught with a bait. It is generally supposed that the allusion here is to the drawing of fish out of a river with a baited hook...the original words are likewise used to express the enticement of harlots...” (588). The “attire of an harlot” is calculated to entice to commit sin (Prov. 7:10). Coffman, likewise, adds:

“These are primarily hunting and fishing words, used metaphorically here.” It was the beauty of the forbidden fruit that acted as a lure for Eve, the bait, which effected her being caught upon the hook of sin. Christians should learn to exercise skill in rejecting the alluring “bait” with which Satan baits his trap of enslavement to sin.

**“Of”** The Greek word for “of” here means “under” or “through” (Strong). One under “his own lust” or through “his own lust” experiences temptation or enticement to sin.

**“His own”** Here, the Greek means “private, one’s own, peculiar to oneself” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**“Lust”** The Greek for “lust” here means, “...a longing (especially for what is forbidden)” (Strong).

**“Enticed”** The Greek for “enticed” means “to entrap, i.e. (figuratively) delude” and is translated “allure,” “beguile” and “entice” (Strong).

**1:15** “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (KJV).

**“Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death” (ASV)**

**“Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (NKJV).**

**“Then”** The Greek here means “a particle of succession (in time or logical enumeration)” (Strong). It denotes “sequence” (Vine).

**“When...hath conceived”** One meaning of the English phrase “when... hath conceived” is to seize or capture (Strong). Hence, the vice that was the prey of the predator becomes the predator and converts the predator to the prey; the tables are turned once vice sought is embraced. Bauer, Gingrich and Danker add regarding the meaning here: “grasp, apprehend...of the taking of prisoners into custody...arrest someone.”

**“Bringeth forth”** The phrase “bringeth forth” relates to breeding or generating and is sometimes translated “beget” and “produce” (Strong). Vine says of these words that they mean “to bear young.”

**“Sin”** Literally, the Greek for “sin” here is “a missing of the mark” (Vine). The target respecting a person’s conduct is righteousness or godliness, and everything else that is aside from righteousness or godliness is unrighteousness or sinful. Couched in the

language of this verse, Woods refers to sin as “the monstrous offspring” and further avows that lust is “the mother of sin” (60). MacKnight expands this idea: “Lust is the mother of sin, and sin the mother of death, and the sinner the parent of both” (588). Coffman words the idea as representing three generations: “Restated, it means lust has a child named sin; and sin, as soon as it grows up, has a baby named death!”

**“When it is finished”** This phrase derives from a Greek word meaning “to complete entirely, i.e. consummate” (Strong). Vincent avows, “Better, the English Revised Version (1885): ‘when it is full grown.’ Not when the course of a sinful life is completed; but when sin has reached its full development.” In this vein, other resources use the words “mature” or “maturity” to describe the process of sin per this context. Louw and Nida remark of “when it is finished,” “when sin has run its course” and “sin, when it has completed its action, produces death.”

Lest Christians incorrectly assign to themselves guilt that they do not deserve, it is important to distinguish between temptation versus lust and sin. Woods writes:

It should be observed that James does not affirm that sin sprang into life at the moment desire was experienced. It is, alas, impossible for us to purge our minds of fleeting desires, improper thoughts, and questionable ideas. These appear unwanted, and without prior notice. We must, when such occur, rigidly exclude them, and never harbor and entertain them. It is good to know that their appearance does not of itself constitute sin. The appearance of sin is described by the inspired writer under the figure of a conception and birth. (60-61)

**“Bringeth forth”** The Greek for the second occurrence of this phrase in the current verse is different than earlier. Here, the meaning is “to produce (from seed...)” (Strong).

**“Death”** Woods describes the spiritual death meant in this verse and distinguishes it from physical death, while showing the relationship between the two deaths.

The “death” here (*thanatos*) is separation from God and all that is good. The basic meaning of death is *separation*. Physical death results from the separation of the body and spirit (James 2:26); a death *in* sin is

separation from that which is good (1 Tim. 5:6); and a death *to* sin is separation from the practice of sin (Rom. 6:1-4). (62)

It was spiritual death to which the apostle Paul referred in Romans 6:23 as a consequence of sin. “This death stands in the closest relation to sin...” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). “Death” exists because of “sin,” but spiritual death is more closely related to sin (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22).

**1:16 “Do not err, my beloved brethren” (KJV).**

**“Be not deceived, my beloved brethren” (ASV).**

The immediate context warns against the child of God mocking God by imagining that God could possibly be responsible for alluring his children to commit sin (Kittel and Bromiley).

**“Err”** The word “err” means “to wander away” or “be mistaken in one’s judgment” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Strong gives the meaning of “err” as “roam.”

**“Beloved”** The word “beloved” belongs to the family of love depicting the highest and noblest form of love—*agapao*. The adjective form appears here. Vine notes that the word came to be used as “a form of address.” Woods observes regarding “beloved”:

From its literal significance of male members of the same family and with a common parentage, it has come to mean, metaphorically, those with the same ancestry spiritually, and is thus descriptive of all those who are with us in Christ, whatever their national and racial origins. It is a term of affection, denoting that close relationship which obtains between those of the same family. (65)

First John 3:14-15 demonstrates the application of the terminology of love toward fellow Christians.

**“Brother”** Here the word for brother is again *adelphos*, meaning from the same womb (Strong).

Woods takes opportunity with the warning in James 1:16 to remind us of the possibility of apostasy, despite popular denominational doctrine to the contrary.

There are more than twenty-five hundred warnings to the saints of the possibility of apostasy in the Scriptures. One can scarcely open the pages of the

Bible without having the eyes fall upon some such injunction as the following: "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God: but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today; lest an one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb. 3:12, 13.) (65)

**1:17** "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (KJV).

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (ASV; cf. NKJV).

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows" (NIV).

Vincent demonstrates the relationship of this outstanding verse to the context in which it appears. "The statement that these gifts are from God is in pursuance of the idea that God does not tempt men to evil. The gifts of God are contrasted with the evil springing from man's lust." After in James 1:17 noting the reliability of God through the figures employed, certainly God could not solicit humanity to commit sin, and so verse 17 connects to the immediate preceding verses.

Two wonderful truths are thus affirmed in God in this section: (1) There is no admixture of evil in the goodness which he bestows; (2) no obscuring shadow ever falls over him, hiding his goodness. He is ever at the zenith; he occupies the position of the sun at high noon in the steadying and unvarying light with which he shines so benignly upon the race. It is therefore beyond belief that such a one as thus described could ever lead those who are in his image astray. (Woods 69).

"**Every**" The word *pas* can refer to things, people, etc. and is a general word, meaning, "all, any, every, the whole" (Strong).

"**Good**" The usually word in Greek for "good" is *agathos* (ag-athos'). Gifts given by God are not pointless as not only gag gifts but many other gifts are useless, neither practical nor aesthetically

valuable. Here “good” means, “in external sense *fit, capable, useful*” or “of things,” “beneficial...useful for edification” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Vine adds that it, “describes that which, being ‘good’ in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect...”

**“Gift”** The word for “gift” in this instance is *dosis* (dos'-is) and means, “a giving; by implication (concretely) a gift” (Strong). Here, “gift” means, “means “what is given” (Kittel and Bromiley). *Dosis* “...denotes, properly, ‘the act of giving,’ Phil 4:15, euphemistically referring to ‘gifts’” (Vine). *Dosis* emphasizes the act of giving whereas *dorema* appearing below simply means “gift” (Robertson). Woods says *dosis* refers properly to the act of giving whereas *dorema* refers to the result of giving (66).

**“Perfect”** “What is ‘whole’ and without fault comes from God (1:17)” (Kittel and Bromiley). Bauer, Gingrich and Danker define perfect here as “*having attained the end or purpose, complete, perfect.*” Wuest observes, “In James 1:4, 17, 25, *teleios* means ‘wanting nothing to completeness.’” Woods observes, “The gift is complete because of the goodness of the giver” (66). Vincent denotes that the word “perfect” here adds to the idea for “good” already used in this verse. “Enlarges upon ‘good,’ bringing out more distinctly the ‘moral’ quality of the gift.”

Together, the words “good” and “perfect” in this verse contemplate the entire consideration of anything that is worthy, then attribute the source of it to God exclusively. Besides being the exclusive resource for any good humanity may enjoy or know, God cannot originate any evil. God is all good and the source of all good, which good things he bestows on his human creation. Barnes observes:

The difference between good and perfect here, it is not easy to mark accurately. It may be that the former means that which is benevolent in its character and tendency; the latter that which is entire, where there is nothing even apparently wanting to complete it; where it can be regarded as good as a whole and in all its parts. The general sense is, that God is the author of all good. Every thing that is good on the earth we are to trace to him; evil has another origin.

Clarke, commenting on “good” in James 1:17 also paints God as being the sole source of everything favorable of which mankind is the beneficiary.

Whatever is good is from God; whatever is evil is from man himself. As from the sun, which is the father or fountain of light, all light comes; so from God, who is the infinite Fountain, Father, and Source of good, all good comes. And whatever can be called good, or pure, or light, or excellence of any kind, must necessarily spring from him, as he is the only source of all goodness and perfection.

**“Gift”** The second Greek word for “gift” in this verse is *dorema* (do'-ray-mah), meaning “bestowment” (Strong). Of this word for “gift” opposed to the former word used for “gift” in this verse, Vincent remarks, “It enlarges slightly upon the other word in emphasizing the gift as ‘free, large, full’...”

**“Cometh down”** The Greek word here translated “cometh down” means “to descend” (Strong). Present tense in the Greek indicates continuing action and here, “Literally, ‘is coming down from above.’” As usual, this union of the participle with the finite verb denotes something ‘habitual’” (Vincent). Woods astutely remarks, “Inasmuch as all good things from him [God] *come down*, surely simple gratitude suggests that we *send up* our thanks!” (67).

**“From above”** The Greek here is *anothen* (an'-o-then) and means “from heaven” (Robertson). “The word occurs in John 3:31; 19:11; James 1:17; 3:15, 17, and is in every instance translated “from above.” It is used often in contrast to a word which means “from beneath” (Wuest). Barnes makes the appropriate application: “From God, who is often represented as dwelling above-in heaven.”

**“Father”** The first definition for “father” is “the nearest ancestor” (Vine) or “immediate (male) ancestor” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker) after which one’s family is named, including spiritual consideration of the heavenly Father (Eph. 3:14-15) (Kittel and Bromiley).

**“Lights”** The Greek word for “light” is *phos* (foce) and means “by metonymy— that which gives light, *light* (-bearer): torch, lamp, lantern” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Vine further defines *phos* as “expressing ‘light as seen by the eye,’ and, metaphorically, as ‘reaching the mind’...” Our English word phosphorus (light-bearing) comes from *phos* (Vine). It is also true that “God is the Father of lights (the stars) in Jms. 1:17” (Kittel and Bromiley), which because of a definite article appearing before *phos*: “Literally, ‘the’ lights, by which are meant the heavenly bodies” (Vincent) is understood in James 1:17. Coffman summarizes the contrast in this verse between the heavenly

bodies, particularly the sun, and God, to make the intended application of James 1:17.

The almost scientific words of this verse, however, would seem to show that James was particularly thinking of the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon and stars. ... Such things as the apparent movement of the sun around the earth, giving day and night, or its moving southward or northward, giving the seasons, and many other variations are suggested by these words. By contrast, “there is no variation with God.”

There are numerous senses in which God is the Father of lights, two of which we note below from Fream.

Father of lights is a beautiful and revealing expression concerning God. First, God can be said to be the Father of lights because he created light, and created the heavenly bodies that give light in this universe. (Gen. 1; Psalms 136:7) God is thereby the source of physical warmth, and food, and life. God is thereby the sustainer as well as the creator, for the heavenly bodies were not only created, but they continue in existence and in giving light. Second, God is the Father of lights in that He is the source of spiritual light and blessing. This is the most important light, and seems to be the significance of references to God as the “light of the world.” (see Psalms 36:9; John 1:1; 8:12; Psalms 27:1). (45-46)

Further, it is interesting to note the symbolic correlation between light of divine origin and the development of and use of lights in budding Catholicism. “The liturgical use of lamps develops by the fourth century, due partly to necessity, partly to contemporary examples and the general symbolism. Lamps are first placed around the altar, then on it” (Kittel and Bromiley).

**“Variableness”** “Variableness” comes from *parallage* (par-allag-ay'), the definition of which includes “fickleness” (Strong). Vine notes regarding “variableness” that it is “the difference between the directions of a body as seen from two different points.” Irrespective from what angle God is observed, he appears the same and is wholly reliable. Woods refines *parallage* in this context, writing that it is:

a word signifying the change, in position, from hour to hour, through which the sun appears to pass in its

relationship to earth...God does not reflect such variations in his dealings with us. Though the celestial bodies alter their relation to the earth, and the changes appear from day to day and from season to season, no such variation in God is noted; he is ever constant and unvarying in his attitude toward us, and in his bestowal of good gifts upon us.” (68)

**“Shadow”** The various translations provide the sense respecting the “shadow”: “*a shadow cast by variation* (in position of heavenly bodies) Js 1:17” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). “In Jas 1.17 one may translate ‘shifting shadow’ as ‘a shadow which constantly changes.’” (Louw and Nida). The word for shadow here, *aposkiasma* (ap-os-kee'-as-mah), is a compound word literally meaning, “a shading off” (Strong). The shadow here is “a shade cast by one object on another” (Robertson).

**“Turning”** The Greek here is *trope* (trop-ay'), the definition of which is literally “revolution” and figuratively “variation” (Strong). Vine comments that this word is “used especially of the revolution of the heavenly orbs.”

Vine notes that God is not affected by happenings on this planet and by humanity whereby anything about him or promised by him changes. Hence, God is dependable when mankind is not reliable. Barnes summarizes the application of James 1:17.

The design here is clearly to contrast God with the sun in a certain respect. As the source of light, there is a strong resemblance. But in the sun there are certain changes. It does not shine on all parts of the earth at the same time, nor in the same manner all the year. It rises and sets; it crosses the line, and seems to go far to the south, and sends its rays obliquely on the earth; then it ascends to the north, recrosses the line, and sends its rays obliquely on southern regions. By its revolutions it produces the changes of the seasons, and makes a constant variety on the earth in the productions of different climes. In this respect God is not indeed like the sun. With him there is no variableness, not even the appearance of turning. He is always the same, at all seasons of the year, and in all ages; there is no change in his character, his mode of being, his purposes and plans. What he was millions of ages before the worlds

were made, he is now; what he is now, he will be countless millions of ages hence. We may be sure that whatever changes there may be in human affairs; whatever reverses we may undergo; whatever oceans we may cross, or whatever mountains we may climb, or in whatever worlds we may hereafter take up our abode, God is the same.

**1:18** “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (KJV).

“Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (ASV; see also NKJV).

The definition of words, as useful as it is, is meaningless unless those words can be correctly fitted in to the context by which they are surrounded. *Wycliffe* shows how James 1:18 fits into the context in which it is found.

In James 1:18 the writer climaxes his refutation of the idea that God is the author of temptation. He has already shown that such a charge is contrary to the nature of God (1:13) and to His consistent goodness (1:17). Now he appeals to his readers' experience in the Gospel. J. B. Mayor (*The Epistle of St. James*, p. 62) aptly states the point of this verse: “So far from God's tempting us to evil, His will is the cause of our regeneration.”

Lenski concurs and appends the following: “God has regenerated us, has made us a kind of first fruits that are set peculiarly apart and sanctified unto him. Will he undo this by tempting us to sin? ...It is not enough for James to say that God brought us forth, he adds that God willed to do this” (546).

“Of his own will” The Greek word here means “to be willing.” Vine clarifies the Greek in this verse as meaning “the deliberate exercise of volition.” Robertson says of “will” here: “God as Father acted deliberately of set purpose.” Lenski remarks of God's will here: “...it marks the chosen direction” (546). Clarke contrasts the lust of humanity in James 1:15 with the will of God in this verse; “God's will here is opposed to the lust of man, James 1:15...”

The apostle John also writes respecting the will of God, not man's will, to be born into the family of God. “He came unto his own, and

his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13). However, God’s will that mankind be saved does not interfere with the will of man to be saved or his will not to be saved.

That our salvation results from the free determination of the will of God does not necessitate the conclusion that his will is arbitrarily exercised, or that the choice is made independently of human agency and responsibility. The Lord calls; but he calls by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14); and the gospel is to be preached to all, and may be obeyed by all (Mark 16:15, 16). The saved have been chosen; but the choice was not capricious or arbitrary; it requires belief of the truth: “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thess. 2:13, 14.) God *wills* the salvation of *all* who believe his word and obey his will. (Heb. 5:8, 9.) (Woods 70)

**“Begot he”** The Greek word here means “to breed” (Strong). This particular Greek word appears only one other time in the New Testament, James 1:15 where it is translated as “it bringeth forth.” Vine says of the word appearing here that it means “to be pregnant...used metaphorically of spiritual birth by means of the Word of God...” Barnes points to a contrast between James 1:15 and James 1:18:

The Greek word here is the same which in James 1:15 is rendered “bringeth forth,” – “sin bringeth forth death.” The word is perhaps designedly used here in contrast with that, and the object is to refer to a different kind of production, or bringing forth, under the agency of sin, and the agency of God. The meaning here is, that we owe the beginning of our spiritual life to God.

Several New Testament passages refer to being born into the kingdom of God. “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor 4:15). “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him” (1 John 5:1). “What a glorious parentage is ours through being privileged to be ‘brought forth’ (born of God). Inasmuch as God is our Father, we partake of his nature, the divine nature; and we are, in consequence, expected to conduct ourselves in keeping with our heritage” (Woods 73). Coffman writes, “...it is absolutely certain that the new birth is the subject of this passage.”

**“With the word”** Here the Greek *logos*, which is often translated “word” and sometimes translated otherwise appears. Other ways in which the word *logos* is translated include: “cause,” “communication,” “sayings,” “account,” “thing,” “talk,” “reckoneth,” “matter,” “question,” “frame,” “rumour,” “treatise,” “tidings,” “speaker,” “reason,” “speech,” “work,” “utterance,” “preaching,” “as concerning,” “a shew,” “have to do” and “doctrine.” *Logos* appears 326 times in the New Testament. Consulting the context in which a word appears is essential to ascertain the way in which it is being used and is explanatory for the differing translations of *logos*, in this case. Vine defines *logos* as “the expression of thought...not the mere name of an object...as embodying a conception or an idea...a saying or statement.” According to Robertson, though the definite article, “the,” does not appear in this instance before *logos*, the definite article is implied in the context of “the word of truth”; “The reference is thus to the gospel message of salvation even without the article (2 Cor 6:7) as here, and certainly with the article (Col 1:5; Eph 1:13; 2 Tim 2:15).”

The word *logos* is related to the word *lego*, “to speak,” and the two words refer to a “collection” or “list” of things spoken or written with respect to *logos*, and the speaking of the “collection” or “list” with respect to *lego*. The manner of presentation is not emphasized regarding *logos*.

2. *logos* a. Like *lego*, *logos* has first the sense of “collection.” b. A second sense is “counting” with the nuances (i) calculation, (ii) account, (iii) consideration, or evaluation, and (iv) reflection, or, in philosophy,

ground or reason. c. Counting also gives the sense of “list” or “catalogue.” d. We then find “narrative,” “word,” “speech.” (Kittel and Bromiley)

Whereas James here mentions “the word of truth,” Paul calls it “the truth of the gospel” (Col. 1:5).

**“Of truth”** The Greek is usually translated as “truth,” but also once each as “true” and “verity” among the 104 times it is used in the New Testament. In the New Testament, “truth” came to stand for “the content of Christianity as the absolute truth” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker); it is used this way in 1 Timothy 2:4, “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” Yet, not all men cooperate with the will of God to be saved (Rom. 10:16; Matt. 7:13-14; 21-23). “Inasmuch as it is by the word *of truth* we are brought forth into spiritual life, it is vitally important that the truth be preached, believed, and obeyed. Jesus said, ‘And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.’ (John 8:32.)” (Woods 72). The truth has the capacity to save in conjunction with belief or faith (with all that faith involves, as a part of the plan of salvation standing for the whole) entertained by those who would be saved. “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13).

Barnes astutely notes that rather than through arbitrariness of God, through his truth successfully germinating in the mind of the regenerate, God’s will that we be birthed into his family occurs. “By the instrumentality of truth. It was not a mere creative act, but it was by truth as the seed or germ. There is no effect produced in our minds in regeneration which the truth is not fitted to produce...” The apostle Peter further defines the part truth plays in salvation: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth...” (1 Pet. 1:22). The apostle John, likewise, uses “truth” (John 17:17).

**“Should be”** The Greek word here means “to exist” (Strong).

**“A kind”** The Greek pronoun appearing here means “some or any person or object” (Strong).

**“Of firstfruits”** The Greek here is a compound word meaning from the beginning and was applied to the beginning Jewish animal sacrifice or firstfruits (Strong); it appears eight times in the New Testament and is always translated “firstfruits.” These examples demonstrate the way in which firstfruits relate to others of the same category as the firstfruits. “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and

become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor 15:20). “...ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia...” (1 Cor 16:15). Firstfruits imply additional fruits: “These early Christians were called firstfruits because they were a guarantee of many more to come” (*Wycliffe*).

Vincent remarks, “The figure is taken from the requirement of the Jewish law that the first-born of people and cattle, and the first growth of fruits and grain should be consecrated to the Lord. The point of the illustration is that Christians, like first-fruits, should be consecrated to God.” Another commentator remarks, “God shows his constancy by giving believers new birth so that they are a firstfruits of humanity offered to God” (Kittel and Bromiley).

**“Creatures”** The Greek word here means “an original formation...created thing” (Strong); it appears five times in the New Testament, four of which instances it is translated “creatures” and once appearing as “took.” Vine defines the Greek here as “the product of the creative act.”

With James 1:18, the context in which the lust of men contrasted with the holiness of God concludes.

**1:19** “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (KJV).

**“Ye know (this), my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (ASV)**

**“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (NIV).**

More than one commentator views James 1:19-27 as a section of passages. Lenski titles these several verses, “Hearing and Doing the Word” (548).

The relationship of this verse to what comes before in this chapter, if there is any direct relationship, is suggested by *Wycliffe*: “There is a possible connection between this paragraph and what precedes. The strong admonition to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath may be a reference to the readers’ accusations against God. Or it may be simply a general statement about hearing and speaking.” Barnes, likewise, views James 1:19 as the natural outgrowth of what precedes it in James 1: “The connection is this: ‘since God is the only source of good; since he tempts no man; and since by his mere sovereign goodness, without any claim on our part, we have had the high honor conferred on us of being made the first-fruits of his creatures, we

ought to be ready to hear his voice, to subdue all our evil passions, and to bring our souls to entire practical obedience.”

**“Wherefore”** The Greek word translated “wherefore” here is *eido* (i'-do), meaning, “properly, to see (literally or figuratively); by implication... to know” (Strong). Consequently, the ASV and one or more other translations read “ye know” instead of “wherefore.” Fream records in his commentary that James is essentially saying, “ye know this, but I shall say it anyway” (49).

**“Beloved”** The Greek word for “beloved” here is *gapetos* (ag-apay-tos'), which is related to the famous word for “love” — *agape*. Vine notes that “beloved” is often used “as a form of address, e.g., 1 Cor. 10:14.” Lenski says, “The address ‘my brethren beloved’ (v. 16) again marks the earnestness and the loving concern of James...” (549).

**“Brethren”** The word “brethren” is the usual word for brother, *adelphos*.

**“Let...be”** The Greek word for “let” here means “to stand” (Strong).

**“Every”** The word “every” is *pas*, a general word for everything, everyone, etc.

**“Man”** The word for “man” in this instance is *anthropos*, which means a human being without regard to gender.

**“Swift”** The Greek word *tachus* for “swift” means “prompt or ready” (Strong). The Greek word is related to our English word “tachometer.” Bauer, Gingrich and Danker add that *tachus* means “quick” and “speedy.” Louw and Nida render this part of James 1:19, “everyone must be quick to listen.”

Barnes observes the immediate context of James 1 as well as the value of its general teaching.

That is, primarily, to hear God; to listen to the instructions of that truth by which we have been begotten, and brought into so near relation to him. At the same time, though this is the primary sense of the phrase here, it may be regarded as inculcating the general doctrine that we are to be more ready to hear than to speak; or that we are to be disposed to learn always, and from any source. ... The ancients have some sayings on this subject which are well worthy of our attention. “Men have two ears, and but one tongue, that they should hear more than they speak.” “The ears are always open, ever ready to receive instruction; but

the tongue is surrounded with a double row of teeth, to hedge it in, and to keep it within proper bounds.”

**“To hear”** The Greek word for “to hear” is *akouo* (ak-oo'-o) and is related to the English word, “acoustics.”

**“Slow”** Robertson makes the valuable comment regarding the application of the word “slow” in this context: “slow to begin speaking, not slow while speaking.” Louw and Nida define “slow” as “pertaining to an extended period of time, with the implication of being slow to do something.”

**“To speak”** The Greek word for “to speak” is *laleo* (lal-eh'-o) “to talk, i.e. utter words” (Strong). Several biblical passages warn respecting the improper use of the tongue (Ecc. 5:2; Prov. 10:19; 13:3; 15:2) and contain similar caution as found in James 1:19. As a matter of fact, James will deal at length with the tongue in his little volume (1:26; 3:5-6, 8).

**“To wrath”** The Greek word translated “to wrath” means “excitement of the mind,” implies “violent passion” and is also translated “anger,” “indignation” and “wrath.” Barnes explains, “That is, we are to govern and restrain our temper...” The meaning of James here is so much like the proverb, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16:32). Woods says of “wrath,” “Wrath is violent emotion resulting in uncontrolled anger and improper indignation...Men will not, and cannot, properly listen to God when they entertain bitterness, malice, and hatred in their hearts toward their fellows” (74-75). Barnes notes the immediate application of the verse and the general use that can be made of it as well.

The particular point here is, however, not that we should be slow to wrath as a general habit of mind, which is indeed most true, but in reference particularly to the reception of the truth. We should lay aside all anger and wrath, and should come to the investigation of truth with a calm mind, and an imperturbed spirit. A state of wrath or anger is always unfavorable to the investigation of truth. Such an investigation demands a calm spirit, and he whose mind is excited and enraged is not in a condition to see the value of truth, or to weigh the evidence for it.

MacKnight notes frequently respecting wrath by religious persons: “Intemperate religious zeal is often accompanied with a train of bad

passions, and particularly with great wrath against those who differ from us in opinion” (588-589). Fream writes about the uselessness of unmitigated, unwarranted anger: “The high emotional state of one in intense anger makes reasoning almost impossible. Under the influence of this state of anger, one will often do and say things he will forever regret. Anger, which robs one of his reasoning and inhibition, can be as sinful as narcotics or alcohol, which does the same thing” (50).

Clarke makes a general and contemporary application to James 1:19: “Those who are hasty in speech are generally of a peevish or angry disposition. A person who is careful to consider what he says, is not likely to be soon angry.” In this verse, careful hearing is contrasted with hasty speaking and unwarranted anger; the latter two are to be avoided. MacKnight observes typical human conduct in contradistinction to the instruction of James 1:19: “Persons half learned, having an high opinion of their own knowledge in religious matters, are very fond of instructing others, and zealous to bring them over to their opinions” (588). Woods concludes: “The degree to which one adheres to the precept, ‘Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath,’ will, in large measure, reveal how stable one’s character is. The respect people are disposed to give to our opinions will depend largely on the amount of thought we give to the utterance of these opinions—and not the rapidity with which we express them!” (76).

**1:20** “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (KJV).

“for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (NKJV).

“**Man**” In this instance, the Greek for man is *aner*, the definition of which pertains to the male. However, with verse 19, it appears to be used as a synonym on this occasion for *anthropos* of the preceding verse.

“**Worketh**” The word “worketh,” *katergazomai*, here, according to Vine, means “to effect by toil,” and this form of the word is more emphatic than merely *ergazomai*.

“**Righteousness**” Strong defines righteousness, “equity (of character or act); specially (Christian) justification.” Bauer, Gingrich and Danker add that “righteousness” is “uprightness.” Vine defines “righteousness” as “the character or quality of being right or just” or “right action.” Woods plainly states of “righteousness”: “Righteousness is thus that state or condition wherein one is in a right

relationship with God. ...A righteous man is, therefore, one who is straight, lined up properly with God! ...right-doing” (77).

As a sidebar, it is important because of doctrinal error respecting “righteousness” to note also what righteousness **is not**. In some theological circles and sadly by some in the Lord’s church righteousness is defined as a divine virtue that is transferred or imputed to humans at the point of salvation. Transferred or imputed righteousness, as Woods writes, is not a biblical doctrine.

There is a vast difference between (a) not imputing guilt (this, the Lord does for us) and (b) in conferring merit (this, the Lord does not) in the process of salvation. The primary import of the word translated righteousness indicates a change in position and in relationship to God, and not, on that basis alone, a life of personal purity. A pardoned criminal is no longer regarded as guilty of the crimes which led to his arrest and conviction, but he is thence by no means a valuable citizen with a long record of civic goodness back of him simply because he has been pardoned. Righteousness is right-doing. To be righteous, one must do right. ...We should ever remember that justification does not eliminate the fact of sin; it simply releases the sinner from the guilt thereof. The history of the act must forevermore remain. (78-79)

The denominational doctrine of transferred or imputed righteousness further implies the impossibility of apostasy and is Calvinistic to the core.

Barnes notes the contrary contribution of anger toward one’s conduct. “The meaning of this passage is not that our wrath will make God either more or less righteous; but that its tendency is not to produce that upright course of life, and love of truth, which God requires. A man is never sure of doing right under the influence of excited feelings...”

“**God**” The word here is *theos*.

**1:21** “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (KJV).

“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to

**save your souls” (NKJV; see also ASV).**

Verses 21-25 appear to be a set or section together.

**“Wherefore”** The little Greek word that appears here means “through which thing” and is also translated “for which cause” (Strong). With this word “Wherefore” (KJV) or “Therefore” (NKJV) the immediately preceding (verses 19-20) is tied to the remaining verses in this chapter (verses 21-27). God is the source of information by which the faithful and attentive child of God will order his life on so many levels. Barnes makes the following correlation between the foregoing and verse 21: “In view of the fact that God has begotten us for his own service; in view of the fact that excited feeling tends only to wrong, let us lay aside all that is evil, and submit ourselves wholly to the influence of truth.”

**“Lay apart”** The Greek word for “lay apart” is also translated “cast off” and “put away.” Vine defines the Greek word appearing here as “to put off from oneself.” Robertson observes that the Greek used here is a “metaphor of removing clothing”; it is used this way in Scripture (Acts 7:58), but the image is more frequently in the New Testament applied to bad habits and sinful activity that the child of God must thrust from him (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:22, 25; Col. 3:8; Heb. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:1). Woods writes respecting the James 1:21 context: “...in the significance of the word the act of stripping oneself completely of every evil thought and act...the once-for-all-act to be performed before the word can accomplish its full work...something we must do for ourselves, since God *will* not, and others *cannot*, do it for us” (81).

**“All”** Here the Greek word *pas* again appears, which depending on the context means “all, any, every, the whole” and may refer to things (tangible or intangible) or people.

**“Filthiness”** The Greek word for “filthiness” means ‘moral dirtiness’ (Strong). Vine defines the word as “moral ‘defilement.’” Another lexicon defines “filthiness” as “moral uncleanness, vulgarity” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Woods denotes the import of the word and the attitude Christians should have respecting it. “‘Filthiness’ (riparian, that which is dirty) occurs only here in the New Testament, but a form of the word appears I the Septuagint Translation of the Old Testament in Zech. 3:3, 4, where the reference is to filthy garments. ...God regards all sin as a filthy rag, disgusting and sickening, and so should we” (80).

The particular sin intended in the context respecting “filthiness” and “naughtiness” is the “wrath” or anger of verse 20. Fream notes this correlation.

The admonition of James certainly does indicate that man can do something about his tendency to anger. By willpower and self--control one can, with the help of God, overcome most terrible habits in this loss of self-control. This is a subject that needs much reaching, much admonition, and certainly much self-control. One so afflicted should prayerfully seek help of the Lord. “But why,” we may ask, “do people become angry so easily . . . especially when they know it is profitless?” James seems to sense the question, for he answers it immediately in v. 21. Anger is most easily provoked when the inconsistencies of one’s life is laid bare. When the wrongness of a man’s action is made clear, that man will usually do one of two things: (1) He will repent, therefore correcting the wrong and ridding himself of the embarrassment of the inconsistency; or (2) He will become angry about the situation, thus dulling his reasoning capacity so that he no longer is facing the embarrassment. When deeds and conscience conflict, one may change the deeds or dull the conscience. Repentance changes the deeds. Anger dulls the reasoning capacity, thus the conscience. Often this is the psychology behind one who vigorously attacks the preacher, or behind one who is constantly fighting the church, or even angry with God. This accounts for the stoning of Stephen, and the Old Testament stoning of the prophets. In fact, it is the unrepented sins that crucified Jesus. Consequently, the Godly way to rid oneself of the anger-provoking situation is to repent. . . .Any sin overflows and, like leaven, contaminates the whole. (50-51)

**“Superfluity”** The “superfluity” in the KJV is rendered “overflow” in the ASV and means “superabundance” or “abundance” (Strong). Kittle and Bromiley define the Greek here as “surplus.” *Wycliffe* astutely observes that though the Christian has left behind the bulk of evil formerly characteristic of his life prior to becoming a child of God, inadvertently and surely he brings to his Christian life some

residue or baggage that is contrary to his new life as a Christian, and which must also be jettisoned.

Superfluity of naughtiness might suggest that only excess of evil is to be put away. However, Tasker rightly takes superfluity to mean “remainder.” “Every converted Christian brings with him into his new life much that is inconsistent with it. This has to be laid aside, that he may give himself more completely to the positive work of receiving with meekness the engrafted (RV, rightly implanted) word”

**“Naughtiness”** The word “naughtiness” means “badness” or “depravity” and is translated “evil,” “malice,” “maliciousness” and “wickedness”; the word also means “vice” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). More than the slightly doubtful behavior we attach to “naughtiness” today, in Scripture it is equivalent to sin. Vincent also notes the diminished vice ascribed to “naughtiness” today. “‘Naughtiness’ has acquired a petty sense in popular usage, as of the mischievous pranks of children, which renders it out of the question here.”

**“Receive”** Vine defines “receive” here as “to receive by deliberate and ready reception of what is offered.” Bauer, Gingrich and Danker define “receive” as “take, receive...take in hand, grasp...put up with, tolerate...approve, accept” depending on the context in which it occurs.

**“With”** The word “with” comes from the Greek *en*, which most often is translated “in.”

**“Meekness”** The word “meekness” means “mildness” and implies “humility” (Strong). Another lexicon defines “meekness” as “gentleness, humility, courtesy, considerateness...in the older favorable sense” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). However, whereas the words “mildness,” “meekness,” etc. are often understood to denote weakness, Vine observes that there is an inadequacy in the English language to adequately express the Greek here. Vine notes that saying what “meekness” is not may better define it: “Described negatively, meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all.” Kittel and Bromiley say of “meekness” that it is contrasted with “anger” in verse 10 “...and its gentleness will be a mark of the righteous in pleasing contrast to bitterness and contention.”

**“The”** In this place, the definite article for “the” appears, modifying *logos* (“word”), making *logos* refer to the Gospel, the Word of God, the Bible, etc.

**“Engrafted”** Not reliance on ourselves, but through the Word of God planted within us (Luke 8:11), Christians can be what God wants them to be.

**“Word”**

**“Able”** The Greek word is *dunamai* (doo'-nam-ah-ee) and its meaning includes the ideas of possibility and power, “...whence our words dynamic, dynamo, dynamite derive” (Woods 83).

**“To save”** The Greek here is *sozo* (sode'-zo), which means to “deliver or protect” (Strong). It also means “save, keep from harm, preserve, rescue” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). That the Word of God possesses the power to save souls when properly applied is a popular New Testament affirmation (John 8:32; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:22-25). “James was addressing people already forgiven of their alien sins; hence, the salvation here primarily refers to a deliverance following pardon. The Greek verb means to *keep safe, preserve*...it preserves us from a life of habitual sin, and it keeps us pure and holy. David said, ‘Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee’ (Psalm 119:11)” (Woods 83).

**“Souls”** The Greek word here is *psuche* (psoo-khay'), the definition of which depends on the context in which it is found; in this verse, its meaning is as one today ordinarily understands this word, i.e. the immortal part of man’s dual being existence. Consequently, Bauer, Gingrich and Danker refer to *psuche* as a “many-sided word.” Woods briefly summarizes the ways in which *psuche* is used in Scripture: “...the whole person (Acts 2:41), the life which ends at death (Psalm 78:50), and the spirit—the immortal nature—of man (Acts 2:27)” (84). For a full range of the different uses of *psuche*, see Vine.

Overall the verse strongly indicates the necessity of preparing one’s mind by the complete rejection of sinful contemplations before the more noble objects of the Word of God can flourish in our minds, produce appropriate action and save our souls. Consequently, Barnes says of James 1:21:

The particular reference in these passages is to the reception of the truth; and the doctrine taught is, that a corrupt mind, a mind full of sensuality and wickedness, is not favorable to the reception of the truth. It is not fitted to see its beauty, to appreciate its

value, to understand its just claims, or to welcome it to the soul. Purity of heart is the best preparation always for seeing the force of truth.

Woods writes:

The word “filthiness” is *riparian*, from *rupos*, that which is soiled, dirty, filthy. ...in classical Greek the word *rupos*, when used in the field of medicine, has reference to *wax in the ear!* ...As wax in the ear prevents sound impulses from entering the brain, so sin in the life effectively blocks the hearing of the word and its reception into the heart. Jesus said of some in this condition: “For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should turn again, and I should heal them” (Matt. 13:15). (84)

**1:22** “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (KJV).

**“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves” (ASV).**

“**But be ye**” Robertson mentions the significance of the present tense here: ““But keep on becoming.”” Woods writes here, ““keep on demonstrating yourselves as doers of the word’...God has never blessed anybody in any age or dispensation because of his faith until such time as his faith exhibited itself in obedience to his will” (84-85).

“**Doers**” The Greek word here is *poiotes* (*poy-ay-tace'*)...” meaning “...a performer; specifically, a "poet"; KJV - doer, poet” (Strong). One commentary gives good advice respecting the habitual application of the Word of God to one’s life: “...’be doers’ systematically and continually, as your regular business” (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown).

“**Word**” The Greek is *logos*.

“**Hearers**” The Greek word for “hearers” here is not *akouo* but *akroatai*. Woods comments:

The word rendered “hearers” (*akroatai*) was used in the early centuries to designate those attending lectures who heard, but never became genuine disciples. There are those, in every congregation, who attend services

regularly, and who sit passively where the truth is preached, but who never profit by the word preached, nor translate into life the things heard. Many regard hearing the word as sufficient within itself, and feel no sense of obligation further. Our Lord often refuted this assumption. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father in heaven... (86)

It is in that sense that the only other New Testament appearance of *akroatai* appears: “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (Rom. 2:13).

**“Only”** The Greek for “only” in this place is *monon* (mon'-on) and means “merely”; its is translated “alone,” “but” and “only” (Strong).

**“Deceiving”** The Greek word for “deceiving” means “to misreckon, delude” (Strong). Vincent explains the meaning thus: “‘to reckon,’ and hence, ‘to conclude by reasoning.’ The deception referred to is, therefore, that into which one betrays himself by false reasoning—reasoning ‘beside’ the truth.” Woods calls it “to reckon sideways” (86). Clarke also speaks of rationalizing away application of the Word of God in one’s life; “They had reasoned themselves into a state of carnal security, and the object of James is, to awake them out of their sleep.” Fream says of this “deceiving”: “Self-deception is a means of cheating oneself” (52).

Barnes notes the futility of only being aware of the Word of God:

Obey the gospel, and do not merely listen to it. ...If a man supposes that by a mere punctual attendance on preaching, or a respectful attention to it, he has done all that is required of him, he is laboring under a most gross self-deception. And yet there are multitudes who seem to imagine that they have done all that is demanded of them when they have heard attentively the word preached. Of its influence on their lives, and its claims to obedience, they are utterly regardless.

Clarke adds: “They had heard this doctrine; they had believed it; but they had put it to no practical use.” Jamieson, Fausset and Brown call rationalizing away personal application of God’s Word “logical fallacy that the mere hearing is all that is needed.” The same Greek word here “deceiving” appears once more in the New Testament, and where it is

used in the same sense as in James 1:22: “Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words” (Col. 2:4 NKJV).

Lenski remarks: “...their thinking is off the track. Hearing is a means, a very essential means and not an end” (555). Woods reminds us that the recipients of James 1:22 are Christians.

Let it be remembered that James is not addressing the alien sinner primarily here. These words are addressed to Christians! One who merely listens to a doctor, but never takes his course of treatment, need not hope to profit thereby; and a disciple of our Lord is by him regarded as a genuine one only if he abides in his word; i.e., conforms completely to it. (87)

**1:23** “For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass” (KJV).

“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” (NKJV).

Several words in this verse appear also in the preceding verse or in prior verses in this chapter, which were discussed upon their appearance earlier: “hearer,” “word” and “doer.” Verse 23 contains an obvious contrast between *hearing* and *doing*, which effectively resigns the *hearing* alone to uselessness or practically voids it. Such a hearer is no better for he goes “going on exactly as he was before” (Coffman).

“**Is like unto**” The Greek word here is *eiko* (i'-ko); and means “the idea of faintness as a copy...to resemble” (Strong).

“**A man**” The Greek for man here is *aner* (an-ayr').

“**Beholding**” The word “beholding” means “to observe fully” (Strong). Vine remarks that the Greek for “beholding” is a strengthened form of “perceive” and means “‘the action of the mind in apprehending certain facts about a thing’; hence, ‘to consider’; ‘behold.’” Kittel and Bromiley concur and stress the carefulness of the gazing. “This compound intensifies the simple *noeo*; it means ‘to immerse oneself in.’ This may be in the field of sensory perception, but critical examination is also denoted, and in literary Greek the idea is that of apprehension by pondering or studying.” Another lexicon defines “beholding” as to “*look at (with reflection)*” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

Vincent portrays “beholding” as “[w]ith the notion of ‘attentively considering...It is not mere careless hearing of the word which James rebukes, but the neglect to carry into practice what is heard. One may

be an attentive and critical hearer of the word, yet not a doer.” Woods states about “beholding” that it is “to fix the mind definitely on, to regard attentively, to take careful note of” (88).

“**Natural**” The Greek here is *genesis* (ghen'-es-is) and means “nativity” (Strong). Combined with the reference to “face,” Vincent interestingly describes the meaning: “Literally, ‘the countenance of his birth;’ the face he was born with.”

“**Face**” The Greek word for “face” here means “the front (as being towards view), i.e. the countenance, aspect, appearance, surface; by implication, presence, person” (Strong). Vine “denotes ‘the countenance,’ lit., ‘the part towards the eyes’ (from pros, ‘towards,’ ops, ‘the eye.’)”

“**A glass**” The Greek word translated here as “glass” is *optanomai* (op-tan'-om-ah-ee), the compound word meaning “into to gaze (i.e. with wide-open eyes, as at something remarkable)” (Strong). Vincent comments: “Better, the English Revised Version (1885): ‘a mirror; a metallic’ mirror. The word occurs only here and 1 Cor 13:12.” Robertson remarks about ancient mirrors: “The mirrors of the ancients were not of glass, but of polished metal (of silver or usually of copper and tin).”

Quoting others, *Wycliffe* summarizes the application of James 1:23.

The hearing-but-not-doing man is like a person who sees the reflection of his own face in a mirror. “He sees himself, it is true, but he goes on with whatever he was doing without the slightest recollection of what sort of person he saw in the mirror” (Phillips). The tenses in this verse are interesting: beholdeth (aorist), goeth (perfect), forgetteth (aorist). “By the aorists he (James) shows that the impression was momentary, and the oblivion instantaneous; by the perfect he implies a continuing condition of absence from the mirror” (H. Maynard Smith, *The Epistle of St. James*, p. 85).

Woods adds that “...it is vitally important for every disciple to take special pains to see to it that the truth heard is also heeded” (88).

**1:24** “For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was” (KJV).

“for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was” (NKJV).

**“Goeth his way”** The Greek here is *aperchomai* (ap-erkh'-om-ah-ee) and means “to go off (i.e. depart), aside (i.e. apart) or behind (i.e. follow), literally or figuratively” (Strong). Lenski remarks regard the tense of the ‘going away’: “He went away; the perfect implies that this being away continued” (556).

**“Straightway”** The word “straightway” means “at once or soon” (Strong).

**“Forgetteth”** The Greek for “forgetteth” means “to lose out of mind; by implication, to neglect” (Strong).

**“What manner”** The Greek word here has to do with “quality” (Strong).

**“Of man”** There is no Greek word for “man,” but it was added by translators in an attempt to convey the intended meaning.

Woods applies the message to Christians in the pulpit or in front of the pulpit as an unsightly spectacle to God; “Slovenliness, whether in the pulpit or the pew, is inexcusable, highly objectionable to God, and a serious barrier to the spread of the gospel” (89). The consequence of failing to apply God’s Word to one’s life is spiritually catastrophic. Lenski presents the imagery portrayed in James 1:24 thus: “His hearing netted him nothing as far as the real purpose and the power of the Word are concerned” (556).

**1:25** **“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (KJV).**

**“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” (NKJV).**

**“Looketh”** The Greek word for “looketh” in James 1:25 means “to bend beside, i.e. lean over (so as to peer within)” (Strong). Clarke adds that “looketh” “is very emphatic, and signifies that deep and attentive consideration given to a thing or subject which a man cannot bring up to his eyes, and therefore must bend his back and neck, stooping down, that he may see it to the greater advantage.” Of the five times the Greek for “looketh” here appears in the New Testament, three of the instances refer to ‘stooping down’ while looking into the empty tomb of Jesus (Luke 24:12; John 20:5, 11); the other two references appear in James 1:25 and 1 Peter 1:12. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown write that “looketh” is “stronger than ‘beholdeth.’” MacKnight assigns purpose to the stooping down when he writes that

it was “with an intention to look to and examine an object with accuracy. It is therefore fitly translated ‘looketh narrowly’” (589). After stating that “looketh” of this verse is stronger than “beholdeth” of the preceding verse, Woods adds respecting “looketh”: “It reveals (a) an abiding interest on the part of the viewer; (b) a recognition that there is something vitally important to see. It is this disposition which characterizes the interested listener” (90).

**“Into”** The Greek word for “into” in this place is *eis*. The word “into” indicates “...the penetration of the look into the very essence of the law” (Vincent).

**“Perfect”** The Greek word for “perfect” in this verse is *teleios*, which means “completeness” and also is translated “of full age” (Strong). Another reference work says that the word “perfect” here attached to the Law of Liberty (the Gospel) may refer to the “entire” law of liberty, comparable to Acts 20:27) (Kittel and Bromiley). Still another source defines “perfect” as “*having attained the end or purpose, complete, perfect*” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Wuest adds to the definition, “wanting nothing to completeness.” MacKnight puts it this way: “The gospel is called the perfect law, to distinguish it from the law of Moses, which made no man perfect, either in respect of holiness or of pardon, Heb. vii. 10; whereas the gospel makes men perfect in both” (589).

**“Law”** The Greek for “law” here is *nomos*. Vincent writes that the Greek construction is “[l]iterally, ‘the perfect law, the law of liberty.’” Whereas the word “law” can be applied variously dependent upon the context in which it occurs, the word “law” in this verse is a synonym for the Gospel, the Truth or the Word of God (John 8:32; Rom. 1:16; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; see also Psa. 19:7). Regarding “law” in James serving as a synonym for the Gospel, see James 2:8 (“royal law”), 12 (“law of liberty”). Critics may attempt to fault James for not using the word “gospel” in his epistle, but anyone believes James fails to refer to the Gospel is misguided. Lenski observes: “Leave out the gospel from the *nomos* of James, and ‘the liberty’ becomes an illusion...” (559).

The Gospel of Christ is no less law because it is not the Law of Moses. If there were no law in the New Testament era, there could not be any sin either (1 John 3:4). There are rules from God to be observed presently, but different rules from those under Judaism or Patriarchy before it. It is not as some maintain that because we are under “grace” we are not under “law.” The lengthy following excerpt form the

writings of Guy N. Woods is necessary owing to the corruption even members of the Lord's church make respecting the relationship of "law" today and "grace."

... "the perfect law." It is well to observe first that it is *law* into which one is to look. ... Law is "a rule of action"; to insist that there is no law in the new covenant is to urge that there is no rule by which we are to walk today. ... "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21); a "law of the Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2); a "law of liberty" (James 1:25; 2:12); the "law of love" (Rom. 13:10); and, to insist that there is *no law* in the New Testament is (a) in conflict with these plain affirmations of inspiration; (b) implies that we are without an enforceable standard of conduct; and (c) disregards the significance of the word *law*.

But did not Paul declare that children of God are not under law, but under grace? (Rom. 6:14.) The statement, "Ye are not under law, but under grace," is either (a) limited by the context; or (b) it is not. If *it is not*, Christians are a lawless people. Those who are under no law are lawless. It is absurd to affirm, in one breath, that children of God are not under law, any law, law of any kind, and then to concede that they are under restraint. Law is restraint. Those who are restrained are under law. Where there is no law there is no restraint. Moreover, those who are without law are without sin. Sin is the transgression of the law. "Where there is no law, neither is there transgression." (Rom. 4:15.) Where there is no law, there is nothing to transgress; where there is nothing to transgress, there is no sin. Hence, where there is no law, there is no sin. The conclusion is irresistible. What is sin? It is lawlessness. (1 John 3:4). What is lawlessness? Lawlessness is an offense against law. But, where there is no law, there can be offense against it. Those incapable of offending are either (a) perfect, thus *above* law; or (b) they are wholly *without* law. How can one transgress that which does not exist? We are under some law; or, we are not. If we are not, then it is impossible for us to sin; if we are under some

sort of law, then those who affirm otherwise are in grave error. (90-91)

Coffman in his commentary likewise notes that Paul and James did not differ respecting law, but that both taught the same principle. Coffman writes, first quoting still another commentator: "Gibson said that 'The conception of the gospel as a law is characteristic of James'; but that conception was also that of the apostle Paul who wrote, 'Do we then make law of none effect through faith? God forbid: nay, we establish law' (Rom. 3:31), also, 'And so fulfill the law of Christ' (Gal. 6:2)."

Several additional pages in Woods' commentary address the error of jettisoning all law and deserve attention we cannot afford to give space here, to which the reader is recommended (90-94). Two additional statements, though, especially need to be mentioned here. Opponents of any law to which the Christian is amenable commonly accuse their fellow Christians as being legalists for recognizing that all today are bound by and will be judged by the "perfect law of liberty." Woods pens: "To allege that such is legalism is to level the charge against the Lord himself who is the author of the plan of salvation applicable to us today" (93) and "If it is legalism to insist that every command of Christ should be equally respected and faithfully obeyed, then let us all be legalists! Far better this than to deny the plain affirmations of his word and thus, in effect, to become infidels!" (94).

**"Liberty"** The word "liberty" means "freedom" (Strong). The "perfect law of liberty" contrasts to the Law of Moses. Clarke understands also that the "perfect law of liberty" stands opposite the Law of Moses or Judaism. The Book of Hebrews advances the superiority of the New Testament over the Old Testament. Kittel and Bromiley note that the word "liberty" attached here may be an attempt to guard against an unjustified legalism. Bauer, Gingrich and Danker suppose the reference to "liberty" may pertain to "the freedom that stands in contrast to the constraint of the Mosaic law." MacKnight enumerates ways in which the Gospel is a law of liberty:

The gospel is called the law of liberty, -1. Because it delivers men from the slavery of their lusts, and which is true liberty; 2. Because it hath freed the Jews from the law of Moses, which was a yoke of bondage they were not able to bear; 3. Because it delivers all true believers from the punishment of sin; 4. Because it assures us, that in the eye of God all men are on a level,

and equally entitled to the privileges of the gospel; 5. Because it forbids the acceptance of persons in judgment, chap. ii. 12. (589)

**“Continueth”** The word “continueth” means “to stay near” (Strong). Vine defines “continueth” as “to continue or persevere in anything.”

**“Therein”** This word was added by the translators.

**“He being”** The words “he being” represent a Greek word that means to come into existence.

**“Forgetful”** The Greek for “forgetful” pertains to “negligence” (Strong). Vincent characterizes the description of the person implicated in this verse as “‘a hearer of forgetfulness;’ whom forgetfulness characterizes.”

**“Of the work”** The Greek word translated “of the work” is *ergon* and means “(to work); toil (as an effort or occupation); by implication, an act” (Strong). Vincent observes that the definite article “the” does not appear here, so that godly work in general is meant. Ergon is related to our word “ergonomics,” which usually pertains to efficient working conditions.

**“Man”** The word “man” is not in the original language, but it was added by the translators.

**“Blessed”** The Greek word for “blessed” means “fortunate, well off” (Strong). It also means “happy” and is translated that way sometimes.

**“Deed”** The word “deed” means “performance” (Strong). Vincent says the rendering here is literally “in his doing.”

Woods summarizes the problem regarding those for whom hearing the Word of God bears no fruit.

They sit quietly and politely under the sound of gospel preaching, but their thoughts are far away and on material matters, and the word of truth finds no room to settle down and stay in hearts already filled with worldly affairs. ... (a) the hearer who forgets; (b) the hearer who puts into practice the things heard. Only the latter is promised blessing. ... Blessedness belongs only to those who are obedient to the Lord’s will. Jesus said, “If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them.” (John 13:17.) (94-95)

**1:26** “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is

vain” (KJV).

**“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” (NKJV).**

**“If any man”** The word for “man” here is neither *aner* nor *anthropos*; the Greek here literally means “if any” and can be applied to humans, things, etc.

**“Among you”** The words “among you” do not appear in the original and were added by the translators because they thought the words aided the reader to understand the intent of the verse.

**“Seem”** Vine gives as one of the definitions for “seem” in this place, “to be of opinion.” Vincent describes the manner in which the words “seem to be” are employed in this verse, when he writes: “A man can scarcely seem to be religious, when, as Trench observes, ‘his religious pretensions are belied and refuted by the allowance of an unbridled tongue.’” The NKJV rendering of “thinks” conveys the idea better to us: “The context suggests that the reference is to the man’s attitude toward himself, rather than as he may appear to others” (Woods 96).

**“To be”** The Greek word here translated “to be” means “to exist” (Strong).

**“Religious”** The Greek word for “religious” means “ceremonious in worship” and implies “pious” (Strong). Vine notes of “religious” that it pertains to being “careful of the externals of divine service.” Vincent notes that the word “religious” (*theoskos*) appears nowhere else in the New Testament. The English word “religious” appears once more in the Bible (Acts 13:43), but it comes from an entirely different Greek word.

**“And”** The word “and” in this place does not appear in the original.

**“Bridleth not”** Obviously, the idea in “bridleth” originates with the bit placed horses’ mouths to control them. Robertson observes respecting the appearance here: “The picture is that of a man putting the bridle in his own mouth, not in that of another.” Clarke comments: “He who speaks not according to the oracles of God, whatever pretences he makes to religion, only shows, by his want of scriptural knowledge, that his religion is false ... or empty of solid truth, profit to others, and good to himself.”

**“Tongue”** The Greek word for tongue in this place is *glossa*; it is used in the variety of ways in which the word “tongue” is used in

English (i.e., the physical member in one's mouth or by implication, language). Couple with the words "bridleth not," "tongue" here has to do with improper speaking. "Discretion in speech is better than fluency" (*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown*). Louw and Nida note: "In some languages the expression ...in Jas 1.26 may be rendered as 'one who does not tell his tongue what to say' or 'one who cannot tie his tongue down' or 'one who cannot stop his talking.'" Lenski comments regarding the type of person about whom James writes here: "This man is always voicing his own opinions and damaging people right and left like an unrestrained horse; he talks even religion in the same way and is not meek to hear the Word for his own soul's good. ...fooling himself in his very religion" (560). Fream adds:

The self-deception involved in the misuse of tongue is an interesting thought. A man, secure in the conviction that his religion and his worship is acceptable with God, will grow all the more vehement with his tongue-slaughter. Like Moses, if he is not careful, he will sit on the throne of God and pass both judgment and sentence on his fellow man; personally seeing to it that the sinners that surround him will get the tongue-lashing they "deserve." And the deception feeds itself! The more he lashes and cuts and destroys, the more like God he feels; until finally the very air reeks with his presence and all men tremble at the sound of his voice. It seems that some tongues will only be stilled when their owners face God in the judgment! (56-57)

**"But"** The Greek word for "but" in this instance is *alla*, which means "other things" or "contrariwise" (Strong). Another Greek word, *de*, is usually employed for the word "but."

**"Deceiveth"** The Greek word for "deceiveth" means "to cheat, i.e. delude" (Strong). Robertson says "deceiveth" in this context means: "He plays a trick on himself." Barnes expands on this idea, so though one may trick himself, others who observe one's unruly tongue are not fooled. "Implying that he does deceive his heart by supposing that any evidence can prove that he is under the influence of religion if his tongue is unrestrained. Whatever love, or zeal, or orthodoxy, or gift in preaching or in prayer he may have, this one evil propensity will neutralize it all, and show that there is no true religion at heart."

**"Heart"** The Greek word for "heart" is *kardia*, from which our English words "cardia" and "cardiac" come. *Kardia* means "the heart,

i.e. (figuratively) the thoughts or feelings (mind); also (by analogy) the middle” (Strong). Essentially, the Greek word for “heart” can be used in the same number of ways the English word can be employed, its meaning varying depending upon the context in which it occurs.

“**This man’s**” The Greek word for “this” here is *toutou* (too’-too) and is masculine gender and possessive. The word “man” does not appear in the verse, but it is indicated through the word for “this.”

“**Religion**” The Greek word here is derived from the Greek for “religious” above and means “ceremonial observance” (Strong). Vine says of the word “religion” that it “signifies ‘religion’ in its external aspect.” Robertson adds, “It means religious worship in its external observances, religious exercise or discipline, but not to the exclusion of reverence.”

“**Is**” No corresponding word for “is” appears in the original.

“**Vain**” The Greek word for “vain” means “empty, i.e. (literally) profitless, or (specifically) an idol” (Strong). Vine remarks that “vain” is “void of result.” Robertson says of “vain,” “Comes to nothing.” Louw and Nida define “vain” as “futility.”

Albert Barnes summarizes James 1:26 well:

That is, if he does not restrain his tongue, his other evidences of religion are worthless. A man may undoubtedly have many things in his character which seem to be evidences of the existence of religion in his heart, and yet there may be some one thing that shall show that all those evidences are false. **Religion is designed to produce an effect on our whole conduct;** and if there is any one thing in reference to which it does not bring us under its control, that one thing may show that all other appearances of piety are worthless. (emphasis added, ler)

Coffman reminds us that the epistle was written to Christians, howbeit, Christians it is obvious from this verses as well as James 2:14-26 who were reluctant to acknowledge that Christianity required corresponding activity in their lives.

It is clear from this that James was addressing this letter to self-deceived people who in some manner had accepted the proposition that they were saved without reference to the practice of true Christianity. What was their fallacy? It could well have been that of imagining that they were “saved through faith only.” That they

were indeed believers is perfectly clear from the fact that they thought they were religious and were deceived into thinking that their conduct was unrelated to their salvation.

**1:27** “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (KJV).

“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” (NKJV).

Robertson records respecting James 1:26-27, “...the right spirit of religion...leads to such acts.” One’s defective religion neither leads him to practice purity and holiness nor exhibit benevolence toward others less fortunate than ourselves.

“**Pure**” The Greek for “pure” here means “clean (literally or figuratively)” (Strong). Vine notes that “pure” also means “pure,” as being cleansed.”

“**Undefiled**” The Greek word for “undefiled” means “unsoiled, i.e. (figuratively) pure” (Strong). Vincent observes: “The two adjectives, ‘pure and undefiled,’ present the positive and negative sides of purity.” As such, that should conclusively demand utter or complete holiness in religion, to include one’s personal conduct.

“**God**” The Greek *Theos* appears here.

“**The Father**” There is no article, “the,” preceding “Father.” The Greek for “Father” here is *pater*. Vine observes that *pater* is “from a root signifying ‘a nourisher, protector, upholder,’” and it may refer to “the nearest ancestor” or “forefather” among other uses, each determined by the context in which it appears.

“**To visit**” The Greek word here translated “to visit” means “to inspect, i.e. (by implication) to select; by extension, to go to see, relieve” (Strong). Vine adds, “to look upon, care for, exercise oversight.” Vincent challenges those who claim Jesus as Lord with his insight into the word “visit”: “James strikes a downright blow here at ministry by proxy, or by mere gifts of money. Pure and undefiled religion demands ‘personal contact’ with the world’s sorrow: to visit the afflicted, and to visit them in their affliction.” Clarke, likewise, notes the personal involvement ascribed to the word “visit” in our context.

True religion does not merely give something for the relief of the distressed, but it visits them, it takes the oversight of them, it takes them under its care... It goes to their houses, and speaks to their hearts; it relieves their wants, sympathizes with them in their distresses...The religion that does not prove itself by works of charity and mercy is not of God.

Robertson notes of the verb tense here, “present tense for habit of going to see.” Christianity as a way of life sees its faithful proponents repeatedly demonstrating their fidelity to Jesus Christ by actively and regularly practicing their Christianity.

**“The fatherless”** The article, “the,” does not appear here. The Greek for “fatherless” is *orphanos* (or-fan-os') and means “bereaved (‘orphan), i.e. parentless” (Strong).

**“Widows”** The Greek word for “widows” means “through the idea of deficiency; a widow (as lacking a husband)” (Strong). Robertson quotes another commentator that orphans and widows are the “natural objects of charity in the community.” Barnes notes that true religion naturally leads to “practical benevolence” in addition to personal purity. He further says respecting the benevolence in this verse: “This is an instance or specimen of what true religion will do...” Lenski comments that genuine Christianity manifests itself in “its undefiled state by proper fruits, two of which are named as samples” (560).

**“Affliction”** The Greek word for “affliction” means “pressure (literally or figuratively)” (Strong). Vine notes that the word can apply to “anything which burdens the spirit,” and it appears in a wide variety of contexts in the New Testament.

**“To keep”** The Greek word translated “to keep” means “to guard (from loss or injury, properly, by keeping the eye upon...)” (Strong). Vine adds respecting the meaning of “keep,” “to watch over, preserve, keep, watch.” Robertson astutely once more notes the repetitive process of practicing one’s Christianity when he writes: “Present active infinitive, ‘to keep on keeping oneself unspotted from the world.’”

**“Unspotted”** The Greek word for “unspotted” means “unblemished (physically or morally)” (Strong). Vine notes that “unspotted” means “free from contamination.” Woods observes: “One keeps “unspotted” from the world by not allowing the spots of the world to be transferred to him. One cannot come into contact with dirt,

without becoming dirty; in like fashion, it is impossible to participate in the things of the world, without being worldly” (103). A number of passages urge Christians likewise (Eph. 5:11; 1 Tim. 5:22; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pet. 1:15-16. Coffman quotes Zerr with respect to the practical application of keeping oneself unspotted from the world; it means “to be free from the vices commonly practiced by mankind.” Fream records a fitting illustration about being spotted by the world.

Not to be slighted is the picture of the man spotted by the sinful slush of this world. The young man, with his car polished clean and white, asked if he could park it in front of the house. “You may park that pretty car there if you wish” was the reply, “but you won’t drive it away!” Thinking the matter some kind of a joke, the car was left parked. Three hours later the young man returned to find his car covered with great gobs of black mud. He had parked his car by two mud-filled holes in the pavement, and passing cars had done the rest. Yes, friend; you are free in Christ. You may park that lily-white carcass of yours by the sinful chugholes of this world if you wish, but you will not be lily-white for long! If we could only realize that it is not just for His good pleasure that God warns us . . . but for our *benefit!* (57-58)

**“The world”** In this instance, the article, “the,” does precede the word “world.” The Greek for “world” here is *kosmos*. It means “orderly arrangement, i.e. decoration; by implication, the world (in a wide or narrow sense, including its inhabitants, literally or figuratively [morally])” (Strong). Vine chronicles the various ways in which *kosmos* appears in Scripture: “the earth” as part of the visible universe, “‘earth’ in contrast to Heaven,” “by metonymy, the ‘human race, mankind,’ “‘Gentiles’ as distinguished from Jews” and “the ‘present condition of human affairs,’ in alienation from and opposition to God” among others.

Barnes pictures James 1:26-27 as the depiction of true religion respecting “what it will do when it is properly and fairly developed.” Further, by demonstrating both holiness and benevolence, Christians truly imitate the heavenly Father, whereas those who do not manifest both of these qualities in their lives lack evidence in their lives that they are practicing Christians.

These two things may, in fact, be said to constitute religion. If a man is truly benevolent, he bears the image of that God who is the fountain of benevolence; if he is pure and uncontaminated in his walk and deportment, he also resembles his Maker, for he is holy. If he has not these things, he cannot have any well-founded evidence that he is a Christian; for it is always the nature and tendency of religion to produce these things. (Barnes)

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* makes the noteworthy observation by way of contrast between ritualism and the activity of the Christian religion that true religion cannot be limited to ceremonialism, but it must manifest through good works as well. In addition, that commentary makes a very interesting point respecting the progression of Christianity in one's life: "Religion in its rise interests us about ourselves; in its progress, about our fellow-creatures; in its highest stage, about the honour of God."

A special note is necessary following James 1:27 because a number of congregations among the churches of Christ have so construed the verse, and others similar to it, in such a way as to exempt its application to the church, restricting its relevance to the individual Christian. Such a claim is absurd on its face, implying as it were a *Type A* and a *Type B* religion, one of which is exclusively applicable to Christians on a congregational level and one of which is exclusively applicable to Christians on an individual level. Not strangely, the issue actually revolves around money and what money can buy. The relevant comments Guy N. Woods, though somewhat lengthy, appear below.

It is alleged that this passage is exclusively individual; i.e., the duties here enjoined are obligatory upon individuals *only*, and that the church cannot scripturally participate in such. ...if it be urged that James has in mind only the individual from his use of the word "oneself," in the final clause of the verse, it should be noted that the context deals with the "church assembly" (James 2:1ff), in the verses following which, as James penned the statement, was without chapter and verse division; (b) such a conclusion would mean that the church is forbidden to practice pure and undefiled religion; (c) such would require that each individual

member of the church must, if able, take at least *two* orphans and at least *two* widows (the words are plural), into his own home and support them, in order to engage in pure and undefiled religion; (d) If it is alleged that James designates by the word “oneself” in the last clause of the verse a duty which only an individual may perform, and which bears no relationship to *church* duties, would not Paul’s statement, “But let a man prove *himself*, and so let *him* eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For *he* that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto *himself*, if he discern not the body” exclude the church? (1 Cor. 11:28, 29.) If “oneself” in James 1:27 excludes the church from all participation in the matters mentioned, why would not “himself,” from the same mode of reasoning, eliminate the Lord’s supper from *church* action? ...The truth is, it was not James’ design to indicate the *who* in the passage under study, but the *what*. ...Paul designates the *who* in 1 Tim. 5:16, when he charged the church with the responsibility of providing for the widow “indeed.” ...So Paul taught in Gal. 6:10: “So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, *especially* toward them that are of the household of faith.” The effort to make this passage exclusively individual is absurd; it requires the conclusion that Paul, in a letter specifically addressed to “the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2), gave them instruction therein *which it would be sinful for these churches to follow!* It is clearly the responsibility of the church to provide for the needy. (James 1:27; Gal. 6:10; 1 Tim. 5:16.) (101-102)

# James Chapter Two

**2:1** “My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons” (KJV).

“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality” (NKJV).

“My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism” (NIV)

Coffman briefly summarizes the section of James 2:1-13 starting here. His observations not only provide a digest of the next several verses, he links the applicability of the passage to our own age, too.

The first section of this chapter (James 2:1-13) carries a warning against courting the favor of middle-upper income people or the wealthy, against showing special courtesies and solicitude. There are no doubt many congregations which are tempted to do this very thing. After all, there are budgets to be subscribed, programs to be financed and all kinds of good works which require constant scrambling on the part of the church elders and deacons in their efforts to finance such things. Therefore, the tendency is to do a little bowing and scraping when some well-to-do person condescends to visit the assembly of the church. It was no different in that generation to which James addressed these remarkable words. The warning is clear enough: “Don't do it!”

The warning provided in this context is ever needed because of the dependable tendency of humanity to revere wealth and accord it undue attention or even affection. Church members are not immune to this inclination. “The ability to accumulate riches, in the minds of many people, seems to qualify any man for any position” (Fream 68), including in the church, as James notes in the passage under review. I once know of a congregation that had appointed a man an elder who had only been a member of the church for nine months, it seems, largely on the basis of the fact that he owned his own business and was on the town council. Besides an abuse of passages marking the qualifications of elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11), that congregation suffered for its error in that regard.

**“Brethren”** The word “brethren” is from the word adelphos, already noted in this study. *Wycliffe* remarks that the words “My brethren” indicate that James shifts to a new subject at this point. Lenski notes the change of topic as well as the gentle encouragement to carefully consider the application of this new material; “The friendly address ‘my brethren’ introduces the new subject and bids the readers heed the admonition in a fraternal spirit” (562).

The use of the word “brethren” has its greatest application in this context respecting Christians as opposed to Jewish or some other relationship by which members could refer to each other as brother. *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* says of “brethren”: “the equality of Christians as ‘brethren’ forms the groundwork of the admonition.”

**“The faith”** The definite article, “the,” appears here preceding the word for “faith.” The Greek word for “faith” is *pistis* and means “moral conviction” and “by extension, the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself” (Strong). It is translated “assurance,” “belief,” “faith” and “fidelity.” The context in which the word appears determines whether it refers to the system of faith or one’s personal faith derived from the system of faith. “Faith” in this verse obviously, especially because of the presence of the definite article, refers to the system of faith or Gospel. *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* makes an interesting and valid correlation between “faith” and Christian living: “James grounds Christian practice on Christian faith.”

**“Of our Lord”** The word “of” is the same word translated “the” preceding “faith” in this verse. Essentially, the three words are “the our Lord.” The word “Lord” is *kurios* (koo'-ree-os), meaning “supreme in authority... a respectful title” (Strong). It is translated as “God,” “Lord,” “master” and “Sir.” Lord may apply to deity or to mortals, in both instances denoting superior positions respecting others under consideration. The context determines whether the reference pertains to deity or to mortals.

**“Jesus”** The Greek word translated “Jesus” is *Iesous* (ee-ay-sooce'). Other Israelites wore this name, some of them biblical characters, e.g. Joshua.

**“Christ”** The Greek word for “Christ” is a transliterated (as opposed to translated) word: *Christos* (khris-tos') meaning “anointed, i.e. the Messiah” (Strong). In the sense of anointed (Septuagint), Old Testament priests and kings were anointed and references to the Son of God appear as “Messiah.” In New Testament contexts, special application of the word identifies the Son of God or the Messiah.

Some view the phrase “our Lord Jesus Christ” as a correct and appropriate title for the Son of God respecting the Christian’s relationship to him. “This exact title of the Master is found in that letter addressed by James and the apostles and elders in Jerusalem to the Syrian churches (Acts 15:26), and this is considered by some to support the proposition that this epistle was written by the same James” (Coffman).

**“Glory”** The Greek word for “glory” is *doxa*, the usually word for “glory.” Vine says *doxa* “primarily signifies an opinion, estimate, and hence, the honor resulting from a good opinion.” The word “Lord” does not precede the word “glory” in the original and is simply “the glory” (Robertson). Woods contrasts the glory Jesus Christ enjoys now (comparable to what he enjoyed before his Incarnation) with the humble life and death he experienced on earth (105).

**“With”** The Greek word translated “with” here is *en*, usually translated as “in.”

**“Respect of persons”** The single Greek word translated as “respect of persons” in the King James Version means “partiality, i.e. favoritism” (Strong). The original language word is a compound word, which through its parts means “to receive the countenance” (Vincent). Lenski observes the Greek means “the act of being partial to a person when one sees who he is” (562). Woods notes that the partiality under consideration is based on “external grounds” and “worldly considerations”(105), which does injustice to the very nature of the spirit religion, Christianity.

Partiality, based on worldly or material considerations, is so far removed from the true spirit of Christ, that for any of the disciples to exhibit such is a violent perversion of the Christian religion. ...What is taught is that there is no place for worldly acclaim in Christianity, and that all such reverence in public worship is unseemly and sinful. (Woods 106-107)

The partiality between Christians that is condemned here is reminiscent of the lack of partiality with God toward humanity (i.e., God is no respecter of persons, Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17).

**2:2** “For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment” (KJV).

**“For if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing” (ASV).**

**“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” (NKJV).**

**“Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in” (NIV; cf. RSV “shabby”).**

**“For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes” (NASU; NASB).**

**“For”** This is the usual translation of the word *gar*. Robertson observes that the word “for” and the balance of the verse serve as the example for the announcement of verse one: “An illustration of the prohibition.” Lenski says the scenario under consideration “visualizes a case which may occur at any time” (564).

**“There come”** The Greek word for “there come” means “to enter” (Strong).

**“Assembly”** The word translated “assembly” here is *sunagoge* (soon-ag-o-gay') and means “an assemblage of persons; specifically, a Jewish ‘synagogue’ (the meeting or the place); by analogy, a Christian church.” Besides “assembly,” the Greek word is translated as “congregation” and “synagogue.” Of the 58 times the word appears in the New Testament, it occurs as “synagogue” except where it is rendered “congregation” once (Acts 13:43) and “assembly” once (Jam. 2:2). Vincent notes that the Greek word is a compound word, *sun* meaning “together” and *agoo* meaning “to bring,” and literally means “a gathering or congregation.” Vincent adds that the word pertains to gathers for other occasions besides to worship. Vincent then writes: “In this passage alone the word is distinctly applied to a Christian assembly or place of worship.” *Wycliffe* quotes another commentator “that the two words *sunagoge* and *ekklesia* are roughly synonymous...” Guy N. Woods remarks about the choice of words to describe a Christian assembly.

If to us today it appears strange that a Christian writer, addressing Christians regarding conduct in a Christian assembly should, nevertheless, refer to the even under a Jewish appellation, let it be remembered that the

religious background of the writer and the people to whom he wrote was wholly Jewish; that these impressions lingered for a long time; that the Jewish influence was strongly felt and exhibited throughout the apostolic age; and that terms were of necessity used which would convey as fully as possible to Jewish people the mind and message of the Spirit through James. (107)

Incidentally, the church is more nearly patterned after the synagogue than it is patterned after either the Tabernacle or the Temple; the synagogue was a place of assembly and the assembly where Jews were edified through instruction and where they prayed and sang songs without instrumental accompaniment. Barnes notes: “It is probable that the Christian church was modelled, in its general arrangements, after the Jewish synagogue...” The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* also observes that the arrangement of the Lord’s church was patterned after the synagogue rather than the Temple.

**“Man”** The Greek here for “man” is *aner*, meaning “an individual male” (Strong).

**“Gold ring”** Vincent denotes that the Greek word appearing only here in the New Testament refers to several rings rather than one ring: “...having his hands conspicuously loaded with rings and jewels...” Robertson defines the Greek here as “a gold-fingered man.” Several resources record that ancient men of some financial means wore several rings per finger.

**“Goodly”** The word “goodly” comes from the Greek *lampros* (lam-pros') and means “radiant; by analogy ...figuratively, magnificent...” (Strong). Vincent adds respecting the attire described here: “Literally, ‘bright or shining clothes.’”

**“And”** The Greek word for “and” here is *de* and is often translated as “but.”

**“Also”** The Greek word for “also” in this place is *kai*, which is usually translated as “and.”

**“Poor”** The word “poor” in this verse means “beggar” or “pauper” (Strong). Woods contrasts the poor with which we are familiar with the poor man intended here: “one dependent on the charity of others for his very livelihood, not simply one with but little of this world’s goods, yet with a sufficiency for living.”

**“Vile”** The word in this case means “dirty,” “cheap” or “shabby” (Strong). Vine says the Greek means “filthy dirty.” *Barnes* describes the word for vile as meaning “foul.”

**“Raiment”** This is the same Greek word translated “apparel” earlier in this verse.

The scene unfolded for us in James 2:2-3 may be of two non-Christian visitors attend an assembly of the church to see for themselves what comprises Christian worship and who are the people that compose this new religion. Both a rich man and a beggar decide to attend, and the church treats the two radically different from each other (Lenski 564). The point of the likely treatment of visitors so drastically different from each other respecting earthly fortunes is as Woods explains. “Though their economic status is as different as day and night, and though, in social rank, they are as far apart as the poles, they are both in church, and there stand equal before God who respects not the persons of men” (108). Based on this verse, Coffman makes a useful observation about the openness of Christian worship in the first century. “What a marvelous insight this gives into the early Christian assemblies. They were open meetings, in which men of all classes and conditions might enter.” Coffman also makes an application to the present with which, unfortunately, we fear can identify in modern churches of our Lord.

It is a very vivid picture which James brings to our minds in this passage. The Christians have assembled for worship; and suddenly there walks in this distinguished looking man with a gold ring and obviously expensive clothes. He creates quite a stir. Someone, one of the ushers perhaps, bows him into a good place; and then, when a working man, still wearing his work clothes, comes in, he is told to sit on the floor or stand! Such conduct, either then or now, is disgraceful. But does it still happen? Who can deny that it does?

Last, we observe that the message of James in these verses is not a new teaching, but the principle survives from the Old Testament. “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour” (Lev. 19:15). See also Jude 14-16 for the penalty for the conduct described in James 2:2, and notice the sinners who also are associated in Scripture with the sin

respect of persons.

**2:3** “And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool” (KJV).

“and ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say, Sit thou here in a good place; and ye say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool” (ASV).

“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’” (NKJV).

“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’” (NIV; “at my feet, RSV).

“**And**” Here, the word “and” is translated from the Greek *de*, which is usually translated as “but.”

“**Ye have respect**” The compound Greek word translated “ye have respect” means “to gaze at (with favor, pity or partiality)” (Strong).

“**Weareth**” The Greek word translated “weareth” means “‘to bear,’ and denoting ‘repeated or habitual action,’ is chiefly used of clothing, weapons, etc., of soft raiment” (Vine).

“**Gay**” The Greek word for “gay” in this verse is *lampros*. It is the same word translated “goodly” in the previous verse.

“**Clothing**” The Greek word translated as “clothing” in this verse is the same word that appeared twice in the previous verse and was translated as “apparel” and “raiment.”

“**Thou**” The Greek word *su* (soo) appears twice in this verse, in each instance making the respective statements to the wealthy visitor and poor visitor emphatic or bordering on a command (Robertson).

“**Good Place**” The two Greek words translated “good place” mean “[l]iterally, ‘honorably;’ in a seat of honor” (Vincent). However, sometimes the Greek word for “good,” *kalos*, can be interpreted as a “polite request” and could appear here as “please sit here” (Louw and Nida).

“**Poor**” The Greek word for “poor” in this verse is the same Greek word translated as “poor” in the previous verse.

“**Under**” Vincent remarks that the Greek word translated “Under” means “[n]ot literally ‘underneath,’ but down on the ground beside.”

**“Footstool”** The compound Greek word here translated “footstool” is *hupopodion* (hoop-op-od'-ee-on) and means “something under the feet” (Strong).

*Barnes’ Notes* summarizes the application of the verse. Concerning the rich man: “The meaning is, you treat him with distinguished marks of respect on the first appearance, merely from the indications that he is a rich man, without knowing any thing about his character.” Concerning the poor man: “The meaning is, that he would be treated as if he were not worth the least attention.” Lenski offers a colorful synopsis of the situation portrayed:

...James says, are you Christians still impressed by a gold ring and a bright rag! ...Is the soul of the one worth more than the soul of the other? Are not all men, rich and poor, equal in the house of God? Something is wrong with the faith of those who have not heard the Word of God sufficiently to learn this and to act on this elementary truth (1:22, etc.). (565-566).

Coffman likewise observes the impropriety of the conduct James denounced:

A number of totally false assumptions on the part of Christians acting in such a manner are discernible in this situation condemned by James. By such conduct, the perpetrators of this injustice revealed that they considered fine clothing a mark of good character and shabby clothes a mark of bad character. It showed that they considered wealth to be a guide to the worth of persons, that financial ability should procure a more favorable acceptance in the church, and that social and economic caste systems are allowed in the religion of Christ. All men should be thankful that James came down very hard against such false values.

**2:4** “Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?” (KJV).

“Do ye not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?” (ASV).

“have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?” (NAS).

**“Are ye partial”** The Greek word *diakrino* means “to separate thoroughly... to withdraw from, or (by implication) oppose; figuratively, to discriminate” (Strong). The compound Greek word by its parts could be rendered through judging.

**“Evil”** The Greek word for “evil” in this verse is related to a Greek word for “labor,” and so the evil here is evil activity or labors (Robertson).

**“Thoughts”** The Greek word here translated “thoughts” means “reasoning” (Vine). One resource suggests that those addressed in James 2:4 are guilty of “bad decisions” rather than merely thoughts (Kittel and Bromiley). However, thoughts precede decisions (Matt. 15:18-19).

Vincent says of the verse, “Their evil processes of thought lead to these unjust discriminations.” Robertson observes that verse four is “a rhetorical question” for which “an affirmative answer” is anticipated. *Wycliffe* notes that in this passage a contradiction between Christian profession and Christian action exists respecting attitudes toward wealth and social position. The *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* correctly remarks, “The ‘evil thoughts’ are in the judges themselves.” Woods summarizes by writing:

The conduct of those to whom James wrote (the verb indicates that they were practicing the thing which he condemned here) was such that they were wavering between what the Lord taught regarding fame, riches, social standing, and the like, and the temptation to show special favors to those well circumstanced. To us one James’ phrases, they were men of two minds; i.e., “double-minded.” (James 1:8.) ...In his sight, all men are equal in privilege and promise; and with him, one soul is as precious as another. (110-111)

As Coffman writes, these Christians addressed by James in this context were acting like the world from which they were called by the Gospel instead of acting like followers of Christ: “The persons guilty of the type of behavior in view here betrayed, by their conduct, the essential worldliness within them, and this proved that they were still acting in the evil spirit of the unregenerated world.”

**2:5** **“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” (KJV).**

**“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?” (NKJV).**

**“Hearken”** The Greek word for “hearken” is *akouo*, the usual word for “hear.” Lenski notes, “The imperative requests attention to what follows...” (566). Woods says that the recipients of this epistle who fell under the scope of these opening verses of James 2 were “to hear with attention” (111).

**“Beloved”** The word “beloved” in the Greek is *agapetos*, which is related to the most famous Greek word for love, *agape*.

**“Brethren”** The word for “brethren” is *adelphos* as it usually is.

**“Hath chosen”** The Greek word for “hath chosen” means “to select” (Strong). Vine qualifies the word in that the word means “to pick out...to choose for oneself.” Louw and Nida define the word “to make a choice of one or more possible alternatives.”

**“God”** The Greek word for “God” is *theos*.

**“Poor”** This is the same word used earlier in this context, meaning “a begger...pauper” (Strong). “They are poor in one respect, namely in regard to the world; they have precious little money, etc. But in another respect they are rich indeed, namely, enpistei, ‘in connection with faith’ (the faith already mentioned in v. 1)” (Lenski 567). Several commentators haste to note that the poor as a class of people have not been chosen by God to the exclusion of the rich as a class of people.

The poor outnumber the rich among those God has thus chosen simply because the poor are much more likely to obey God than the rich are. This passage does not assert that the Lord chooses people because they are poor; poverty, of itself, is not a blessing; nor, is the mere possession of wealth a sin. (Woods 112)

**“Of this”** Vincent interprets the Greek “to this” for “to this world” or according to “the world’s esteem.” Robertson notes that James speaks of the poor “as the world looks at it.”

**“World”** The word for “world” is *kosmos*, meaning “orderly arrangement” and its exact definition determined by the context in which it appears (Strong). Hence, for instance, *kosmos* can refer to “women’s attire...1 Pet. 3:3,” thereby pertaining to modesty (Bauer, Gingrich, Danker). “*Kosmos* is translated in every place by the word “world” except in I Pet. 3:3 where it is rendered ‘adornment.’ In interpreting the passages where *kosmos* is found, the student should

study the context in order to determine which one of the above meanings is to be used in any particular passage” (Wuest).

**“Rich”** The word for “rich” means “wealthy” (Strong). Vine adds that the word for “rich” means “richly, abundantly.” Lenski contrasts earthly riches with spiritual riches when he writes, “Earthly riches are a handicap as far as true faith is concerned...” (567). Woods observes: “Far better it is to be ‘poor as to the world,’ and ‘rich in faith,’ with the blessings which attend such, than to be possessed of all the gold of Ophir and the cattle on a thousand hills and to be impoverished in faith” (112).

**“In”** The Greek word for “in” here is *en*.

**“Faith”** The Greek word for “faith” is the usual *pistis*. Barnes’ notes that: “Though poor in this world’s goods, they are rich in a higher and more important sense.” *Pistis* also means “trust” (Bauer, Gingrich, Danker).

**“Heirs”** The Greek compound word refers to “partitioning” and refers to dividing an inheritance among family survivors (Strong). Vine adds that “heir” means “one who obtains a lot or portion.” Regarding spiritual application of the word “heir,” Woods writes: “To be an heir, in the New Testament usage, is to be related to God in such fashion as properly to receive that which descends from a father-son relationship. (1 Pet. 3:9.) This relationship begins with the new birth...” (112).

**“Kingdom”** The Greek word for “kingdom” is *basileia* and means “royalty...rule...a realm” (Strong). Vine adds that it means “sovereignty, royal power, dominion.” Bauer, Gingrich and Danker define the Greek word for “kingdom” as “kingship, royal power, royal rule, kingdom” “This term refers to the being or nature or state of a king, i.e., his dignity, and secondarily the expression of this in the territory he governs” (Kittel and Bromiley). Robertson notes that the kingdom under consideration that had been promised is the Messianic kingdom or the church. However, Woods qualifies the application of kingdom here: “It is important to take note of the fact that the kingdom contemplated here is not the kingdom set up on the first Pentecost following our Lord’s resurrection, but the eternal kingdom...” (112).

**“He hath promised”** The Greek word for “he hath promised” means “to assert something respecting oneself” (Strong). Vine expands the definition to mean “to announce, proclaim.”

**“Love”** The verb “love” here is related to the most famous Greek noun representing the highest form of love, *agape*.

Robertson observes that the verse contains a rhetorical question for which an affirmative answer is implied. *Wycliffe* paraphrases the verse correctly thus: “Those who grant special treatment to the rich fail to take into consideration that God has chosen the poor of this world (poor as to the world, RV) to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to those that love him.” Barnes comments that James “proceeds to show that the rich, as such, had no special claim on their favor,” as they have not been especially favored by God or often conduct themselves favorably toward God. Barnes further observes that the poor due to their circumstances of life as opposed to the circumstances enjoyed by the rich are more likely to respond to God. Then, why go against norm to put down the poor and elevate the rich? “[T]he great mass of believers is taken from those who are in comparatively humble life” (*Barnes*’) Fream writes: “Their choosing to pamper the rich is in direct opposition to the nature of God’s choice, who chose ‘the poor as to the world’” (76).

The place of James 2:5 in its context is: “The object which James has in view is quite plain. The poor visitor at the services is far more likely to become a believer than the rich one...” (Lenski 567). Coffman concurs: “There is also the counter-productivity of such conspicuous partiality. As a matter of fact, the poor visitor at church is a hundred times more likely to become a Christian than the wealthy visitor; and it is a sin against the growth of the church to exhibit the kind of partiality that would tend to discourage the poor.”

This does not mean that the rich visitor to the assembly should be slighted and the poor visitor more honored. “They ought to treat both with the same honorable friendliness” (Lenski 568). The whole episode of the mistreatment of the poor guest and the undue honor bestowed on the rich acquaintance misrepresented the Christian faith. Lenski notes regarding the poor conduct of the Christians addressed in the opening verses of James 2: “You acted as if this were what your Christian faith had taught you whereas it taught you the very opposite. Look at your own numbers! How many of you would be heirs of the kingdom if God would act as you do? (568).

**2:6** “But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?” (KJV).

“But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?” (NKJV).

“But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are

**exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?” (NIV).**

**“Have despised”** Strong defines the Greek for “have despised” as “to render infamous.” Vincent writes that “despised” is too tame a meaning for the Greek word; “Not strong enough. They had ‘manifested’ their contempt; had ‘done’ despite to them.” Bauer, Gingrich and Danker include among the words defining “despised: *“treat shamefully.”* Woods comments: “...it signifies to put the poor in a state of degradation and to withhold from them the respect which they deserved. The attitude was more than a passive one...” (115). Coffman records a colorful quotation from John Calvin respecting the ludicrousness of mistreating the poor in favor of the rich: “It simply does not make sense for the church to dishonor the poor and to fawn upon the wealthy and powerful. As Calvin put it, ‘Why should a man honor his executioners and at the same time injure his friends?’”

**“Rich”** Jamieson, Fausset and Brown remind us by the word “rich,” a class of people is meant about whom generalizations are true respecting their usual mistreatment of others not as fortunate as they are.

**“Oppress”** The Greek word for “oppress” means “to exercise dominion against” (Strong). Vincent adds that the preposition attached to the Greek word strengthens its meaning: “The preposition *kata*, ‘against,’ implies a power exercised for ‘harm.’” Robertson observes that the Greek word for “oppress” here is used only one other time in the New Testament when it applies to the devil (Acts 10:38); that is not very good company for Christians, which company they have by their mistreatment of a poor stranger. Bauer, Gingrich and Danker include in the definition the Greek here: “Of the tyrannical rule of the devil.”

**“Draw”** Vincent prefers a stronger representation of the Greek word here translated “draw”; “Not strong enough. The word implies ‘violence.’” Robertson puts the word “draw” or “drag” into perspective by comparing its use when applied to mistreatment of the apostle Paul. “An old and vigorous word for violent treatment, as of Paul in Acts 16:19; 21:30.”

**“Judgment seats”** The Greek word translated “judgment seats” is *kriterion* (kree-tay'-ree-on) and it means “a rule of judging...a tribunal” (Strong). “Judgment seats” refers to “*legal action*” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). In other words, “judgment seats” pertains to “courts and legal procedures” (Louw and Nida). Lenski and Woods

note that the “judgment seats” respecting legal proceedings of Jews against Jews pertain to the synagogues.

The “judgment seats,” before which they were “dragged,” were probably synagogue courts. Though the Jewish people were under the subjection of the Roman government (which maintained an army of occupation in Palestine at the time), they were permitted the privilege of conducting both civil and religious courts in which were heard matters of litigation involving the religion and business affairs of the Jewish people. Into these courts rich Jews often had the poor brought and by their power and influence had actions decided in their favor and against the poor, however just the cause of the latter might be. It should be noted that these were not Christian rich men, but unbelieving Jews who oppressed and evilly treated the Christian Jews among the early disciples. This situation is cited by James to show the absurdity of the practice which prevailed among some Christians of the time to show undue regard for the rich because they were rich, and to despise the poor because they were poor. (116)

James is speaking of the rich Jews who were for the most part Sadducees and at this period (A.D. 35-65) were the tyrannous oppressors of the poorer Jews and thus also made a specialty of harassing Christian Jews. The Roman government allowed the Jews in the Diaspora a great deal of legal control over their own nationals. We see this when Saul carries letters to Damascus to arrest Christian Jews (Acts 9:2) and when he speaks of persecuting them “even unto foreign cities” (Acts 26:11). In Corinth the proconsul Gallio remands Paul’s accusers to the Jewish tribunal to try him there if he has been guilty of an infraction of Jewish law. Rich and powerful Jews in the Diaspora were thus able to maltreat poor Jews and especially Christian Jews by dragging them before their synagogue courts or judgment seats. (568)

Coffman concurs that the primary oppressors of the poor in Jerusalem were the Sadducees: “There had been countless examples of this right there in Jerusalem, where the Sadducees, the rich party of their day,

were notorious oppressors of the poor.” However, by “judgment seats,” Coffman notes: “These were both Jewish and Roman courts.”

Lenski makes another valuable observation respecting “judgment seats” and how mention of them here contributes to dating of the Book of James. “This fact, which is so clearly reflected in our epistle, is one of the evidences for its early date. After the Jewish war broke out in the year 66 all this underwent a radical change” (568).

**2:7** “Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

“Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?” (NIV).

“**Blaspheme**” The word “blaspheme” is a transliteration of the Greek word *blasphemeo* (blas-fay-meh'-o), which means “to vilify” (Strong). One can blaspheme mankind as well as God: “defamed” (1 Cor. 4:13), “evil spoken of” (1 Cor. 10:30), “to speak evil of” (Titus 3:2), “speaking evil of you” (1 Pet. 4:4) and “speak evil of dignities” (2 Pet. 2:10; Jude 8). The Greek also appears as “reviled” (Matt. 27:39), “railed” (Mark 15:29) and “slandrously” (Rom. 3:8). Woods notes that the blasphemy was ongoing: “They slandered the name which the disciples wore; and this evil speaking was not momentary or occasional, they did it over and over so the tense of the verb indicates” (117).

“**Worthy**” The Greek word *kalos* appears here as “worthy” and means “beautiful” (Strong).

“**Name**” The Greek word here is *onoma* (on'-om-ah).

“**Called**” The Greek word for “called” is a compound word, its respective parts respectively meaning “upon” and “called.” Together as a compound word, the meaning is “to be called by a person’s name; hence it is used of being declared to be dedicated to a person, as to the Lord...” (Vine). This word “called” answers the question whether disciples of Christ in the New Testament were called Christians because the enemies of Christ foisted this name upon them. As in the Old Testament when God’s name was worn by his people in the name “Israel” (ruled by God; “el” is a shortened form for God in Hebrew), in the New Testament, too, God’s people wore his name “Christian.” Note the contribution of Vincent:

Literally, “which is called upon you;” the name of Christ, invoked in baptism. The phrase is an Old Testament one. See Deut 28:10, where the Septuagint

reads “that the name of the Lord has been called upon thee.” Also, 2 Chron 7:14; Isa 4:1. Compare Acts 15:17.

Acts 15:17 reads: “That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.” See also 1 Peter 3:14. The name indicated in Acts 15:17 and 1 Peter 3:14 is stated three times in the New Testament: Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16.

The name of Christ came to be associated with one at his baptism. “...at your baptism 'into the name' (Greek, Matt 28:19) of Christ, ye became Christ's people (1 Cor 3:23)” (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*). Thus, we have Paul's meaning in 1 Corinthians 1:13-16; had Paul baptized people in his name they would have been followers of Paul rather than followers of Jesus Christ. Lenski writes: “James refers to the name of Jesus which was used in the baptismal formula: ‘In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’” Coffman likewise concludes: “The obvious reference here is to the name of Jesus Christ, in the name of whom all Christians were baptized (Acts 2:38), and upon whom the name was formally declared as in the baptismal formula given in Matthew 28:18-20.” Coffman also astutely notices subtle evidence here that the epistle was penned to Christians: “The fact of the epistle's being addressed to baptized believers in Christ is evident in this.”

*Wycliffe* observes that James provides yet another reason why, generally, the class of the wealthy do not deserve special, favorable treatment just because they are rich. “This is another argument to show that the rich had no special claim to the honor which they were disposed to show them. The ‘worthy name’ here referred to is, doubtless, the name of the Saviour.”

**2:8** “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” (KJV).

“**Fulfil**” The Greek here is *teleo*, meaning “complete... conclude, discharge (a debt)” (Strong).

“**Royal**” The word “royal” means “regal...belonging to ...the sovereign” (Strong). Vine defines “royal” as “belonging to a king.”

“**Law**” The Greek word for “law” is *nomos*, which carries the idea “...as decreed by a state and set up as the standard for the administration of justice” (Vine).

**“The Scripture”** Whereas the definite article does not appear in the Greek preceding “royal” in this verse, the definite article does precede the word translated “Scripture”; this indicates that a particular “document” (Strong) is under consideration—the Word of God. The Greek word for “Scripture” is *graphe*, related to the *grapho*, which means “to write.” The particular Scripture under consideration may be Leviticus 19:18 or during the ministry of Jesus Christ, Matthew 19:10 or the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37.

**“Thou shalt love”** The Greek verb here is *agapao* (ag-ap-ah'-o), related to the highest form of love, *agape*.

**“Neighbor”** The word “neighbor” here means “close by” (Strong).

**“Well”** Vine remarks that “well” means “what is done rightly.”

For fulfilling the law, compare Romans 13:10 and Galatians 5:14. *Barnes’* shows how this verse applies to the context in which it appears: “...if, in the true sense, they regarded all others as ‘neighbors,’ they would treat no one with neglect or contempt.” Fulfilling the royal law here would have Christians show no respect of persons, but treat rich and poor alike. Lenski explains the way in which law under consideration is “royal.”

It is “royal,” kingly, not because it emanates from God or from Christ as King; not because it applies to kings, or because it makes kings of those who obey it. It is “royal law” because it is sovereign over all other laws, is a law of such a quality that on it “hang all the law (Torah, Instruction) and the prophets” (the whole Old Testament, Matt. 22:40).

MacKnight speaks of the “royal law” as being “excellent in its kind,” and that the law to which James refers is the “law enjoining us to love our neighbour” (591).

Woods notes the contrast between that law of love and the mistreatment of visitors to the assembly (really both the rich and the poor were treated improperly). “Favoritism and partiality toward the rich, and a corresponding disregard for the poor, by Christians, is a violent perversion of the law of love, and is thus sinful” (118). Fream explains the proper application of the “royal law” to the scenario under review in this context.

Thus, to be polite to the rich, and to give them normal courtesy and treat them like gentlemen, is evidently not considered to be in error, but rather an application of

the royal law. Yet, their treatment went far beyond the normal courtesy given any stranger. It was a difference clearly measured by the amount of their wealth. It was such honor as to show distinct preference even to the point of insulting the poor.

**2:9** “But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convicted of the law as transgressors” (KJV).

**“But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers” (NIV).**

**“Ye have respect to persons”** This phrase comes from a single Greek word that means “to favor an individual, i.e. show partiality” (Strong). Louw and Nida define the Greek here as “to make unjust distinctions between people by treating one person better than another.”

**“Ye commit”** The word translated “ye commit” means “to toil (as a task, occupation, etc.), (by implication) effect, be engaged in or with” (Strong). Sin is a vocation, an occupation, and the taskmaster is Satan. Vincent adds that the Greek is “[l]iterally, ‘work sin.’ ...The position of sin is emphatic: ‘it is sin that ye are working.’” Robertson phrases it, “Ye work a sin.” Woods observes the verse means that those addressed “participate habitually” in sin, and it is “a deliberate and calculated course of action” (122).

**“Sin”** The word “sin” is a colorful word. Here it is translated from *hamartia*, and it is related to another word for sin, *hamartano*, which means, “to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize), i.e. (figuratively) to err, especially (morally) to sin” (Strong; see also Vine). Every sinner has missed the mark of righteousness.

**“Convinced”** The Greek here includes the idea “of putting the convicted person to shame” (Strong). Incompatibility with the law of God under which one lives and by which he will be judged eternal at the Judgment Bar of God should bring any sinner to shame. Vincent qualifies the meaning of “convinced” in the *King James Version* as “a rebuke which produces a ‘conviction’ of the error or sin.” Robertson shows the correlation between the charge and the law of God that supports the charge; “convince” in this verse means “to convict by proof of guilt.” *Barnes’* observes that “convincing” and “conviction” are related as some sinners do not believe they are sinning, and that they must be “convinced” to alter their “conviction.” He further notes that occurs through proving by the law of God that certain actions are

sinful. Another resource says of “convinced” that it means: “‘to show people their sins and summon them to repentance,’ either privately (Mt. 18:15) or congregationally (1 Tim. 5:20)” (Kittel and Bromiley). Still another resource adds: “*bring to light, expose, set forth...reprove, correct...discipline*” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**“Of”** The preposition “of” in this case is translated from *hupo*, which is often translated “under.” Those who are **under** the amenability to a law are determined to be in compliance with it or out of compliance with it or sinning.

**“The law”** The definite article “the” appears before “law,” indicating that a specific law rather than law in general is under consideration. *Nomos*, as the ordinary word for “law,” appears here. The law applicable to the recipients of James’ epistle (Christians) is the “perfect law of liberty” (Jam. 1:25) or the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16), the New Testament (2 Cor. 3:6). It is true, though, that Judaism also forbade “respect of persons”: “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour” (Lev. 19:15). However, respecters of persons violate also the “royal law” of loving one’s neighbor as himself (Clarke; see also Lenski).

**“Transgressors”** The Greek here means “violators” and comes from another word that means “to go contrary to, i.e. violate a command” (Strong). Vine adds that a “transgressor” is “one who oversteps the prescribed limit.” Robertson says it means “to step across.” These to whom James wrote could not appeal even to the Law of Moses for by it (Lev. 19:15) they were condemned for their partiality (Woods 122). Fream writes: “The same law behind which they may hide concerning their treatment of the rich exposes their sin concerning their treatment of the poor.”

Further, anytime one “steps across” the biblical boundary, sin results. Whenever a person becomes a “lawbreaker,” he stands at odds with the system of law he representatively violated by violating a part of it (Jam. 2:10).

In context, evidence derived from the Gospel proved that the recipients of this epistle were commonly guilty of sin when favoritism was bestowed on the wealthy and poor visitors to the assembly were mistreated. This sin was as serious as any sin to the extent that uncovered sin (unforgiven sin) results in spiritual death (Rom. 6:23).

**2:10** “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in

**one point, he is guilty of all” (KJV).**

**“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (NKJV).**

**“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it” (NIV).**

**“Keep”** The word “keep” in this verse comes from a Greek word that means “watch over, preserve” (Vine). Robertson and others note that the Greek word for “keep” includes the idea of “to guard.” Bauer, Gingrich and Danker add to the definition: “keep, etc. unharmed or undisturbed.” No law of God or no law system of God should be disturbed by the infraction of any of its tenets.

**“And yet”** The words “and yet” are translated from the Greek, *de*, which is often translated as “but.”

**“Offend”** The Greek word for “offend” in this place means “to trip” (Strong). Kittel and Bromiley define the word to include: “to stumble against,” “to collide with” or “to suffer a reverse.”

**“One”** The word “one” here means “the first cardinal number...one in contrast to many” (Vine).

**“Point”** The word “point” in this verse is a transliterated word, placed there by the translators because they thought that its appearance would assist readers to understand the meaning of the verse better.

**“Is”** The Greek here means “is become,” and Robertson notes by the one occasion of stumbling one becomes “guilty of all.”

**“Guilty”** The Greek for “guilty” in this verse means “liable to a charge or action at law” (Vine). Bauer, Gingrich and Danker include in the definition of the word “guilty” the word “answerable.”

*Barnes’ Notes* correctly observes that the verse does not say that a person has violated every law because he has violated one law, but:

he is guilty of violating the law of God...His acts of obedience in other respects, no matter how many, will not screen him from the charge of being a violator of the law, or from its penalty....One portion of the law is as much binding as another, and if a man violates any one plain commandment, he sets at nought the authority of God...He cannot plead his obedience to the law in other things as a reason why he should not be punished for this sin; but however upright he may have been in general, even though it may have been through a long

life, the law holds him to be a transgressor, and condemns him.

MacKnight states: "...the man who despises the authority of God, so far as to break any one of them habitually, would in the like circumstances of temptation and opportunity certainly break any other of them; consequently in the eye of God he is guilty of breaking the whole law; that is, he hath no real principle of virtue" (592).

**"Of all"** The words "of all" come from the Greek *pas*, which refers to an indefinite number of whatever to which the sentence in which it appears refers (i.e., people, things, animals, etc.).

*Wycliffe* summarizes the verse by referring to "the solidarity of the law" and saying, "Transgression of one precept of the Christian rule of faith is a breach of the whole, because it breaks fellowship with the object of faith." What a remarkably concise explanation of the relationship of the violation of one law of God to the overall law system. The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary quotes other sources to give outstanding illustrations of the concept about the unity of divine law (or any law system).

The law is one seamless garment, which is torn if you but tear a part; or a musical harmony, spoiled if there be one discordant note (Tirinus); or a golden chain, whose completeness is broken if you break one link (Gataker).... If any part of a man is leprous, the whole man is judged to be a leper.... Any sin brings death: not that all sins are equal as acts but all alike betray a state of natural alienation from God.

Lenski, likewise, contributes an inspiring example to explain the relationship of one law violated to the law system. "A glass that is truck at only one point is nevertheless shattered. ... You need not touch an electric wire at a 1,000 points, you get the full shock of the current by touching just one point. To transgress one commandment reveals the fact that you are not true to the law." (572-573). Guy N. Woods adds a colorful illustration as well.

A flock of sheep in a pasture surround by a paneled fence are *in* the pasture. If they leap over one of the panels, they are *out* of the pasture. It is, of course, not necessary for them to leap over every section of the fence around the pasture to be outside. ... The vital lesson taught here is that *all* of the law of God is

pertinent to us, and that we must not feel at liberty to tamper with any portion thereof.” (124)

Clarke notes, “The truth is, any sin is against the divine authority...” The case in point whereby in this context one becomes a lawbreaker has to do with showing partiality, being respecter of persons. Or, one could say that the law of which because of partiality one is a lawbreaker is the “royal law” mentioned in verse eight. Fream brings to our memory our worthless claim on our own merits to stand in the presence of Almighty God and beg residency in his eternal home.

Any transgression makes a man a sinner. Men like to measure their righteousness percentage-wise. We act as if we would like to be able to say “I am only 22.9% a sinner, and 77.1% righteous.” God says, however, that if we are .1% a sinner, we are a transgressor of the law and not fit for heaven. One jot, one tittle of transgression, is enough to completely condemn us, and we are no more qualified to stand in the presence of God than the 100 ~a sinner.

**2:11** “For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law” (KJV).

“For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker” (NIV).

“He who said” Clarke continues is correlation between the offense and the authority underlying the law or laws of God that may be violated. “That is, the authority that gave one commandment gave also the rest; and he who breaks one resists this authority; so that the breach of any one commandment may be justly considered a breach of the whole law.”

“Adultery...kill” Jamieson, Fausset and Brown suggest that these sins were “selected as the most glaring violations of duty toward one’s neighbour.”

“Also” The Greek *kai* appears in this verse for “also.” *Kai* is usually translated as “and.”

“Not” The word “not” comes from the Greek, *me* (may).

**“Kill”** The Greek word here for “kill” is *phoneuo* (fon-yoo'-o), meaning “to be a murderer” (Strong). Woods notes that “kill” here refers to “the unlawful taking of human life” or murder (125).

**“Now”** The word “now” is from the Greek *de*, usually translated as “but.”

**“Yet”** The word “yet” here comes from *de*.

**“No”** The word for “no” here is *ou* (oo).

**“Transgressor”** The Greek and English words for “transgressor” are the same as in verse 9, and mean “violator.”

*Barnes’ Notes* summarizes: “The penalty of the law will be incurred, whatever precept you violate.” Lenski observes, “Even in human courts no just judge will excuse one crime by referring to the noncommission of all other possible crimes” (573). Woods evaluates the type of person described in this context who is styled a “transgressor” or lawbreaker. “The writer has under contemplation here those who keep the law I those instances in which they approve of what God has said, and who hesitate not to violate it in those instances in which they disapprove, or which they regard as of little consequence” (126).

**2:12 “So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty” (KJV).**

**“Speak”** The Greek word in this place for “speak” is *laleo* (lah-eh'-o), which means “to talk, i.e. utter words” (Strong).

**“Judged”** The word for “judged” in this verse is *krino* (kree'-no), and it means “properly, to distinguish, i.e. decide (mentally or judicially); by implication, to try, condemn, punish” (Strong). *Krino* appears 113 times in the New Testament and usually translated “judge” or “judged.”

**“By”** The word “by” is a preposition from the Greek *dia*, which is often translated as “through.”

**“The law”** The definite article does not appear in the original and was added by the translators. The word for “law” is *nomos* and has been noted before in this study.

**“Liberty”** The word in Greek and English appeared already in James 1:25. The Greek word appears 11 times in the New Testament, each time translated “liberty.” Woods applies “the law of liberty” herein to the affect of the Gospel toward the obedient (Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9). “That by which all men are to be judged is ‘a law of liberty.’ It is, therefore (a) law (a rule of action); (b) a law of liberty, in that it leads to liberty for those formerly enslaved by sin” (127).

Coffman offers an additional perspective of “the law of liberty”: “Very few deny that ‘law of liberty’ is here a further reference to the teaching and doctrine of Jesus Christ; and why is it called a law of liberty? As contrasted with the Law of Moses, called by the apostles ‘a yoke of bondage,’ the teachings of the Son of God are characterized by marvelous freedom.”

Robertson says of “so speak ye and so do” that the phrase: “Present active imperatives as a habit.” Lenski concurs with: “James tells his readers ever to speak and ever to act (present, durative imperatives) as people who are about to be judged by God” (573). *Barnes’* summarizes the verse and the context in which it appears to reflect on the type of treatment Christians hope to obtain in the final Judgment.

The sense is, “In all your conduct, whatever you do or say, remember that you are to be judged, or that you are to give an impartial account; and remember also that the rule by which you are to be judged is that by which provision is made for being delivered from the dominion of sin, and brought into the freedom of the gospel.” The argument here seems to be, that he who habitually feels that he is soon to be judged by a law under which it was contemplated that he might be, and should be, free from the bondage of sin, has one of the strongest of all inducements to lead a holy life.

In other words, especially Christians ought to practice what we call the *Golden Rule*, which appears in one form or another often in the New Testament. “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. ...Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt. 7:2, 12). “And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (Luke 6:31). “...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Rom. 13:9). “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Gal. 5:14). Numerous other passages likewise attest that the way we treat our fellows, if we abuse them, will come back to haunt us (Matt. 6:15; 18:28-35; 25:41-46; Luke 16:25). However, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7).

Woods reminds us that “[t]here *is* a day of judgment coming” (126). Hence, it behooves all of humanity to prepare for the Judgment.

Especially Christians ought to safeguard their redemption from past sins so that they may convert it to eternal redemption (2 Pet. 1:10). We must be faithful unto death to be victorious eternally (Rev. 2:10).

MacKnight observes respecting James 2:12 that “the gospel requires obedience to all the laws of God without exception” (592). Amazingly, even Christians seem determined to rationalize away the affect of what they consider insignificant matters irrespective of divine commentary upon them. Some boldly commit such to words, while others simply enact a quiet disregard for “thus saith the Lord.” How is this different from the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church respecting *venial* and *mortal* sins? The far reaching affect of any sin irrespective how little a transgression of God’s law one feels that it is ought to be reevaluated in view of passages like Romans 6:23, 1 John 3:4 and Revelation 21:8. Lenski notes that *little sins* can damage Christian faith: “He [James] warns us not to let this our faith become damaged or destroyed by such a sin as respect of persons” (574).

**2:13** “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (KJV).

**“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment” (NKJV).**

**“Judgment”** The Greek word for “judgment” here is *krisis* (kree'-sis), meaning “decision (subjectively or objectively, for or against); by extension, a tribunal; by implication, justice (especially, divine law)” (Strong). *Krisis* appears 48 times in the New Testament, usually translated “judgment,” but also translated as “accusation,” “condemnation” and “damnation.”

**“Without mercy”** The Greek word for “without mercy” in this verse only appears here in the Bible. A negating prefix attached to a word for “mercy” occurs here. It means “merciless” or “without pity” (Strong). Lenski defines “mercy” as “pity for those in distress” (575).

**“That hath showed”** The Greek word here translated “that hath showed” is the same Greek word that is translated “do” in the previous verse. This Greek word means “to make or do” and has a wide application depending on the context in which it appears (Strong).

**“Mercy”** The Greek word for “mercy” here is the same for “without mercy” less the negating prefix. It means “compassion” (Strong).

**“Rejoiceth against”** The Greek word translated here “rejoiceth against” appears four times in the New Testament and in other references is translated “boast” or “glory.”

The little sin (in man’s eyes) of showing partiality graduates to the seriousness of sin that will withhold mercy from respecter of persons addressed in this context. “James is not taking exception to a minor fault” in this context (Lenski 575). Woods squarely and correctly acknowledges the affect of habitual, impenitent sin against the mercy of God in Judgment: “There will be mercy shown in judgment for those who have faithfully served the Lord, and whose lapses were unintentional and absolved in the blood of Christ; but, those who have shown others no mercy need not expect mercy themselves when before the judgment seat of Christ they come to stand” (127). Fream simply states: “...I am only covered in this mercy when I choose to do (i.e., live) this mercy.”

**2:14** “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” (KJV).

**“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?” (NKJV).**

**‘What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?’ (NIV).**

Interestingly, Coffman asserts that “Luther did not misunderstand James (as frequently urged), but that he misunderstood Paul.” James 2:14-26 constitutes a section dealing with a Bible faith that is living and active. Bible faith is not merely academic gymnastics, but it demonstrates itself through fruitfulness. Compare James 2:14-26 with the active faith it portrays with the Bible’s Hall of Fame of Faith in Hebrews 11. Lenski dubs this section of Scripture (2:14-26) as pertaining to “Barren Faith” (576) and notes that “James stimulates sluggish faith” (578).

**“Profit”** The Greek word here means “gain” (Strong). “Profit” also means “pertaining to a benefit to be derived from some object, event, or state - ‘advantage, benefit, beneficial” (Louw and Nida).

**“Brethren”** The Greek word for “brethren” is adelphos, which we have observed in other verses previously.

**“A man”** The Greek for “a man” in this place is an “indefinite pronoun” and means “any person or object” (Strong).

**“Say”** The Greek here is *lego*, “a primary verb” meaning “say” or “speak” (Strong). Robertson notes that the verb tense means “if one keep on saying.”

**“Faith”** The Greek word for “faith,” as it often is in the New Testament, is *pistis*. We have noticed this word already in this study. *Wycliffe* correctly contrasts only a professed faith with a living and active faith: “It is important to note that the faith under discussion is a so-called, or spurious, faith. ...It is only a false faith that does not issue in works and that is incapable of saving.”

**“Have not”** Robertson notes that the verb tense here means “keeps on not having.”

**“Works”** The Greek for “work” here is *ergon*. This word also has been treated previously in this study. Regarding works in this passage, “Paul and James deal with different kinds of works. Paul deals with works of law which have nothing to do with true gospel faith...James deals with gospel works, which ever evidence the presence of gospel faith...” (Lenski 577-578). Woods adds, “It should be apparent to the most casual reader that Paul and James are discussing *two different kinds of works in these passages*” (131). Martin Luther referred to the Epistle of James as an epistle of straw because Luther failed to realize that Paul and James discussed different kinds of works. That error in interpretation continues to affect adversely the faith of most denominations to this day.

**“Can”** The Greek word for “can” here is “*dunamai*.” It means, “to be able or possible” (Strong). *Dunamai* is related to our English word “dynamite.”

**“The faith”** The definite article “the” appears in the Greek before this occasion of “faith.” “The faith,” that system of faith, is helpless to save anyone whose professed faith does not result in action. Though James teaches that lifeless faith will not save anyone, the Methodist Church Discipline reads, “the doctrine of faith, and faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort” (qtd. in Woods 131).

**“Save”** The Greek word for “save” is *sozo*, which means “to save, i.e. deliver or protect” (Strong). “Save” also means “keep from harm, preserve, rescue” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

Robertson reminds us that James 2:14 is a rhetorical question (or has in it two rhetorical questions); the implied answer is, “No, faith without works is ineffectual” (Jam. 2:26). Lenski writes, “Two self-answering questions penetrate to the bottom of the whole matter.

...Faith itself cannot be seen; it makes its presence known by a proper confession and by its proper and natural works” (576).

*Barnes’* observes:

In order to a proper interpretation of this passage, it should be observed that the stand-point from which the apostle views this subject is not before a man is converted, inquiring in what way he may be justified before God, or on what ground his sins may be forgiven; but it is after a man is converted, showing that that faith can have no value which is not followed by good works; that is, that it is not real faith, and that good works are necessary...It is implied in this question that faith cannot save him, for very often the most emphatic way of making an affirmation is by asking a question. The meaning here is, that that faith which does not produce good works, or which would not produce holy living if fairly acted out, will save no man, for it is not genuine faith.

Coffman alludes to the fact that the faith that requires a person to consciously act out salvation steps (i.e., repenting, confessing Christ and requesting baptism) equally requires acting out Christian living and Christian service, too. How irrational for a child of God who acted out his faith to be saved from his sins to refuse to act out his faith after becoming a child of God. Woods comments, “God has never blessed anybody, in any age or dispensation, *because of faith*, until the faith exhibited itself in action” (133).

**2:15** “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food” (KJV).

“If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food” (RSV).

“**Sister**” The Greek word for “sister” here is *adelphē* (ad-el-fay’), which is the feminine form of *adelphos* for “brother.” Louw and Nida say of *adelphē*, “a close female associate of a group with well-defined membership (in the NT referring specifically to fellow believers in Christ).”

“**Naked**” The Greek word here is *gumnos* (goom-nos’), meaning, “nude (absolute or relative, literal or figurative)” (Strong). Vine observes that the word used here for “naked” can, among other references, refer to “unclothed,” “scantily or poorly clad” or “clad in the undergarment only.” Another Greek resource indicates that the

word translated naked can mean, “stripped, bare” or “without an outer garment, without which a decent person did not appear in public” or “poorly dressed” or “uncovered” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

“**Destitute**” The Greek word here translated “destitute” is other places in Scripture translated “wanting” or “lacking.”

“**Daily**” The Greek word for “daily” here means, “pertaining to recurring on a daily basis” (Louw and Nida).

“**Food**” The Greek word for “food” in this verse is *trophe* (trof-ay) and means, “nourishment (literally or figuratively); by implication, rations (wages)” (Strong).

The love we as Christians are supposed to have for each other (Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 2:17) can be amply demonstrated by exhibiting a charitable faith (Gal. 6:10).

**2:16** “And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (KJV).

“If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?” (NIV).

“**And**” The Greek word appearing in our translation as “and” comes from the Greek word *de*, usually translated as “but.”

“**One**” The Greek here is *tis*, meaning “some or any person or object” (Strong). In the previous verse, *tis* is translated as “a man.”

“**Of**” The Greek word for “of” in this place is *ek*, meaning “out.”

“**Say**” Contrary to other instances of the word “say,” here the Greek is *epo*, which is translated in other places throughout Scripture as “answer,” “bid,” “bring word” and “command.”

“**Depart**” The word “depart” in this verse means, “retire (as if sinking out of sight)” and is sometimes translated “get hence” and “go away” (Strong). Vine remarks that “depart” means, “a ‘going,’ without noise or notice, or by stealth. In this passage the idea is perhaps that of a polite dismissal.” Basically, the command means, “leave a person’s presence” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

“**Peace**” The word “peace” implies “prosperity” (Strong). The word “peace” was commonly used in salutations, that is, “used in greetings” (Kittel and Bromiley). Bauer, Gingrich and Danker indicate the usage of “peace” in this verse is a “farewell greeting” equivalent to, “keep well.” Fream remarks, “The phrase ‘go in peace’ is an expression of genuine concern for the needy, and is not intended to

sound hollow or mocking. Rather the genuineness of the expression stands in sharp contrast with the lack of action to bring the wish about.”

**“Be ye warmed”** The words “be ye warmed” come from the Greek word *hermaino* (ther-mah'-ee-no), which means, “to heat (oneself)” (Strong). Essentially, the speaker portrayed in this verse tells the destitute, “dress warmly! keep warm!” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**“Filled”** The Greek word for “filled” means, “to gorge (supply food in abundance)” and is sometimes translated “feed” or “satisfy” (Strong). Vine defines “filled” as to “satisfy with food.” Another resource says of “filled,” “eat one’s fill” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**“Notwithstanding”** The word “notwithstanding” here comes from the Greek *de*, usually translated as “but.”

**“Ye give”** The words “ye give” come from a Greek word sometimes translated as “minister” or “yield,” among other words in different contexts.

**“Needful”** The Greek word here means, “enough...serviceable...requisite” (Strong). Vine defines “needful” as “suitable, convenient,’ then, ‘useful, necessary.” Bauer, Gingrich and Danker describe “needful” as “what is necessary for the body, i.e. for life.” Louw and Nida define “needful” as “essential.”

Robertson observes on these two verses, “Instead of warm clothes and satisfying food they get only empty words to look out for themselves.” *Barnes’* comments that James demonstrates by this example of verses 15-16 the utter uselessness of an inactive faith.

The sense is, that faith in itself, without the acts that correspond to it, and to which it would prompt, is as cold, and heartless, and unmeaning, and useless, as it would be to say to one who was destitute of the necessities of life, depart in peace. ...in religion, what is wanted is not merely the abstract state of mind which would be indicated by faith, but the life of goodness to which it ought to lead. ...Faith is not and cannot be shown to be genuine, unless it is accompanied with corresponding acts...

The faith under consideration in this passage is “faith that exerts no practical influence whatever on the life” (*Barnes’*).

**2:17** “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (KJV).

“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (NKJV).

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

“**Hath not works**” The verb tense of the Greek word for “hath” in conjunction with “not” and “works” means, “if it keep on not having works” (Robertson).

“**Is dead**” *Wycliffe* comments, “A faith that does not concern itself, by active participation, in the needs of others is not faith at all.” Rather than denying the assertion of having faith, *Barnes’ Notes* correctly describes the affect of *dead faith*: “That which is alive bodies itself forth, produces effects, makes itself visible; that which is dead produces no effect, and is as if it were not.” Clarke reasons, “The faith that does not produce works of charity and mercy is without the living principle which animates all true faith, that is, love to God and love to man.” Fream says, “When v. 17 points to the deadness of the faith, it is nor to say the faith is non-existent; but rather it is dead and profitless as far as results are concerned.”

Regarding a useful faith respecting Christianity, Lenski makes some interesting comparisons. One may have a *general faith* that generally acknowledges God and Christianity, but that is not enough faith. One may have a *historical faith* whereby he acknowledges the Gospel narrative about first century events, but that is not enough faith. One may have a *doctrinal faith* whereby he may argue, even correctly, the tenets of the faith, but that is not enough faith. One may have an *assenting faith* whereby he acknowledges the truthfulness of the Christian system and its Gospel, but that is not enough faith. Respecting this last type of faith, Lenski writes that it is “a matter that was in the head, that dried up there and did not enter and vivify the heart” (580).

Fream defines the nuances of faith:

Among the faculties of the “inner man” (Spiritual man) are man’s intellect, his will, and his emotion. With the intellect man believes, (faith). With the will man determines that which he should do, (choice). With the emotion man is motivated to act, (deeds). Faith, if it is to bring profit must go “all the way” from belief, to

choice, to action. If your conviction goes no further than your intellect, you may have “faith,” but you are not a Christian! And because this faith, being alone, does not bring the hoped-for results of salvation, James calls it a dead faith.

Illustrating “dead,” Lenski observes, “A dead tree, a dead branch fails to show life by not bearing fruit” (579-580). Likewise at my house, I know my houseplants are dead when the leaves fall off. Also, a body found lying on the ground is deemed dead when it is not breathing; if it were breathing, it would not be dead. Coffman writes, “The dead do not do anything...” Christianity or faith in a person is dead when its leaves have fallen off and it is not breathing.

One may assert that he has faith (verse 14), but respecting the unfortunate in this context (verses 15-16), “[w]e prove that our good wishes for others are genuine when we translate them into golden deeds of mercy and good will...” (Woods 136). Everything that is dead, rots; how much mileage before God do we think that we can obtain with *rotten faith*?

**2:18** “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (KJV).

“But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do” (NIV).

“**A man**” The Greek here for “man” is *tis*. (See previous comments about this word already in this study.)

“**Say**” The Greek word for “say” in this place is *ereo* (er-eh'-o), which means, “to utter, i.e. speak or say” (Strong).

“**Shew**” The Greek word translated “shew” means “exhibit” or “to show by way of proving” (Vine).

“**Without**” The Greek word translated “without” means, “at a space, i.e. separately or apart from” (Strong).

“**By**” The Greek for “by” here is *ek*, which often translates to “out.” In other words, out of one’s works is one’s faith discernible. Lenski says it this way, “Ek refers to source. ‘By’ in our versions is unsatisfactory” (587).

Robertson interjects: “James introduces an imaginary objector who speaks one sentence: ‘Thou hast faith and I have works’...James answers this objector.”

The majority of religionists claiming to be a part of Christianity avow that salvation is *by faith only*. This series of verses is important that we may know the truth and that we may impress that truth on others with whom we may study God's Word. Woods adds:

In view of the fact that the denominational system alleges that salvation is by faith without works and to it multitudes about us subscribe, it is important that every member of the body of Christ should be able to explain clearly the kind of works *included* in the plan of salvation (the commandments of the Lord), and the kind of works *excluded* (those involving merit, the law of Moses, and the like). (137-138)

Fream comments that James was not persuading his auditors respecting faith, but respecting Christian conduct as a consequence of their faith. "He is not just trying to change the conviction of his readers...but their action." The works or action indicated in the New Testament is obedience, which is the difference between salvation and condemnation (Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).

**2:19** "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (KJV).

"Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder" (ASV).

"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble!" (NKJV).

**"Believest"** The Greek word for "believest" is the verb form of the Greek for "faith": *pisteuo* (pist-yoo'-o). It is translated both "believe" and "trust." Vine adds to the definition: "'to believe,' also 'to be persuaded of,' and hence, 'to place confidence in, to trust,' signifies, in this sense of the word, reliance upon, not mere credence."

**"God"** As usual, the word for "God" is *theos*. Woods says of *theos* that it:

...denotes deity. (Thayer). It is the Greek name of the divine nature. There is but one divine nature. Hence, there is but one God. There are, however, three Persons who possess this divine nature—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—the Godhead. Hence all are God. Since there is but one divine nature, and this nature is named

God, there is but one God. Thus, the three Persons of the Godhead constitute the One God. (139)

**“Devils also believe”** The Greek for “devils” in the KJV and “demons” in the other translations is *daimonion* (dahee-mon'-ee-on), which means, “a daemonic being” (Strong). *Barnes’ Notes* comments respecting demons, “They are represented as evil spirits, subject to Satan, or under his control, and engaged with him in carrying out his plans of wickedness....That is, particularly, they believe in the existence of the one God.”

It should be evident to even the casual reader that acknowledging the existence of God without a corresponding response is woefully insufficient. “It is well to believe there is one only true God; this truth universal nature proclaims. Even the devils believe it; but far from justifying or saving them, it leaves them in their damned state...” (Clarke).

Woods demonstrates from the biblical text pertinent information respecting these demons, though he admits that it is not presently possible to ascertain definitively who or what these demons were (e.g., departed spirits of wicked persons, fallen angels).

We may, therefore, conclude that (a) the demons of the apostolic age were real and not fanciful; (b) they were wicked spirits (Acts 19:13-17); (c) judgment upon them was impending; they recognized the justice of such, but insisted that the time was not yet (Matt. 8:29); (d) they were possessed of consciousness and intelligence (Luke 4:41); (e) they acknowledged the deity of Christ; (f) they deliberately taught false doctrines, and circulated them among the early disciples (perhaps by influencing men whom they possessed, 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 John 4:1). (141)

**“Thou doest well”** Lenski observes that an emphasis occurs here by use of a figure of speech, the irony. “Thou dost well!” is certainly irony since it is followed by: ‘Even the demons believe it and—shudder!’” (585). Fream calls it “sarcasm.” However, Woods astutely notes another reason for this phrase’s inclusion here: “The writer is careful to make it clear that the acceptance of the premise that God is one is not under criticism” (139).

**“Tremble”** The Greek translated “tremble” means, “to ‘bristle’ or chill, i.e. shudder (fear)” (Strong). *Barnes’ Notes* projects an image of what “tremble” means: “It means, properly, to be rough, uneven,

jaggy, sc., with bristling hair; to bristle, to stand on end, as the hair does in a fright; and then to shudder or quake with fear, etc.” Lenski notes that the “[t]he verb denotes terror which makes one’s hair stand on end!” (585). Robertson comments, “The demons do more than believe a fact. They shudder at it.” Woods remarks that the shuddering demons attest to a very strong belief in the one God (140). Fream aptly states, “This shuddering they do is similar to the bristling of an animal’s hair when he is cornered and frightened because his life is in danger. When the demons contemplate Jesus, they bristle at the prospect of hell that looms before them. Men would do well to have such a conviction of the existence of God’s heaven and hell!”

Robertson assesses the poor condition of one’s idle faith respecting this verse: “That is good as far as it goes, which is not far.” There is no distinction evident between the professed, idle faith under consideration in this context and the faith of Satan’s servants. Woods appropriately states, “There is no more hope for those who depend upon faith only as the basis of salvation than there is for the salvation of the demons” (140). “They never doubt the fact of God’s existence” (Robertson). Wuest, commenting on Jude 17, contrasts the futile type of faith, such as we have in James, with strong conviction: “In Acts 8:13, 26:27; Jas. 2:19, the word refers merely to an intellectual assent to certain facts, in Acts 15:11, to a dogmatic belief that such and such is the case.” Fream continues, “But without this surrender of both life and deed to Jesus. He has only made a start that accomplishes nothing. He is on his way, but if he goes no further, he is no better off than the demons.”

**2:20** “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (KJV).

“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren?” (ASV).

“But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?” (NKJV).

“You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?” (NIV).

“But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?” (NAS).

“Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren?” (RSV).

**“Know”** The Greek word for “know” is *ginosko* (ghin-ocē'-ko). The words Gnostic and agnostic are related to this word. Vine adds that it “signifies ‘to be taking in knowledge, to come to know, recognize, understand,’ or ‘to understand completely’...” Kittel and Bromiley distinguish *ginosko* from some of its synonyms:

The ordinary use is for intelligent comprehension (“to perceive,” “to understand,” “to know”), at first with a stress on the act. ...*ginosko* emphasizes understanding rather than sensory perception, and ...it is a perception of things as they are, not an opinion about them.

**“Vain”** The Greek for “vain” means, “empty” (Strong). *Wycliffe* describes the “vain man” as a “senseless fellow.” “The reference by this language is to a man who held an opinion that could not be defended” (*Barnes*). Commenting on 2 Timothy 2:16, Wuest says of the “vain man” “at James 2:20, where the anthropos kenos (the empty man) is one in whom the higher wisdom has found no entrance, but who is puffed up with a vain conceit of his own spiritual insight...” Woods calls the “vain man” “literally, an empty-headed fellow” (142). Wuest says of “vain” “in Jas. 2:20 it means ‘pretentious, hollow.’”

**“Man”** The occurrence of “man” in this place is *anthropos*, referring to humanity.

**“Dead”** The word “dead” in this verse means, “inactive, i.e. unemployed; (by implication) lazy, useless” (Strong). Lenski remarks about this “dead faith”: “The faith that is dead and barren is only intellectual or a mere sentiment; it never attains anything substantial” (586).

The translations that translated “barren,” etc. instead of “dead” in this place do so because of a variance between manuscripts. It is true that anything dead is barren, and anything barren is dead for the purpose for which it is referred to as “barren.”

Clarke and others note that this verse may actually be a question. The sense would be: “Art thou willing to be instructed in the nature of true saving faith? Then attend to the following examples.”

*Barnes’ Notes* places this verse in its context as intimating that undeniable proof was about to be offered as to why Bible faith must act out; “Will you have a full demonstration of it; will you have the clearest proof in the case. The apostle evidently felt that the instances to which he was about to refer, those of Abraham and Rahab, were decisive....The faith of Abraham and of Rahab was entirely different from this.”

**2:21** “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?” (KJV).

**“Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?” (NIV).**

**“Was justified”** The Greek for “was justified” means, “to render (i.e. show or regard as) just or innocent” (Strong). Another source says of “justified that it means, “be acquitted” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Coffman and other commentators correctly indicate that Abraham was not “justified” when he believed, but decades later (“thirty years” later, according to Lenski 593) when he offered Isaac according to God’s dictate. Obviously, then, Abraham is not an example of faith only. Further, Coffman notes that Abraham’s offering Isaac and under Christianity one implementing Mark 16:16 are comparable tests of faith; howbeit, most of the religious community miserably fails the test of baptism.

**“Father”** The Greek for “father” is *pater*. The word “father” was used here “to denote a remote ancestor” (*Barnes*’).

**“By”** Again, “by” is translated from *ek*, which is often translated as “out.”

**“Son”** The word “son” in this verse is translated from *huios*, and “primarily signifies the relation of offspring to parent” (Vine).

Clarke explains the verse well thus: “Did not the conduct of Abraham, in offering up his son Isaac on the altar, sufficiently prove that he believed in God and that it was his faith in him that led him to this extraordinary act of obedience?” Lenski rightly supposes that there were many instances in the life of Abraham from which James could have chosen an example, but in referring to the sacrifice of Isaac, “James selects the greatest work of Abraham’s faith...” (590).

**2:22** “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” (KJV).

**“You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did” (NIV).**

**“You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected” (NAS).**

**“Seest thou”** The Greek word for “seest” is *blepo*. Robertson observes regarding James’ illustration about the correlation between faith and works (activity): “Obvious enough with any eyes to see.”

**“Wrought with”** The words “wrought with” come from the Greek, *sunergeo* (soon-erg-eh'-o). which means, “to be a fellow-worker, i.e. co-operate” (Strong). *Sun* means “union” or “with,” and the word for “work” is likewise visible in this compound word. Vincent observes that “[t]here is a play on the words in the Greek: ‘worked with his works.’”

**“By”** Once more *ek* translates “by.”

**“Was made perfect”** A single Greek word translates “was made perfect”: *teleioo* (tel-i-o'-o), which means, “to complete, i.e. (literally) accomplish” (Strong). Vine adds that it means, “to bring to an end by completing or perfecting.” *Barnes’ Notes* comments about “perfect” that it means, “[m]ade complete, finished, or entire.”

Coffman identifies the established relationship between faith and works. “Faith and works are coordinates, cooperation, being in the very nature of cooperation, operative upon a common level.” MacKnight puts it this way: “In this passage James hath declared, that faith and works are inseparably connected as cause and effect; the faith as the cause necessarily produces good works as its effect...” MacKnight further, astutely, comments that this faith and works scenario is ongoing or continuing—not limited to a one-time instance. Salvation can be undone by a failure to continue faith in action.

**2:23** “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (KJV).

“and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God” (ASV).

“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” (NKJV).

“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” (NIV).

**“Scripture”** The Greek for “scripture” is *graphe*.

**“Fulfilled”** The Greek word for “fulfilled” here means, “to complete” (Vine). Vincent adds that “fulfilled” means, “was actually and fully realized.” *Barnes’ Notes* comments respecting this perfection and the example of Abraham; “His faith was shown to be genuine; and

the fair meaning of the declaration that he believed God was carried out in the subsequent act.”

**“Saith”** The Greek word for “saith” is *lego* (leg'-o), which means, “properly, to ‘lay’ forth, i.e. (figuratively) relate (in words [usually of systematic or set discourse...])” (Strong). Along with its definition of *lego*, Strong compares other Greek words that may be translated “say,” showing variation of meanings.

**“It was imputed”** The words “it was imputed” mean, “to take an inventory” (Strong). Vincent comments that the Greek means “reckoned.”

**“For”** The Greek word here translated “for” is *eis*, usually translated “into.”

**“Righteousness”** The Greek word for “righteousness” means, “the character or quality of being right or just”; it was formerly spelled ‘rightwiseness’” and it refers to “right action” with God as the standard for what is right (Vine).

**“He was called”** The words “he was called” are translated from *kaleo* (kal-eh'-o) and mean to call aloud (Strong).

**“Friend”** The Greek word for “friend” here is *philos* (fee'-los). Vine defines *philos* as “loved, dear, or friendly.” Clarke correctly observes that this is the “highest character ever given to man.” Coffman records, “References to Abraham as the “friend of God” are found in 2 Chr. 20:7 and Isa. 41:8.”

**2:24** **“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (KJV).**

**“You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone” (NIV).**

**“Ye see”** The Greek word translated “ye see” means, “to discern clearly” (Strong). James provides the conclusion to the argument he has made respecting faith and works (activity).

**“By”** The Greek for “by” here is *ek*.

**“Man”** The Greek for “man” in this verse is *anthropos*.

**“Justified”** The Greek word for “justified” here means, “to render (i.e. show or regard as) just or innocent” (Strong). Vine adds that the word means, “to deem to be right, ...by God concerning men, who are declared to be righteous before Him on certain conditions laid down by Him.”

**“By”** The Greek here is *ek*.

**“Only”** The Greek word for “only” here is *monon* (mon'-on), and it means, “merely” (Strong). The Greek is also translated as “alone.”

*Barnes' Notes* summarizes this verse: “Not by a cold, abstract, inoperative faith. It must be by a faith that shall produce good works, and whose existence will be shown to men by good works.”

**2:25** “Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?” (KJV).

“And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way?” (ASV).

“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?” (NIV).

**“Likewise”** The Greek word for “likewise” is *homoios* (hom-oy'-oce), which means, “similarly” (Strong). Lenski, then, notes: “‘Likewise’ makes Rahab’s a parallel case...” (597).

**“Also”** The Greek word here translated “also” is *kai*, which often is translated “and.”

**“Harlot”** The Greek word translated “harlot” is *porne* (por'-nay), which is the feminine form meaning prostitute;  *pornos* refers to a male prostitute (Strong).

**“By”** The Greek here again is *ek*.

**“When she had received”** The words “when she had received” comes from a compound Greek word meaning, “to admit under one’s roof, i.e. entertain hospitably” (Strong).

**“Messengers”** The Greek word translated “messengers” is *aggelos*; it refers to a messenger or an angel, though obviously in this context, the messengers were the spies sent to scout Canaan (Josh. 6:23; Heb. 11:31). Literally, *aggelos* means, “one sent” (Vine).

**“Had sent them out”** The compound Greek word *ekballo* (ek-bal'-lo) translates the words “had sent them out”; the respective parts of the compound Greek word mean “out” and “throw.” Hence, Vincent observes: “Better, ‘thrust them forth,’ implying haste and fear.”

**“Another”** The Greek word for “another” in this place is *heteros* (het'-er-os), and it means, “different” (Strong). Consequently, the English word “heterosexual” refers to sex between a male and a female (i.e., different or not two males or two females).

**“Way”** The Greek word for “way” here means “road” (Strong).

*Wycliffe* offers a useful explanation for the inclusion Rahab as an illustration of faith in action. “James’ second Scriptural example stands in marked contrast to Abraham. Rahab was a woman, a Gentile, and a prostitute. She was chosen to show that James’ argument covered the widest ranges of possibilities...” Some are aghast that Rahab appears in the Bible as deserving commendation for anything in light of her sinful reputation. However, one needs to be careful and to discern exactly what James through Scripture commends.

When we commend the faith of a man who has been a profane swearer, or an adulterer, or a robber, or a drunkard, we do not commend his former life, or give a sanction to it. We commend that which has induced him to abandon his evil course, and to turn to the ways of righteousness. The more evil his former course has been, the more wonderful, and the more worthy of commendation, is that faith by which he is reformed and saved. (*Barnes’ Notes*)

It is interesting to consider the reminder of Lenski that “James does not need to narrate all the details, his readers know them” (597). See also Hebrews 11:31. Most likely, anyone studying the Book of James today also remembers the details respecting the conquest of Jericho.

In addition to the comparisons between Abraham’s and Rahab’s faith in action, Lenski notes a striking contrast: “More noteworthy still, Abraham had believed for thirty years; but this pagan woman had recently come to faith...” (596). Clearly, everyone may choose to be the beneficiary of God’s blessings upon faith and works of obedience.

**2:26** “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (KJV).

**“For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead” (ASV).**

**“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead” (NIV).**

**“For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead” (NAS).**

**“For”** The Greek word translated “for” here is *gar*, meaning, “assigning a reason (used in argument, explanation...)” (Strong).

**“As”** The Greek word translated “as” means, “exactly like” (Strong).

**“Without”** As noticed already, the Greek for “without” means “separately or apart from” (Strong).

**“Spirit”** The Greek word for “spirit” is *pneuma* (pnyoo'-mah), and it can mean, “a current of air, i.e. breath (blast) or a breeze; by analogy or figuratively, a spirit, i.e. (human) the rational soul, (by implication) vital principle, mental disposition, etc., or (superhuman) an angel, demon, or (divine) God, Christ's spirit, the Holy Spirit” (Strong).

**“Dead”** The Greek word for “dead” in this place means “a corpse” (Strong). Kittel and Bromiley, though, also apply the Greek word for “dead” to non-living things. “Inanimate things may be called nekra.” Bauer, Gingrich and Danker suggest that the word for “dead” may be used regarding “one who is deathly sick”; the faith detailed in this passage is, in fact, deathly sick.

Brother Woods offers a fitting conclusion and application of James 2:14-26:

While the principles herein taught by James are of course applicable to alien sinners—those who have never obeyed the gospel—we must not assume that they are limited to such. As a matter of fact, these words were penned especially to Christians...Members of the church whose faith does not prompt them to faithfulness in the Lord's work, and to regular Christian activity such as consistent church attendance, liberality in giving, and personal work, are spiritual corpses, possessed of a faith which is destitute of all life. (153)

Lenski says, “James once more sums it all up...” (597). Every good lesson or sermon needs a *punch line* or points of application. Anything less is merely providing sterile information, which by itself neither protects anyone from sin nor uplifts anyone spiritually. Lenski makes this analogy, resorting to the fundamental meaning of *pneuma* and interpreting it “breath” instead of “spirit”: “Absence of breath, deadness of the body; absence of works, deadness of the faith” (598).

# James Chapter Three

Chapter Three opens with a context of twelve verses respecting the proper use of the tongue. James proceeds to show:

...the peculiar liability to commit error, or to do wrong with the tongue. Of course, this liability is very great in an office where the very business is public speaking. If anywhere the improper use of the tongue will do mischief, it is in the office of a religious teacher; and to show the danger of this, and the importance of caution in seeking that office, the apostle proceeds to show what mischief the tongue is capable of effecting. (*Barnes*')

**3:1** “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (KJV).

“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (NKJV).

“Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (NIV).

“**Masters**” The Greek word here translated as “masters” is *didaskalos* (did-as'-kal-os), meaning “an instructor” (Strong). This word appears 58 times in the New Testament and is sometimes translated “teacher” or “doctor.” Vincent remarks, “James is warning against the too eager and general assumption of the privilege of teaching...” Robertson observes, “There is thus a clear complaint that too many of the Jewish Christians were attempting to teach what they did not clearly comprehend. There was a call for wise teachers (James 3:13 f), not for foolish ones. ... Teachers are necessary, but incompetent and unworthy ones do much harm.” Fream illustrates the great harm possible through irresponsible teaching when he writes, “For a foolish and careless man to assume the position of teacher, would be dangerous to his soul as for a small child to play with dynamite. Other people would also be involved in the careless teaching or the dynamite, and the responsibility is multiplied.”

*Wycliffe* adds, “James first warns his readers that they should not be overeager to become teachers, because of the responsibility involved.” *Barnes' Notes* concurs that discouragement to teach is not

the aim of James, but merely James means to discourage unqualified teachers.

The evil referred to is that where many desired to be teachers, though but few could be qualified for the office, and though, in fact, comparatively few were required. A small number, well qualified, would better discharge the duties of the office, and do more good, than many would; and there would be great evil in having many crowding themselves unqualified into the office.

Clarke simply conveys the idea: "...many wish to be teachers who have more need to learn." Another commentary speaks especially to the "many" respecting teachers when it records, "The office is noble; but few are fit for it" (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*). Lenski avers "while some must of necessity assume the responsibility, many others should not do so" (599). Woods comments on the times when James wrote:

It would appear that there was a disposition on the part of many of the early converts to the word to desire the attention and influence which attended its teaching; and these, without sufficient preparation, were disposed to attempt that which they were not qualified to do. The influence which teachers exercise upon their pupils is often immeasurable; and, the impressions which they make on the impressionable minds of their students, either for good or ill, are far-reaching in nature. It is, therefore, vitally important for those who thus do to be duly conscious of the importance of the work to which they aspire, and to make the requisite preparation thereto. (154)

**"Knowing"** The Greek here is *eido* (i'-do). This word means "to know from observation" and "suggests fullness of 'knowledge'" (Vine).

**"We shall receive"** The words "we shall receive" come from the Greek, *lambano* (lam-ban'-o).

**"Greater"** The Greek word for "greater" means "in greater degree" (Strong).

**"Condemnation"** The Greek *krima* (kree'-mah) appears here and means "a decision" (Strong). Robertson notes, "The reason is obvious.

The pretence of knowledge adds to the teacher's responsibility and condemnation.” Teachers of God’s religion have greater responsibility owing to their opportunity to do much good or much harm. Lenski admits that the right-thinking teacher:

...feels the weight of responsibility or rather his accountability because of thus teaching. ... God will look more closely at all teaches when he judges them. Teachers undertake to convey God’s Word in the way in which God wants it conveyed; God will judge them on that score. ...The damage that wrong teaching, whether it be in substance or in manner, may cause is indicated by what James later says about the tongue. (600)

It is “not that those who were public teachers would be condemned, but that there would be a much more solemn account to be rendered by them than by other men, and that they ought duly to reflect on this in seeking the office of the ministry” (*Barnes*). The Greek word under consideration at this place can mean a “judicial verdict...mostly in an unfavorable sense” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

Woods summarizes the verse thus:

If we keep in mind that James does not condemn teachers *who are able* to teach, and is warning those whose sole motive is the desire for notoriety, we have his meaning exactly. ...The ambition to teach is a worthy one, and should be encouraged, provided the person so aspiring is willing to make the necessary preparation to accomplish the desired end. A failure so to do subjects one to the displeasure of the Lord. (155)

See Matthew 18:6-7 for the severity of misguiding anyone respecting the Gospel of Christ! James 3:1 embodies the spirit of Jesus’ words in Matthew 23:1-12 respecting the prideful, notice-me attitude of first century scribes and Pharisees. In the first century, the Lord’s church experienced a great influx of would be teachers to promote the Judaizing doctrine respecting Gentile Christians (Acts 11:2-3; 15:1-2, 7; Gal. 3:1-3); if not primarily intended, certainly they would have qualified for appropriate application of James 3:1ff to them. Any “ism” in any age, including the present, has its abundance of ill-

prepared teachers (respecting the truth) to herald a corrupted Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).

**3:2** “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (KJV).

“For 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” (NKJV).

“We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check” (NIV).

“For we all make many mistakes, and if any one makes no mistakes in what he says he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also” (RSV).

“**For**” The word “for” or *gar* here signals that a conclusion is to follow.

“**We all**” “He joins himself with the persons to whom he wrote, to mitigate the harshness of his reproof” (MacKnight 594). Lenski notes that between verse one and verse two, James moved from consideration of teachers to all Christians as well: “James starts with teachers but broadens out so as to include all Christians” (602).

“**Many things**” The Greek for “many things” is *polus*, the same word for “many” in the previous verse.

“**Offend**” The Greek for “offend” in this verse means “to trip...to err, sin, fail” (Strong). Another resource adds the definition “to suffer a reverse” (Kittel and Bromiley). The *New King James Version* replaces “offend” with “stumble.” Accordingly, MacKnight comments: “This is a metaphor taken from persons who, in walking on slippery or rough ground, slide or stumble, without falling...” (594). Woods observes that present tense verb here “denotes continuous action” (159).

“**Man**” The Greek for “man” in this place is *tis*, a general reference for any man or thing.

“**Word**” The Greek for “word” in this verse is *logos*. Robertson suggests the sense in which “word” appears here, tying the caution of the previous verse with the manner in which especially a teacher may be chargeable before God. “In speech. The teacher uses his tongue constantly and so is in particular peril on this score.”

“**Perfect**” The word for “perfect” is *teleios* (tel'-i-os), meaning “completeness” (Strong). Louw and Nida add this to the definition for

“perfect”: “pertaining to being perfect in the sense of not lacking any moral quality.” Wuest equates “perfect” in James 3:2 as “spiritual maturity.” MacKnight makes a correlation between successfully controlling one’s speech and controlling one’s body: “For it is reasonable to believe, that one who is strictly conscientious in his words, will be proportionably careful of his actions” (594).

“**Man**” This second translation of “man” derives from *aner*, referring to a male.

“**Able**” The Greek for “able” here means “powerful or capable” (Strong). Another resource defines the Greek *dunatos* for “able” as “mighty” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

“**Bridle**” The compound Greek word for “bridle” means “guide with a bit and bridle, hold in check” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). “Here it is applied metaphorically, to denote restraining of our passions by means of a firm resolution” (594). Coffman interjects: “Apparently, James’ use of ‘bridle’ at this point prompted the employment of the horse metaphor in the next verse.”

Robertson concludes from this verse: “James apparently means that the man who bridles his tongue does not stumble in speech and is able also to control his whole body with all its passions.”

**3:3** “Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body” (KJV).

“When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal” (NIV).

Verse 3: “Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they may obey us, we direct their entire body as well” (NAS).

“If we put bits into the mouths of horses that they may obey us, we guide their whole bodies” (RSV).

“**We put**” The Greek word translated in this verse “we put” is *ballo*, meaning “to throw” (Strong).

“**Bits**” The Greek word for “bits” here differs from the word for “bridle” in the previous verse, though the same thing is meant.

“**In**” The Greek for “in” at this place is *eis*, which is often translated “into.”

“**Horses**” The Greek word for “horse” is *hippos* (hip'-pos). This particular word appears 17 times in the New Testament, all in the Book of Revelation except the occurrence in James; another related word appears twice in Acts 23:23, 32 where it is translated as “horsemen.”

**“Obey”** The Greek word for “obey” here means “to convince...to pacify or conciliate” (Strong). Vine notes: “The ‘obedience’ suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion.”

**“We turn about”** The Greek word translated “we turn about” means “to lead over, i.e. transfer (direct)” (Strong). Vine defines the Greek from which the KJV renders “we turn about” as “to move from one side to another.”

Coffman astutely observes that James employs three illustrations respecting the gravity of the human tongue. “There are three comparisons introduced by James with this verse with reference to the tongue. These are: (1) the bit, James 3:3; (2) the rudder, James 3:4, and (3) the small fire, James 3:6. The first two of these stress the importance and power of such a small instrument as the tongue, and the third stresses the astounding damage resulting from such a small beginning.”

*Wycliffe* summarizes the import of the verse by quoting another commentator: “It is with men as with horses: control their mouth and you are masters of all their action.” The application is not difficult to comprehend: “The meaning of this simple illustration is, that as we control a horse by the bit—though the bit is a small thing—so the body is controlled by the tongue. He who has a proper control over his tongue can govern his whole body, as he who holds a bridle governs and turns about the horse” (*Barnes*). Lenski adds, “The point is that by means of putting bits only into their mouths we swing to the right or to the left as we desire, not only the horses’ heads, but their entire bodies; we make the whole horse go where it should go. ...if we do this with horses, strong, spirited animals, a mere touch of the rein swinging them around, shall we not do this with ourselves...” (602-603). “This illustrates that which James has just affirmed: to control the tongue is, in effect, to exercise restraint over the whole body. A horse, though large, is controlled by a comparatively tiny bridle; this, indeed, is the reason why the bridle is used—in order that the entire body may be easily turned and controlled” (Woods 161).

**3:4** “Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth” (KJV).

“Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, are yet turned about by a very small rudder, whither the impulse of the steersman willeth” (ASV).

**“Look 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” (NKJV).**

**“Look at the ships also; though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs” (RSV).**

**“Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires” (NAS).**

**“So great”** The Greek for “so great” in this verse means “so vast” (Strong). Robertson muses, “If James had only seen the modern mammoth ships. But the ship on which Paul went to Malta carried 276 persons (Acts 27:37).”

**“Are driven”** The words “are driven” come from a Greek word meaning “to push” (Strong). Vine indicates that the Greek also means “impel, urge on.”

**“Of”** The Greek *hupo*, often meaning “under” occurs in this verse as “of.”

**“Fierce”** The Greek word translated “fierce” here means “dry, i.e. hard or tough” (Strong).

**“With”** The word “with” in this place also occurs from the Greek *hupo*, which usually means “under.”

**“A very small”** These words come from a Greek word meaning “least (in size, amount, dignity, etc.)” (Strong).

**“Helm”** The one other time the Greek word here translated “helm” appears in the KJV, it is translated “rudder” (Acts 27:40). Vincent notes respecting primitive boats or ships: “The rudder was an oar worked by a handle. Helm and rudder were thus one.”

**“Governor”** The Greek word for “governor” means “to steer” (Strong).

**“Listeth”** The word translated “listeth” means “violent impulse” (Strong). Vine says of the Greek here that it means “to will, to be minded.” So, Vincent says of “governor listeth,” “Literally, ‘the impulse or desire of the steersman wisheth.’” Robertson notes, “An old word for rapid, violent motion, here of the hand that worked the rudder...”

*Wycliffe* explains the inclusion of “fierce winds” thus: “The point of the phrase, and are driven of fierce winds, is not clear unless and is taken to mean ‘even.’ Then the meaning would be that the rudder turns

the ship even during fierce storms.” *Barnes’* cites the obvious application of this object lesson.

This illustration is equally striking and obvious. A ship is a large object. It seems to be unmanageable by its vastness, and it is also impelled by driving storms. Yet it is easily managed by a small rudder; and he that has control of that, has control of the ship itself. So with the tongue. It is a small member as compared with the body; in its size not unlike the rudder as compared with the ship. Yet the proper control of the tongue in respect to its influence on the whole man, is not unlike the control of the rudder in its power over the ship.

Lenski contrasts the little with the large in the illustrations, and of course, regarding Christians, too. “The rudder of a ship is like a bridle and a bit in the case of a horse; both the horse and the ship are controlled by a little thing. ...Ships are far larger than horses” (603). Obviously, the little tongue of man, if controlled, would translate to control of oneself. Woods adds, “Notwithstanding the will of the first, the horse, and the brute forces—the winds and the seas—operating upon the second, both are easily controlled, and that by a small object...if we are able to exercise similar rule over our tongues, we govern our whole being” (161-162).

Fream sermonizes over the little tongue compared to what large incidents it can engender.

The “little member” of the body...the tongue, weighs far less than a pound! Yet its power is so great that it not only turns about my whole body, but it can turn about the bodies of countless others. Families have been broken by a single tongue. Churches have been split and died because of the venom of a single tongue. Rehoboam’s loose tongue split a kingdom and started a war!

Little else can either cause so much harm or be responsible for so much good than the human tongue.

**3:5** “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” (KJV).

“So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!” (ASV).

**“Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!” (NKJV).**

**“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” (NIV).**

**“Tongue”** The Greek for “tongue” is *glossa*. The Greek word for tongues is used in Scripture in the same and various ways the word is used in contemporary English. Fream correctly portrays the tongue, like almost everything else, as possessing potential for good or evil.

The small match that has the potential of igniting a heating stove and warming the occupants also has the potential of igniting the house and consuming the occupants. So the tongue which has the capacity of warming men’s hearts with the Spirit of God may work harm and destruction with the spirit of the devil. With fire, given by God for a blessing, comes also the responsibility for its proper use. With the tongue, given by God for a blessing, comes also the same responsibility.

**“Little”** The Greek word for “little” in this place is *mikros* (mikros'). Of course, we see this Greek word in our English prefix, “micro.” The Greek *mikros* is the opposite of *megos* (Vine). *Barnes’* notices the association of little things in the series of illustrations in this context: “Little compared with the body, as the bit or the rudder is, compared with the horse or the ship.” Woods notes “the disparity in size of the tongue and the possibilities of which it is capable. Its power and influence are exceedingly great. It is capable of the greatest good, and of the most far-reaching harm” (162).

**“Member”** The Greek word for “member” means “a limb or part of the body” (Strong). Fream knows the trouble the little tongue can cause, has caused and continues to cause.

The “little member” of the body...the tongue, weighs far less than a pound! Yet its power is so great that it not only turns about my whole body, but it can turn about the bodies of countless others. Families have been broken by a single tongue. Churches have been split and died because of the venom of a single tongue. Rehoboam’s loose tongue split a kingdom and started a war!

**“Boasteth”** The Greek for “boasteth” here appears only in this verse and means “to boast, to make wild claims” (Strong). Vine says of the word, “It indicates any kind of haughty speech which stirs up strife or provokes others.”

**“Great things”** The Greek for “great things” is *megas* (meg'-as).” Of course, we see the Greek word *megas* in our English prefix, mega.

**“Matter”** The Greek here translated “matter” means “forest” (Strong).

Coffman relates how the three illustrations in this context correspond with each other. “The first sentence in this verse is the application of the two illustrations of the bit and the rudder, its power being out of all proportion to its size.”

*Barnes*’ summarizes the point James had in mind; the word translated “matter” in the KJV “means a wood, forest, grove; and then fire-wood, fuel. This is the meaning here. The sense is, that a very little fire is sufficient to ignite a large quantity of combustible materials, and that the tongue produces effects similar to that. A spark will kindle a lofty pile; and a word spoken by the tongue may set a neighborhood or a village ‘in a flame.’” Woods adds, “The vast difference in size between the cause and the effect; but, there is an additional characteristic injected here. In the illustration of the horse and bride, and the ship and rudder, there is *controlled* effect; here, the effect of the little fire and the resulting tremendous destruction are *uncontrolled*” (163). Coffman concurs and phrases it this way: “The essential difference in this third illustration is seen in the fact of the horse and the ship being under control; where here, the tiny fire that kindles a whole forest is out of control.” Proverbs 26:18-25, as Woods observes, corresponds to the evil addressed in James 3:5.

Further, Woods admits that the sinful use of the tongue is among the most common of sins among Christians, as well as among the most damaging sins.

It is virtually impossible to counteract the effects of slander and malicious gossip; and those guilty inflict injury the effects of which extend through time into eternity. And, if people are to be judged on the basis of the effects of their activities this undoubtedly will be one of the most grievous sins for which to answer at the judgment. (164)

**3:6** “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth

**on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell” (KJV).**

**“And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell” (ASV).**

**“The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell” (NIV).**

**“And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell” (RSV).**

**“World”** The Greek word for “world” in this verse is *kosmos*, which means “orderly arrangement, i.e. decoration; by implication, the world (in a wide or narrow sense, including its inhabitants, literally or figuratively [morally])” (Strong).

**“Iniquity”** The Greek word for “iniquity” here is *adikia* (ad-ee-kee'-ah), and it means “(legal) injustice (properly, the quality, by implication, the act); morally, wrongfulness (of character, life or act)” (Strong). Vine defines “iniquity” as “unrighteousness,’ lit., ‘unrightness.’” *Barnes’* comments on the meaning of the phrase “a world of iniquity”:

A little world of evil in itself. This is a very expressive phrase, and is similar to one which we often employ, as when we speak of a town as being a world in miniature. We mean by it that it is an epitome of the world; that all that there is in the world is represented there on a small scale. So when the tongue is spoken of as being ‘a world of iniquity,’ it is meant that all kinds of evil that are in the world are exhibited there in miniature...

MacKnight explains regarding “a world of iniquity”: “This is a metaphor of the same kind with a sea of troubles, a deluge of wickedness” (595).

**“Is”** The Greek for “is” in this place is *kathistemi* (kath-is'-tay-mee), meaning “to place down (permanently), i.e. (figuratively) to designate, constitute” (Strong). Vincent remarks of the special or non-ordinary word translated as “is” in this verse. “This differs a little from the simple ‘is,’ though it is not easy to render it accurately. The verb means ‘to appoint, establish, institute,’ and is used of the tongue as

having an appointed and definite place in a system (among our members). It might be rendered ‘hath its place.’”

**“Among”** The Greek here is *en*, usually translated “in.”

**“Defileth”** The Greek for “defileth” is *spiloo* (spee-lo'-o), which means “to stain or soil (literally or figuratively)” (Strong). The word is translated “defile” and “spot.”

**“Body”** The word for “body” is *soma*.

**“Setteth on fire”** The Greek here means “to cause a blaze” (Strong).

**“Course”** Vincent admits that the phrase “course of nature” is difficult both to translated and interpret; he calls it a “very obscure passage.” *Wycliffe* records in his commentary, “Hort calls this one of the most difficult phrases in the Bible. Although the phrase is probably a technical one, which originated outside of Palestine, James uses it here in a nontechnical sense to mean ‘the whole of human existence.’” Louw and Nida say of the Greek for “course” that it is “a figurative extension...an ordered series of events, involving repeated patterns...”

**“Of”** The word for “of” in this place is the word usually translated “the,” i.e., “**the** nature.”

**“Nature”** The Greek word here translated as “nature” is *genesis* (ghen'-es-is), which means “nativity; figuratively, nature” (Strong). Vine defines *genesis* as “birth.” Louw and Nida define the word as “the state of existence.”

Barnes’ comments, “The word rendered ‘nature’ *geneseoos*, means ‘procreation, birth, nativity;’ and therefore the phrase means, literally, the wheel of birth—that is, the wheel which is set in motion at birth, and which runs on through life.” Fream summarizes the application of the “course” or “wheel of nature” in context.

Also the “wheel of nature” may refer to the entire cycle of human life, from birth to death. From the moment of speech until death, lies, tale-bearing, and destruction are strewed in the wake of the tongue. Responsibilities of life may come and go, but it seems that whether a child at home, a teenager in school, a parent with family responsibilities, or a grandmother with advice, the tongue goes on and on—ceaselessly, tirelessly, and sometimes wickedly to the very end.

Lenski extends the application to others who may be affected by a misguided, evil tongue. “You and I do not exist merely as separate entities. Each of us is not a house that is set off by itself so that, if it

were set afire, it alone would burn. James thinks of us a shouse that are set together in a great city. A fire that is kindled in any one house will spread and become a great conflagration [inferno]" (606).

**“Of”** The word “of” preceding the word “hell” is from the Greek, *hupo*, which usually means “under.”

**“Hell”** The English word “hell” sometimes represents the Greek *hades* (referring to the place of departed spirits awaiting final judgment), but here the Greek word is *geena* (gheh'-en-nah), which refers to the place of eternal punishment. Accordingly, *Wycliffe* writes, “This tremendous power for evil possessed by the tongue comes straight from hell (Gehenna).” Fream condenses the origin and use of gehenna so that we may understand it better.

The source of the tongue’s fire, hell itself, is really the Greek form of the Hebrew Gehenom (or gaienna, Joshua 18:16, Septuagint). Originally Gehenna referred to the valley of Hinnom where the Molech, the fire god, was worshiped. Here the sons of Ahaz were burnt in the fire (II Chron. 28:3). The name, however, began to be associated with the place for torment of the wicked after final judgment. Thus Gehenna became the metaphorical name for the flame of hell itself. Here the fire never ceases, but continues through eternity. (Mark 9:47-48; Matt. 25 :46; Rev. 14:11 ).

Wuest, commenting on Jude 17, notes that three Greek words are translated with the English word “hell,” by which understanding of various passages is hindered.

There are three Greek words, each referring to a different place, all of which are translated by the one word *hell*, a fact that causes considerable confusion in interpreting the passages where they occur....*Geenna* refers to the final abode of the wicked dead, called The Lake of Fire in The Revelation (20:14, 15). Where this word occurs, the translation should be *hell*. It is found in Mt. 5:22, 29, 30, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, 33; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; Lk. 12:5; Jas. 3:6. Hades refers to the temporary abode of the dead before the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus...Tartaros is the word in II Pet. 2:4 “cast down to hell.” The fallen angels were sent to their temporary prison house, Tartarus, until the Great White Throne judgment.

Amusing and though-provoking, Woods writes: *“Were all men suddenly to lose the faculty of speech, the number of sins of which men are continually guilty would be sharply reduced!”* (164-165).

**3:7** **“For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind” (KJV).**

**“For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind” (ASV).**

**“For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind” (NKJV).**

**“For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by humankind” (RSV).**

**“For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed by the human race” (NAS).**

**“Kind”** Strong includes among the definitions for the Greek word translated “kind”: “a genus or sort.” Bauer, Gingrich and Danker give the primary definition of the word here translated “kind” as “nature.”

**“Beasts”** The Greek word translated “beasts” here means “a dangerous animal” (Strong). However, the “viper” that attacked the apostle Paul was styled “a venomous beast,” using the same word there as here for “beast” (Acts 28:3-4). Louw and Nida define “beasts” as “any four-footed animal, either wild or domesticated - ‘animal, quadruped.’”

**“Birds”** The Greek word that is translated “birds” means “a flying animal, i.e. bird” (Strong). Vine defines the Greek word for “birds” as “that which is able to fly, winged.”

**“Serpents”** The Greek word translated “serpents” means “a reptile” (Strong). The other three occasions in the KJV where the word appears, it is translated as “creeping thing” (Acts 10:12; 11:6; Rom. 1:23). Louw and Nida say of the word translated “serpents” here that though it

is often interpreted as referring only to snakes, it also includes in biblical contexts (as the result of the influence of classifications based on Hebrew terminology, as in Genesis 1.25, 26, and 30) a number of small four-footed animals as well as snakes, for

example, rats, mice, frogs, toads, salamanders, and lizards. However, in the various NT contexts (for example Ac 10.12, 11.6; Ro 1.23; and Jas 3.7 where ‘creeping things’ are contrasted with birds, animals, and fish) it is probably more satisfactory to use a term which designates primarily snakes.

**“Things in the sea”** Vine defines the Greek word translated “things in the sea” as meaning “of, or belonging to, the salt water.” Louw and Nida add: “any creature living in the sea - ‘sea creature, fish.’”

**“Is tamed”** The Greek word for “tamed” includes the idea of “to subdue” (Vine). The present tense indicates that taming is an ongoing or continuous process, i.e., taming animals, etc. is still occurring (Robertson). The Greek word translated “tame” in another context means “demon”: “a demoniac Mk 5:4” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Humans subdue animals to their wishes comparably to the way “demons” subdued the persons they possessed. Consequently, the basic meaning of the word here translated “tamed” is “to bring under control and to continue to restrain” (Louw and Nida).

**“Hath been tamed”** The verb tense here indicates a past through the present circumstance of having tamed animals, i.e. domestication of some animals persists (Robertson).

**“Mankind”** The same word in this verse translated as “kind,” accompanied by *anthropos* here is translated as “mankind.”

Robertson observes that the classifications of animals, etc. here correspond with the same classifications found in Genesis 9:2. *Wycliffe* astutely comments: “God’s command to man (Gen 1:26) to have dominion over the fish of the sea, etc., has been successfully carried out, but the tongue can no man tame.” Woods notes, “*Though able to subdue the brute creation, man does not always control himself!...It is a sad commentary on man, and an embarrassing exhibition of his moral and spiritual degradation that though able to tame the wildest animals, he cannot tame his own tongue!*” (168). Coffman also laments, “It is a literal fact that mankind, in response to the original directive of the Creator for man ‘to subdue’ the earth and the sea and everything in them (Gen. 1:28), has indeed done that very thing. How strange it is, and how tragic, that he has had no success in the matter of ‘subduing’ his tongue!”

**3:8 “But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (KJV).**

**“But the tongue can no man tame; (it is) a restless evil, (it is) full of deadly poison” (ASV).**

**“Man”** The Greek for “man” in this verse is *anthropos*.

**“Can tame”** Woods observes regarding the verb tense: “Here, the tense of the verb is momentary, and not continuous action....The statement of James was intended to teach us that we must ever exercise ceaseless vigilance in all matters pertaining to the tongue” (168). That is, the tongue of mankind is never so domesticated that no further attention to its proper use is needed.

**“Unruly”** The Greek word for “unruly” means “unstable” (Strong). Woods paints a colorful word picture of what it means for one’s tongue to be unruly: “an evil ever turbulent, agitated, unstable, like a wild beast continually moving up and down in his cage, resisting, as far as possible, all restraint” (169).

**“Evil”** Strong defines “evil” here as “worthless.” Another resource includes in the definition: “evil, injurious, dangerous” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**“Full”** The Greek word for “full” here “conveys the sense of ‘having full measure’” (Vine).

**“Of deadly”** Strong defines “of deadly” as “death-bearing, i.e. fatal.” Louw and Nida say of the words “of deadly poison”: “The phrase ‘deadly poison’ may be rendered as ‘that which can cause death’ or ‘that which causes people to die.’”

**“Poison”** Vine says of “poison” that it “denotes ‘something active’ as (a) ‘rust,’ as acting on metals, affecting their nature, James 5:3; (b) ‘poison,’ as of asps, acting destructively on living tissues, figuratively of the evil use of the lips as the organs of speech, Rom 3:13; so of the tongue, James 3:8.” Coffman notes other instances of similar figurative language; “This is similar to ‘full of adultery’ (2 Peter 2:14), and ‘full of envy (Rom. 1:29). Paul also made use of the same metaphor: ‘The venom of asps is under their lips’ (Rom. 3:13).”

Brother Woods’ lengthy application below respecting one’s struggle with his tongue is too true and capable of immeasurable, irresolvable harm.

There are those whose chief joy in life is the accumulation of malicious matter against every person of their acquaintance, and who relish the recitation thereof on every possible occasion. Such are ever with us; and we must be careful that we do not become their instruments in passing on their slanderous tidbits. Two

questions we should raise on hearing something of an injurious character regarding others: (1) *Is it true?* There is a rather common type of small-souled individual who seems to think that he lifts himself from the anonymity he deserves by attacking others, and who appears to feel that besmirching and discrediting others brings credit to himself. We should, therefore, raise the question, *Do I know that this thing is so?* Unless I have sufficient evidence of the correctness of the report, I should throw the mantle of forgetfulness about it, and relegate it to the realm of forgotten things. But, granting that it is true, I should ask this additional question, (2) *Will it do any good to tell it?* Will it aid the church, the community, the nation? If not, let it be forgotten forever! (169)

Woods continues that the evil perpetrated by the tongue may be impossible to completely undo.

It is of course possible to refute the slanderer and to prove his calumny [defamation] false, but the originator will simply move into new areas and resume his favorite avocation. Moreover, the consequences of such are far-reaching and impossible to eliminate; those who heard the calumny but not the refutation will be disposed to associate the name and the calumny, when either is heard, and so the evil work of the slanderer continues. ...It was not James' design, in this instance, to describe the effects of the tongue on the individual guilty of its abuses, but upon those who are victims of it. Those possessed of such tongues are like slithering snakes carrying a sac of virulent [potent] poison which they are ready to inject at the first opportunity. ...Were there no listeners there would be no slanderers! He who encourages another in his calumny is about as guilty as he who commits it. The receiver of stolen goods is, under the law, as much of a criminal as the thief himself; why not then, the receiver of false and malicious gossip. Were all such intercourse eliminated, the world would improve one hundred per cent overnight. And many, whose chief interest consists in dwelling on the weaknesses and foibles [shortcomings

or quirks] of others, would find themselves barren of useful ideas, and without an avocation in life. (170-171)

**3:9** “**Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God**” (KJV).

**“Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God” (ASV; NKJV).**

“**Bless**” The Greek word for “bless” resembles an English word, eulogize. The Greek *eulogeo* (yoo-log-eh'-o) means “to speak well of” (Strong). Bauer, Gingrich and Danker add to the definition for “bless” the words “praise, extol.” Louw and Nida define bless “to speak of something in favorable terms.” Louw and Nida include as part of the definition of “bless” “to ask God to bestow divine favor on, with the implication that the verbal act itself constitutes a significant benefit.” The verb tense indicates continuing action.

“**God**” The Greek for “God” in this place is *kurios* (koo'-ree-os), which is usually translated “Lord.” “Historically the concept of lordship combines the two elements of power and authority” (Kittel and Bromiley).

“**Curse**” Vine defines “curse” in this verse as “primarily signifies ‘to pray against, to wish evil against a person or thing’; hence ‘to curse.’” Louw and Nida further define “curse” “to cause injury or harm by means of a statement regarded as having some supernatural power, often because a deity or supernatural force has been evoked.” The verb tense here also indicates continuing action. It is inconceivable that the same tongue customarily blesses and curses. Woods notes that this blessing and cursing is “an habitual practice...James affirms, a characteristic of some men habitually to praise God with a tongue which is also used regularly to pronounce curses upon other men” (173).

Woods further denotes the compound word for “curse” here has a fuller meaning. “One who feels disposed so to do regards himself as occupying a higher position than other men, and privileged to death thus with his fellows. He considers himself as able to look *up* to God, and bless him; and *down* to men and curse them. It is a presumptuous and high-handed disposition wholly displeasing to God” (173). Wood further distinguishes between curses authored by God or the servants of God that were not impassioned diatribes but legitimate divine judgments (173-174). Fream acknowledges that the “curse” about which James writes is not limited to *four-letter words*. “But can we not

also curse men without using curse words? In the same way in which we bless the Father by singing praises unto Him, can we not also curse our fellow man by expressing ill-will, by slander, by sending forth destructive verbal missiles?"

**“Men”** The Greek for “men” in this place is *anthropos*.

**“Similitude”** The Greek for “similitude” is *homoiosis* (hom-oy'-o-sis) and means “resemblance” (Strong). Another resource adds the word “likeness” to the definition (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Robertson notes that this characteristic of humanity sets humans apart from the non-human creation. “It is this image of God which sets man above the beasts. Compare 2 Cor 3:18.” *Barnes’* makes the valuable observation that due to our resemblance to God who is our spiritual parent, it is unseemly to bless him while cursing humanity. “The point in the remark of the apostle is, the absurdity of employing the tongue in such contradictory uses as to bless one who has to us the relation of a father, and to curse any being, especially those who are made in his image.” Genesis 1:26-27 introduces the resemblance between God and mankind. Obviously, the Bible student is aware that the resemblance to God that man enjoys pertains to the spiritual image rather than a physical resemblance.

**“God”** This second occurrence of the word “God” comes from *theos*.

Clarke laments the ignoble circumstance where men actively express themselves, wishing the demise or injury of their fellows. “The consideration that man is made after the image of God should restrain the tongue of the swearer; but there are many who, while they pretend to sing the high praises of God, are ready to wish the direst imprecations either on those who offend them, or with whom they choose to be offended.” Fream cites the often, far-reaching destruction to Christianity over the misuse of the tongue by those who purport to be the people of God.

Oh, that entire congregations of God’s people would read this third chapter and tremble. Countless are the broken hearts and broken lives that are left in the wake of a poisonous tongue. How many ministers have ceased to preach, driven to despair by the loose tongues of those who should be on the Lord’s side? How many thousands have been driven from the assembly of God’s people in shame and disgust over slander and tale-

bearing? How many churches have been split asunder by the everlasting venom of poisonous tongues?

**3:10** “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (KJV).

“Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be” (NIV).

“from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way” (NAS).

“**Out**” The Greek word for “out” here is *ek*.

“**Blessing**” The word “blessing” in this verse differs slightly from the previous Greek word translated “blessing” in the last verse. It is *eulogia* (yoo-log-ee'-ah) and means “fine speaking, i.e. elegance of language; commendation” (Strong). Vine says this “blessing” means “good speaking.”

“**Brethren**” The Greek for “brethren” is *adelphos*. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown indicate that James seeks the recipients of his epistle to remember fraternal kinship in Christ. James makes “a mild appeal to their consciences by their brotherhood in Christ.”

“**Ought**” Louw and Nida define the Greek word for “ought” as “that which should be or happen, with the implication of propriety.”

“**So to be**” These words come from a verb in the present tense, indicating continual action. Woods notes that the meaning is “These things ought not to begin to be” (176).

*Barnes*’ makes a contemporary application where the sin described in this series of verses and this verse occurs. “After an act of solemn devotion in the house of God, the professed worshipper goes forth with the feelings of malice in his heart, and the language of slander, detraction, or even blasphemy on his lips.” Clarke admits to observing several individuals who come under the condemnation of these verses and this verse. “To find a man who officiates in sacred things to be a common swearer, a slanderer, etc., is truly monstrous; but there have been many cases of this kind, and I have known several.” Woods rightly ascribes culpability to this verbal action when he writes that it is “both senseless and sinful” (176).

**3:11** “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?” (KJV).

“Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?” (NKJV).

**“Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?” (NIV).**

**“Does a spring pour forth from the same opening fresh water and brackish?” (RSV).**

**“Doth”** The Greek word translated “doth” means “whether at all” (Strong). Vincent notes that verse eleven begins as a rhetorical question, the answer to which is implied, “No!”

**“Send forth”** The Greek word for “send forth” means “to swell out...to gush” (Strong). Vine adds additional dimensions to the Greek here, depending upon the context in which it appears; “‘to be full to bursting,’ was used of the earth in producing vegetation, of plants in putting forth buds; in James 3:11 it is said of springs gushing with water, ‘(doth the fountain) send forth...?’” Vincent records of the Greek for “send forth,” “An expressive word, found nowhere else in the New Testament, and denoting a ‘full, copious’ discharge.” Robertson defines “send forth” to include “to bubble up, to gush forth, here only in the New Testament.” Louw and Nida add to the definition: “to cause a forceful and abundant supply of a liquid.”

**“At”** The Greek word translated “at” here is *ek*.

**“Place”** The Greek for “place” means “a hole (as if for light), i.e. cavern; by analogy, a spring (of water)” (Strong). Robertson adds, “An old word for fissure in the earth...” The Greek word is *ope*, meaning “open” and bearing similarity to the English word (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**“Sweet”** Strong defines “sweet” in this verse, *glukus* (gloo-koos’), as “not bitter nor salt.” The distinction is indicated in the single word; “pertaining to being sweet in contrast with being bitter or salty” (Louw and Nida).

**“Water”** The word “water” does not appear in this verse, but it was added by the translators to help the reader understand the context.

**“Bitter”** Regarding water, the word “bitter” means “water that is not potable” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**3:12 “Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh” (KJV).**

**“My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water” (NIV).**

**“Either”** Strong says of “either,” *e* (ay) is “a primary particle of distinction between two connected terms.” Verse 12 poses another

rhetorical question for which the implied answer is, “No!” “There is an unchanging law of nature that like produces like; and to this law the sacred writers often alluded” (Woods 177). Compare Matthew 7:16-18.

**“Both”** Coffman refers to the necessity of making a distinction that the contrary waters do not issue from the same pool. “It is said that along the Dead Sea there were both salt-water and fresh-water fountains; so James made his meaning clear by adding ‘from the same opening.’ The illustration shows that man's behavior in blessing God and cursing men with the same tongue was a monstrous perversion of nature, in fact an altogether impossibility in nature.”

**“Salt”** The Greek word for “salt” here means “briny” (Strong). This word is “usu. understood as *salt spring*” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**“Fresh”** The Greek for “fresh” here is the same Greek word translated as “sweet” in the immediately preceding verse, *glukus*.

*Barnes’* applies the intent of James’ language here; “A fig-tree bears only figs; and so the tongue ought to give utterance only to one class of sentiments and emotions.” Coffman concludes that even blessings are faulty when they belong to Christians who customarily curse their fellows. “The ‘cursing’ shows the real character of them that do it. Even their ‘blessing’ is in no sense to be construed as ‘sweet.’ Their character denies any goodness that might otherwise have appeared in their pious talk.”

**3:13** “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom” (KJV).

**“Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom” (ASV).**

**“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom” (NKJV).**

**“Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom” (NAS).**

**“Wise”** The Greek word for “wise” here is *sophos* (sof-os) from which we get our word “sophistication” (Strong). The word means “clever, skilful, experienced” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). *Wycliffe* comments that “wise man” “is the technical term for teacher” and “knowledge” means “expert knowledge.” *Barnes’ Notes’* applies

references to a wise man and knowledge to public teachers in the church. “This is spoken with reference to the work of public teaching; and the meaning of the apostle is, that if there were such persons among them, they should be selected for that office. The characteristics here stated as necessary qualifications, are wisdom and knowledge....No mere power of speaking, however eloquent it might be, was a sufficient qualification.” Clarke concurs that James refers to persons who are “qualified to teach others.” Woods portrays the intent of James in this opening verse of the context of verses 13-18, while reflecting back on the caution of James 3:1 to teachers.

But, suppose some teacher says, “Such advise is good for those not qualified to teach; but, I do not need it, inasmuch as I am a wise and understanding man.” James raise the question, “Who is wise and understanding among you?” ...James, by implication, designates here the essential qualifications of *all* teachers, including those of our day. They are to be (a) *wise*; (b) *understanding*. (See Deut. 1:13; 4:6.)  
...**Knowledge is the possession of facts; wisdom their proper application.** [emphasis added] (180-181)

Fream makes a valuable assessment of the context that begins in verse 13.

The term “wise man” was often used, and its usage was primarily a reference to the teachers... The religious teachers of whom Jesus spoke were called the “wise and understanding.” (Luke 10:21 [ASV]). This is not meant to imply that the teaching applies only to teachers, but rather *particularly* to teachers. After designating the teachers in verse one, James digresses somewhat in his discourse on the tongue in that all that he said applies to every person as well as to teachers... The teacher, remember, is not only the one who appears before a class of pupils, but anyone who takes upon themselves the responsibility of giving advice to others, of admonishing, instructing, correcting; whether in private or in a formal classroom situation. Thus the term “wise and understanding” includes many people.

“**Who is...man**” The word appearing here for “Who is...man” is *tis*, a pronoun that can refer to people or things. The verb is implied

(“is”).

**“Endued with knowledge”** The Greek word translated “endued with knowledge” means “intelligent” (Strong). Robertson adds, that the meaning is “an expert, a skilled and scientific person with a tone of superiority,” and “wise” and “knowledge” are synonyms. Baer, Gingrich and Danker ascribe the following to the person of “knowledge” or “understanding” in this verse: “those who are experts in their own estimation.”

**“Among”** The Greek for “among” here is *en*, usually translated as “in.”

**“Let him shew”** Robertson notes that “[a]ctions speak louder than words.” *Wycliffe* observes, “The pride of knowledge has always been the besetting sin of professional teachers.” Hence, the wise man is called upon to demonstrate the wisdom and knowledge he alleges to possess. “Show” includes the idea of “prove” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Woods adds, “Here is the way in which the possession of wisdom and understanding may be demonstrated. If the teacher claims to be possessed of a superior knowledge by which he believes himself to be capable of instructing others, let him prove it by a godly life, richly filled with good works!” (181).

**“Out”** *Ek* appears here for the word “out.”

**“Conversation”** The Greek word for “conversation” in this place means “behavior” (Strong). *Barnes’ Notes* expands the definition to include, “correct and consistent life and deportment.” Another resource defines our word here as “way of life” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Wuest says of “conversation” in his note on Jude 17: “...not referring here to the physical act of walking but to the act of determining our course of conduct and the carrying out of that determined course of action.” Coffman comments, “There is a moral foundation in all true wisdom, there being an utter impossibility of any wicked person being, in any sense, wise. The true wisdom is found alone in those of moral and upright character.”

**“Works”** The usual Greek word for “work” appears here: *ergon*. Vine observes that *ergon* pertains to “work, employment, task.”

**“With”** *En* appears here as “with.”

**“Meekness”** The Greek here translated “meekness” means “mildness” or “humility” (Strong). Vine remarks: “Described negatively, meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest...” Woods defines “meekness” as “stripped of all arrogance, pride and desire for worldly acclaim” (182).

**“Wisdom”** The Greek translated “wisdom” here is *sophia* (sof-ee'-ah), and it is related to the word translated “wise” earlier in the verse.

**3:14** “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth” (KJV).

“But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth” (ASV).

“But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth” (NKJV).

“But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth” (NIV).

“But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth” (RSV).

“But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth” (NAS).

**“But”** The Greek for “but” here is *de*.

**“Ye have”** The Greek word translated “ye have” is *echo* (ekh'-o) and means “possession” or “ability” (Strong).

**“Bitter”** The Greek for “bitter” in this place means “sharp” from the idea of “piercing” (Strong). Vine adds that the definition includes, “to cut, to prick.” Louw and Nida define the word as “resentful.” A warning about bitterness appears also in the general epistle to Jewish Christians, the Book of Hebrews (12:15), and the apostle Paul provided the same warning to the church at Ephesus: “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:31-32). Any warning that appears in two general epistles as well as one or more other epistles signals a common problem among Christians in any century, including our own.

**“Envy”** The Greek word for “envy” is *zelos* (dzay'-los) meaning “properly, heat, i.e. (figuratively) ‘zeal’ (in a favorable sense, ardor; in an unfavorable one, jealousy...)” (Strong). Vincent observes that the Greek *zelos* may be used of a good sense or in a bad sense, depending upon the context in which it appears, just like in English.

**“Strife”** The word here translated “strife” means “faction” and is translated also as “contention” (Strong). Robertson defines the word, “pushing forward for personal ends, partisanship.” *Barnes' Notes*

correctly senses the woeful situation that sometimes existed between brethren of the first century, and lamentably and doubtlessly, plagues brethren in every century. “There is reference here to a fierce and unholy zeal against each other; a spirit of ambition and contention.” *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* includes in the definition of “strife” the disposition of “rivalry.” Outside the New Testament, the word translated “strife” here “denotes a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Lenski defines “strife” in this place as “the selfish spirit that seeks its own will and advantage” (616). Woods says of “faction” (ASV), “It is a condition produced by improper zeal which has as its aim the acquisition of that possessed by others” (183). This is not limited to physical, material, tangible items, but may include intangible qualities such as influence or esteem.

**“Hearts”** The usual word for “heart” appears here: *kardia* (kar-dee'-ah). This is the source, in this case, of all the sin described in this context (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*). Compare Matthew 15:18-19.

**“Glory”** The present tense indicates that one habitually glories or boasts over others. The Greek word here for “glory” is a “strengthened form” of the Greek word for “glory” (Vine). Robertson observes, “Boasting arrogance disproves the possession of wisdom.” Another resource defines the specific word for “glory” found here thus: “This word expresses the element of comparative superiority in boasting” (Kittel and Bromiley). Outside the New Testament, this word refers to the victory expressions “of a gladiator over his defeated foe” or it means “to triumph over” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Woods applies the thought to the contemporary church: “The teacher, preacher, elder, deacon, Bible school instructor, editor, writer, or whoever he may be who exults (glories) in the thought that he is superior to some other because of his attainments in this, or some other field, falls under the ban of this passage” (184-185). Coffman also notes the particular vocational hazard that potentially threatens any preacher or teacher. “No class of persons is any more in constant danger of falling short in this category than is the group of teachers and preachers of religious truth. Such persons are accustomed to speaking and having their words accepted...”

Woods observes further that the problem under consideration is “to boast of one’s affairs to the hurt of another. ...One possessed of the spirit of faction entertains the desire to obtain a goal without regard for, and often in violation of, all honorable ethics. It is, alas, all too

often true that one person pushes himself *upward* by propelling another in the opposite direction—*downward*...” 9185).

**“Lie”** The Greek for “lie” in this verse is *pseudomai* (psyoo'-dom-ahē), and it means “to utter an untruth or attempt to deceive by falsehood” (Strong). We see in the original word the prefix meaning “false” appearing in numerous English words (e.g., “pseudonym,” “pseuoscience”). The present tense means that the lying is ongoing and customary in one’s life.

**“Truth”** The usual Greek word for “truth” appears in this verse: *aletheia* (al-ay'-thi-a).

*Wycliffe* summarizes verse 14 thus: “Pride of knowledge in the case of James’ readers gave vent to bitter jealousy and selfish ambition (RSV), which resulted in boasting (glory not) and being thus false to the truth (RSV). The author does not mean here that the teachers were departing from orthodox doctrine, but rather that by their inconsistent living they were given a lie to the truth of the Gospel.” Clarke cautions, “If ye be under the influence of an unkind, fierce, and contemptuous spirit, even while attempting or pretending to defend true religion, do not boast either of your exertions or success in silencing an adversary; ye have no religion, and no true wisdom; and to profess either is to lie against the truth.” *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* simplifies the concept for us of ‘glorying and lying against the truth’: “To boast of wisdom which your lives evince not, is virtually lying against the Gospel truth.”

Woods vividly applies the verse to any congregational setting in any century where the Lord’s work may be disrupted by misdirected brethren who foster internal division.

All factions, all party-spirit, and all envying issue from selfishness, a desire to put one’s self forward, and to go ahead of others. We are not to overlook the fact that these words were penned primarily with teachers in view, whose activities afford frequent occasion for the temptations against which he warns. Teachers, preachers, writers, editors are all in a position where humility is often difficult and where selfish ambition is a constant temptation. ...There is no place in the body of Christ for those motivated by the desire to be leaders of a party, or to secure for themselves, and for selfish reasons, a place of prominence in the church of our Lord. Paul, in 1 Cor. 1:12, 13, demonstrates the fact that

the party-spirit is an exhibition of carnality; and it thus falls into the class of sins as fornication, adultery, drunkenness, and the like. It is difficult to conceive of a more grievous sin than that which results from the deliberate efforts of a man or group of men who, for the sake of selfish ambition and personal gains, will cause division among the people of God. Far better to be the Roman soldier who thrust a spear into the side of the fleshly body of Christ on the cross, than to be one who drives a sword of division into his spiritual body—the church. (184)

**3:15** “This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish” (KJV).

“This wisdom is not (a wisdom) that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish” (ASV).

“This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic” (NKJV).

“Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil” (NIV).

“**Wisdom**” *Sophia*, the same Greek word for “wisdom” in the previous verse appears again here. Bauer, Gingrich and Danker define “wisdom” as “cleverness in speaking.”

“**Descendeth**” The Greek word for “descendeth” means “to come or go down” (Vine).

“**Not from above**” *Barnes’ Notes* captures the calamity of misguided brethren depicted in this verse. “The wisdom here referred to is that carnal or worldly wisdom which produces strife and contention; that kind of knowledge which leads to self-conceit, and which prompts a man to defend his opinions with over-heated zeal.” Wuest notices (regarding Jude 17) the contrast between Greek and English words respectively for “from above” and “from beneath.”

“**But**” The word translated “but” at this place is *alla*, meaning “contrariwise” (Strong).

“**Earthly**” Robertson notes that “earthly” may mean “earthly limitations.” *Barnes’ Notes* portrays the origin and affect of the false wisdom about which James wrote here. “Has its origin in this world, and partakes of its spirit. It is such as men exhibit who are governed only by worldly maxims and principles.” Bauer, Gingrich and Danker render the Greek for “earthly” as “purely human.”

“**Sensual**” Robertson defines “sensual” as referring to “sensuous or animal life.” *Barnes’ Notes* says of “sensual”: “It is that which takes counsel of our natural appetites and propensities, and not of high and spiritual influences.”

“**Devilish**” The word “devilish” means “demon-like” (Strong). *Barnes’ Notes* remarks about the word “devilish,” “Such as the demons exhibit.” *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* portrays “devilish” as “originating from ‘hell.’” Bauer, Gingrich and Danker express it, “*demonic* in origin.” The *King James Version* does not adequately distinguish between Greek words respectively referring to the devil and demons. “There is but one devil; there are many demons. The King James Translation does not make this distinction, sometimes rendering the word *daimonion* by the word ‘devil.’ The Greek word for ‘devil’ is *diabolos* (a slanderer)...” (Woods 188).

Woods unmasks the pretense of the defective wisdom James denounces.

The “wisdom” which condemns is of the earth, because it sets its affection on things of the earth and in only such finds satisfaction. The motives which prompt it to action are from below, and it hesitates not to use the basest of reasons even in matters of a spiritual nature. It is for this reason that it does not shrink from effecting the greatest harm in the body of Christ, often under the pretense of great loyalty thereto. (187)

Robertson notes that James decries “counterfeit wisdom, not real wisdom.” The fruit betrays the wisdom in this verse as not from God. “To claim to be possession of a superior wisdom, the fruits of which are alienation, division, and disruption of the body of Christ, is to demonstrate that the alleged wisdom possessed is not the heavenly wisdom, is not from above, thus not from God” (Woods 186).

It is interesting to note and to be aware of the progression of sin (i.e., bad to worse). “The order of the words, ‘earthly, sensual, devilish,’ is significant. In each there is a progressiveness of sin, an advance to deeper guilt and thus to greater condemnation” (Woods 188). Further, Fream makes an astute observation contrasting service to God versus service to Satan.

A careful study of this section seems to overwhelm one with an awareness that **there is no neutral ground spiritually. Every man is in service of either God or the devil.** There is not a “no man’s land” were a man

can be safe from both the sword of the Spirit and the fiery darts of the evil one. “He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.” ( Matt. 12: 30). [emphasis added]

Even the apathetic middle in a congregational dispute, inadvertently serves the devil.

**3:16** “For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (KJV).

“For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed” (ASV).

“For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there” (NKJV).

“For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice” (NIV).

“For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice” (RSV).

“For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing” (NAS).

“For” *Gar* appears here, signaling a conclusion is about to be presented from foregoing material.

“Where” The word “where” means “at whichever spot” (Strong).

“Envy” Here we have the same word for “envy” that appeared in verse 14.

“Strife” This word is the same as the “strife” also mentioned in verse 14. Clarke comments on “envying and strife” that it involves “inflammatory passion, and contention-altercations.”

“Confusion” The Greek for “confusion” means “instability” or “disorder” (Strong). *Jamieson, Fausett and Brown* represents “confusion” as “tumultuous anarchy.” Kittel and Bromiley define the word for “confusion as “political turmoil” or “disruption...through disputes.” Another resource defines the same word as “*disturbance*” or “unruliness” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Fream comments, “When the saints of God turn upon one another to “bite and devour” one another they act completely out of harmony with God’s wisdom and throw the camp of God into bitter confusion.” Compare Galatians 5:15.

“Every” The Greek for “every” here is *pas*, meaning “all.”

“Evil” The Greek word translated “evil” in this verse means

“foul,” flawed or “wicked” (Strong). Vincent includes in the definition: “worthlessness, good-for-nothingness.”

**“Work”** The word translated “work” here differs from the previous Greek word for “work” in this context. The former word was *ergon*, whereas the Greek here is *pragma* (prag'-mah), meaning “deed” (Strong).

*Wycliffe* concludes from verses 15-16: “False wisdom produces confusion (RSV, disorder)-- probably a reference to squabbles in the church--and every evil work. God is neither a God of confusion (1 Cor 14:33) nor sympathetic to evil (1 John 1:5). Thus ‘wisdom’ that causes such a situation cannot come from God.” *Barnes’ Notes* describes the horrific cause and effect on a local church:

...tumult or unquietness. Everything is unsettled and agitated. There is no mutual confidence; there is no union of plan and effort; there is no co-operation in promoting a common object; there is no stability in any plan; for a purpose, though for good, formed by one portion, is defeated by another....All love and harmony of course are banished; all happiness disappears; all prosperity is at an end. In place of the peaceful virtues which ought to prevail, there springs up every evil passion that tends to mar the peace of a community. Where this spirit prevails in a church, it is of course impossible to expect any progress in divine things; and in such a church any effort to do good is vain.

Woods adds:

Where jealousy, envy and the spirit of rivalry exist, there is disorder, division and disruption of all that is good and right. Under such circumstances, those thus possessed lose all sense of proper values, and resort to whatever is necessary to in order to achieve their factious designs. ...they must have their way whatever the price involved. ...The “wisdom” which James condemns, far from fostering peace, unity and fellowship, foments warfare, division and alienation. One may be possessed of a sharp tongue, a shrewd mind, and a ready wit; his accomplishments and talents may secure for him much worldly acclaim; but, if his efforts cause trouble among brethren, drive the apart, and make them enemies, his “wisdom” is not from

above, but is “earthly, sensual, devilish.” Such a one serves not God, but Satan, and is an enemy to the cause of truth. The sooner such a one is recognized, marked as such, and avoided (Rom. 16:17, 18), the better it is for the cause of Christ. Those thus motivated “serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent.” (Rom. 16:18.) “A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned.” (Tit. 3:10, 11.) (189-190)

Fream summarizes:

Every action that is opposed to the good is evident, and such torturous self-destruction can be set loose even within the church itself. ...Like bantam roosters in their arrogance of self-love, those who love not peace spend their time looking for a fight. With chips on their shoulders they peck from brother to brother until they find someone who will take up the challenge. Then after weeks of furious activity and a flurry of feathers, the victor cries, “I won, I won” in the midst of the shambled wreckage of a destroyed church. The sweet taste of victory of personal pride is swallowed up by a greater victory, for the devil won the battle!

**3:17** “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (KJV).

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy” (ASV).

“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” (NKJV).

“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” (NIV).

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity” (RSV).

**“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy” (NAS).**

**“Wisdom”** Kittel says of James’ use of “wisdom”: “In James wisdom is a morally upright walk” (Kittel and Bromiley).

**“First”** The Greek word for “first” here is *proton* (pro'-ton), meaning “firstly (in time, place, order, or importance)” (Strong).

**“Pure”** The Greek for “pure” in this place means “properly, clean, i.e. (figuratively) innocent, modest, perfect,” and it is translated also as “chaste” and “clean” (Strong). Vine adds that it means “not contaminated.” Kittel states it is “moral purity” (Kittel and Bromiley). Woods notes, “It is impossible for a factious spirit and a fractious disposition to issue from a pure heart” (191).

**“Then”** The word “then” means “thereafter” (Strong).

**“Peaceable”** The word here for “peace” means the opposite of “unrest” (Kittel and Bromiley). Lenski describes “peaceable” as “never starts quarrels, strife, dissension, and turbulence” (618). Woods observes, “An alleged defense of the truth, at the expense of a sincere heart and a peaceful disposition, is illogical and irrational” (191). Fream makes an important point that is typically lost upon persons who want peace at any price: “The peace is desirable, but never to be desired above purity. ...Contention is to be avoided where it is possible with the preservation of purity.”

**“Gentle”** The word “gentle” means “appropriate, i.e. (by implication) mild,” and it is translated also as “moderation” and “patient” (Strong). Vine adds, “it expresses that considerateness that looks ‘humanely and reasonably at the facts of a case.’” *Barnes’ Notes* includes the word “inoffensive” in the definition of “gentle.” Clarke portrays “gentle” as “putting the best construction upon all the actions of others.” Another resource defines “gentle” as “‘forbearing:’ making allowance for others” (*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown*). Still another source says of the Greek for “gentile” that its meaning includes “yielding” and “kind” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**“And”** The “and” following “gentle,” as well as the “and” following “partiality,” does not appear in the original.

**“Intreated”** The Greek word for “intreated” means “ready to obey” or “compliant” (Vine). *Barnes’* fleshes out the idea of “intreated”:

He does not take a position, and then hold it whether right or wrong; he is not a man on whom no arguments

or persuasions can have any influence. He is not one who cannot be affected by any appeals which may be made to him on the grounds of patriotism, justice, or benevolence; but is one who is ready to yield when truth requires him to do it, and who is willing to sacrifice his own convenience for the good of others.

Clarke adds: “Not stubborn nor obstinate; of a yielding disposition in all indifferent things.” Woods comments:

It is highly absurd for one who fancies that truth is all on his side to be unwilling to consider the views of those who oppose him. ...Some assume they are strong in argument only if they are violent in argument. Some seek to make upon in thunder what they lack in lightning; but, it should be remembered that it is the lightning that kills!...He who is thus influenced will listen carefully to what others have to say and, if it appears that the course he has adopted is an erroneous one, he will not hesitate to abandon it, and to accept that which is right. Such a one will not persist in a course that is wrong, simply because it is that originally launched; he will readily yield to convincing argument and sound logic. (192-193).

Fream provides an example of “easy to be intreated” when he writes:

the Christian is himself a teachable person. Far from being dogmatic and unyielding, he is ready to learn, even from his pupils. The wise man says, “Let us sit together and learn from the Word of God.” While the foolish (worldly wise) person says, “I’m right, and you’re wrong. There’s no purpose in looking it up in the Word of God. I’ve read it many times!”

**“Full”** The Greek for “full” in this place means “having full measure” (Vine). Louw and Nida define “full” as a “degree of completeness, with the implication of abundance.”

**“Mercy”** The word for “mercy” in this verse means “compassion” (Strong). Vine expands the definition, saying it “is the outward manifestation of pity; it assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it.” *Barnes’* observes that “full of mercy” means “disposed to show compassion to others.” Clarke interprets “full of mercy” to mean,

“Ready to pass by a transgression, and to grant forgiveness to those who offend, and performing every possible act of kindness.” “Mercy” has to do with “clemency” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**“Good”** The word for “good” here is *agathos*, and Vine remarks that it “describes that which, being ‘good’ in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect...” Barnes’ describes “good fruit” as: “The fruits of good living; just, benevolent, and kind actions.”

**“Fruits”** Fream notes the benefit of lives “full of mercy and good fruits.” “[T]o be full of mercy and good fruits might imply there is no room left for a measure of evil fruits. The best way to overcome evil is to so fill one’s life with the finer things that there is no room for the evil.”

**“Without partiality”** *Barnes’* cites a marginal note for “without partiality” that it may include without “wrangling.” Clarke represents the concept of “without partiality” as “being never swayed by self-interest, worldly honour.” Louw and Nida say of “without partiality” that it means “free from prejudice.” MacKnight says of “without partiality” that it means “literally, without making a difference” (596).

**“Without hypocrisy”** The words “without hypocrisy” mean to be “sincere” (Strong). *Barnes’* describes “without hypocrisy” as “...sincere. There is no disguise or mask assumed. What the man pretends to be, he is.” Clarke concurs and writes: “...without pretending to be what it is not; acting always in its own character; never working under a mask. Seeking nothing but God’s glory, and using no other means to attain it than those of his own prescribing.” Lenski says of “without hypocrisy” that wisdom of divine origin “never acts the hypocrite, never wears a mask. It never speaks in a fair manner when it secretly means otherwise; its words are never hollow” (619).

Fream makes valuable comments respecting the manifestation of hypocrisy in the church.

“Too many Christians are just play acting,’ is the way a Jamaica preacher states the quality of hypocrisy. ...Hidden purposes and selfish motives are often covered up with a display of Christlike purposes and psuedo affections.

**3:18** “And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (KJV).

**“Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness” (NIV).**

**“And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (RSV).**

**“And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (NAS).**

**“And”** The word for “and” here is *de*, meaning usually “but.”

**“Righteousness”** The Greek word translated “righteousness” means “justification” (Strong). Vine remarks that “righteousness” “is ‘the character or quality of being right or just’; it was formerly spelled ‘rightwiseness,’ which clearly expresses the meaning.”

Robertson comments, “Only those who act peaceably are entitled to peace.” As Christians, we ought to pursue “peace with ourselves, peace with one another, peace with God” (Woods 197).

*Wycliffe* says respecting verses 17-18: “In contrast is the wisdom that is from above. It is the gift of God; it is practical wisdom, wisdom that preserves unity and peace.” *Barnes*’ says of verse 18 that it refers to “the effect of true religion.”

# James Chapter Four

**4:1** “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” (KJV).

“Whence (come) wars and whence (come) fightings among you? (come they) not hence, (even) of your pleasures that war in your members?” (ASV; NKJV).

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?” (NIV).

“What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members?” (RSV).

**“Wars”** Of the 18 times the original language noun appears in the New Testament, the *King James Version* translates it once as “fight” and five times as “battle.” Robertson observes that “wars” here “pictures the chronic state or campaign” of war. Literally, the Greek word here means “armed conflict” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Lenski comments regarding those described by James, “They go on the warpath, keep up fights” (622). Coffman observes that references typically applicable to real moral combat are borrowed to demonstrate infighting within the Lord’s church. “It is rather startling that James would refer to the disputes and wranglings of church members in such terms as ‘wars and fightings’; but is this not actually the nature of them? It is a gross error to construe these words literally in the sense of wars.”

**“Fightings”** The word “fightings” means “a battle” or “controversy” (Strong). Of the four times the Greek word for “fightings” appears in the *King James Version*, once each it is translated as “strife” and “strivings.” Robertson distinguishes “wars” from “fightings” by noting that the latter “presents the separate conflicts or battles in the war. So James covers the whole ground by using both words.” The history of the Greek word relates to “physical combat, especially of a military kind” (Kittle and Bromiley). Bauer, Gingrich and Danker add that the word refers to “only of battles fought without actual weapons.”

**“Among”** The Greek here is *en*, meaning “in.” Fream asserts correctly that the “war” and similar descriptions of hostilities pertain to

Christians based on the words “among you.” He writes, “Among you’ locates the war.”

**“Of”** The word “of” is *ek*, meaning “out.”

**“Come they not hence”** Jamieson, Fausset and Brown notes that James makes “an appeal to their consciences.”

**“Lusts”** The Greek for “lusts” is *hedone* (hay-don-ay'), which means “sensual delight” (Strong). Of the five times the Greek appears in the New Testament, three times it is rendered “pleasure.” Vincent defines “lusts” here as “sensual pleasures” or “sinful pleasures.” The English word “hedonism” derives from this Greek word. Louw and Nida defines “lusts” as “desire for physical pleasure, often sexual.” Hedonism is a “non-Christian orientation to life” (Kittel and Bromiley).

**“War”** This verb means “to serve in a military campaign...to contend with carnal inclinations” (Strong). Robertson concurs with “to carry on a campaign” and comments, “Modern church disturbances are old enough in practice.”

**“Members”** The Greek for “members” means “a limb or part of the body” (Strong).

Lenski comments: “These Christians are not devotees of Christian peace, they are chronic fighters. James does not pretend to prove it, for the matter is all too obvious” (621). Woods acknowledges the divisions among Jews, “Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Essenes, Zealots and the like” and “that converts to Christianity from Judaism often brought with them their contentious spirit and urged their views upon their brethren to the point of division” (198). Without a Jewish heritage, contemporary Christians rival the dissension of early, Jewish Christians of whom Woods speaks. He continues:

James provides clear evidence here, and often elsewhere in his Epistle, that such difficulties were not confined to those congregations composed of people lately out of heathenism, such as the Corinthians, Galatians, etc., but that among the Christians of the “circumcision,” there were dissensions, divisions, and factious groups. The early church was thus by no means free of difficulty; and while we may properly deplore trouble in the church at any time or place, we may at least conclude that such is not peculiar to our day, and

that the congregations of the apostolic age wrestled with this vexing problem. (198-199)

Woods applies problems in the church of the nature described by James to the contemporary church.

The lust for power, the desire for acclaim, and the overpowering pride of opinion have propelled men into the most vicious and hurtful state of war, thus disgracing the cause of Christ, discouraging the good, and providing infidelity with one of its most effective arguments. ...Desire of the wrong kind will inevitably lead to conflict. Money, prestige, the desire for a place of prominence and influence are all sources of conflict; and men frequently seek to climb up in the world on the bodies of those they have pulled down. (200)

Though even some brethren (e.g., Coffman) surmise that some of James' criticisms surely must be intended for non-Christians in the midst of Christians, the fact of the matter is that Christians are sinners, too (1 John 1:8-10). Fream is correct, "The picture of the sinning brethren to whom James addresses the epistle is not pretty. ...Let us be honest, brethren! There is sin in the church; and that, often! We as Christians do need to repent; and that, often! Christ not only was my Savior, but is *continually* my Savior." God is the author of the Bible who throughout his divine book has included upon the divine pages of inspiration the sins of his children as well as their spiritual successes (e.g., Noah, Moses); mankind would not write such a human biography of its heroes (cf., James to 1 Corinthians).

**4:2 "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not" (KJV).**

**"Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and covet, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war; ye have not, because ye ask not" (ASV).**

**"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" (NKJV).**

**"You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God" (NIV).**

**“You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask” (RSV).**

**“You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask” (NAS).**

**“Lust”** The Greek for “lust” here means “to set the heart upon” (Strong). *Barnes’* comments:

That is, you wish to have something which you do not now possess, and to which you have no just claim, and this prompts to the effort to obtain it by force. You desire extension of territory, fame, booty, the means of luxurious indulgence, or of magnificence and grandeur, and this leads to contest and bloodshed. These are the causes of wars on the large scale among nations and of the contentions and strifes of individuals.

**“Kill”** The word “kill” here signifies “to be a murderer” (Strong). Some commentators take “kill” literally and assign it other than Christians because they cannot imagine Christians actually murdering each other. However, Lenski appropriately applies the verse to Christians and explains James’ choice of words. “The terms used by James are purposely made stronger in order that they may penetrate into the hearts of the readers” (623). Accordingly, Woods writes, “This statement, insofar as it refers to *murder*, would best be construed as figurative...” (202). Fream fittingly declares, “Some may feel that referring to these tongue battles as “war”, and to these soul murders as “kill” is overly harsh; but in view of the true value of the human soul and the complete destruction of the grace of fellowship, war and kill might even seem too mild!”

**“Desire to have”** The Greek for “desire to have” is *zeloo* (dzay-lo'-o), meaning “to have warmth of feeling for or against” (Strong). Robertson adds that this “desire” means “to desire hotly to possess.”

**“Cannot”** Two Greek words [*ou* (oo) and *dunamai* (doo'-nam-ah-ee)] together translate the word “cannot” here. They essentially mean to have no power.

**“Obtain”** *Barnes’* comments:

By any fair and honest means; by purchase or negotiation: and this leads to bloody conquest. All wars

might have been avoided if men had been content with what they had, or could rightfully obtain, and had not desired to have what was in the possession of others, which they could not obtain by honest and honorable means. Every war might have been avoided by fair and honorable negotiation.

**“Fight”** The word “fight” means “to quarrel, dispute” (Strong).

**“War”** The word for “war” here is *polemeo* from which in English we get our “polemics” (Vine).

**“Have”** The Greek word for “have” here means to possess.

**“Not”** The Greek for “not” here is *ou*, which “expresses an absolute denial” (Strong).

**“Because”** The Greek for “because” in this place is *dia*, usually meaning “through.”

**“Ask”** The Greek for “ask” appears 70 times in the New Testament, sometimes translated as “desire,” “beg” and “crave.” The word for “ask” in this place has the idea of “the petition of one who is lesser in position than he to whom the petition is made; e. g., in the case of men in asking something from God” (Vine). The word “ask” here refers to “prayer.” *Wycliffe* puts this verse and the following verse in perspective when he writes:

One reason their desires (in this case the legitimate ones) were not being realized was that they did not ask God, who alone can fully satisfy human desires. 3. A second reason is found in the unacceptable motive of those who do ask - that ye may consume it upon your lusts. The essential condition of all prayer is found in 1 John 5:14: “If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.”

*Barnes’* notes that there is a proper way to obtain what is needed and prayer should accompany the acquisition. “The true way of obtaining anything which we really need is to seek it from God by prayer, and then to make use of just and fair means of obtaining it, by industry and honesty, and by a due regard for the rights of others.”

**“Not”** The Greek for “not” here is *me* (may) means “a qualified negation” (Strong).

Fream observes that James continues the just criticism of Chapter Three by examining the **source** of the malady in Chapter Four. It is difficult to recover from the malady of sin that lies behind the abuses

enumerated in Chapter Three, since the erring child of God must admit his sinfulness before he can effect any desired change.

Honesty in facing one's sin is also assumed in this portion. Not only should a person admit the right source for his wrong-doing, but he should be honest in facing the enormity of the trouble. This is hard for a man to do. It makes one guilty and in need of God's grace. It robs one of pride in his own ability to be right. It drives one to remorse and repentance. ...We do not like to admit the hedonic lusts he so vividly described so we would rather attribute the entire problem to a people away from the church, or at least far removed from ourselves to-day.

**4:3** “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (KJV).

“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend (it) in your pleasures” (ASV; NKJV).

“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (NIV).

“You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions” (RSV).

“**Receive not**” *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* comments: “Some are supposed to object, But we do ‘ask’ (cf. James 4:2). James replies, It is not enough to ask for good things, but we must ask with a good spirit. ‘Ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it (your object) upon (literally, in) your lusts’ (literally, pleasures): not that ye may have the things you need for the service of God.” One of the reasons for which men may not receive the things for which they pray is as Woods comments: “We must, however, understand that these promises are conditioned on (a) asking for the right things, (b) in the right way, and (c) from right motives” (205). Coffman summarizes the prayers to which God responds: “The Bible reveals exactly whose prayers are answered. He hears the cry of the righteous (Ps. 34:15); he hears those who call upon him in truth (Ps. 145:18); and he hears the penitent (Luke 18:14): those who ask ‘in his name’ (John 14:13), those who ask ‘believing’ (Mark 11:24), and those who ask according to God’s will (1 John 5:14).”

**“Not”** *Ou.*

**“Amis”** The word “amis” means “badly” (Strong). Vincent portrays the asking as “with evil intent.” *Barnes’* observes that some pretenses of prayer may be offered by misguided men:

It sometimes happens that the covetous and the quarrelsome; that those who live to wrong others, and who are fond of litigation, pray. Such men may be professors of religion. They keep up a form of worship in their families. They pray for success in their worldly engagements, though those engagements are all based on covetousness. Instead of seeking property that they may glorify God, and do good; that they may relieve the poor and distressed...Ye do it with a view to self-indulgence and carnal gratification.”

Woods concurs as he writes, “If we are disposed to be shocked by the suggestion that men may be lustful, covetous, murderers (at heart) and constant wranglers and, at the same time, be given to prayer, we need only to recall that it is not unusual for men to invoke the blessings of God upon them, though engaged in the most highhanded wickedness” (204).

**“Consume”** The Greek for “consume” here means “to expend” (Strong). Robertson defines the word “consume” as “to squander.” Louw and Nida include as the definition “to waste.” One resource notes, “In prayer Christians are to avoid selfishness” (Kittel and Bromiley).

**“Upon”** The Greek for “upon” here is *en*.

**“Lusts”** Lenski notes that the “lust” here is “zeal for position, honor, and the like” (625). Fream continues the application of this context to real life, contemporary congregational settings in his astute note at this place.

Peace within the church and even the very existence of the local congregation must give way to the satisfaction of these inordinate desires. Yet the devil is so clever with his deception that the warring church members do not readily see the true cause. Pointing accusing fingers and accusing tongues at one another they conveniently shrug off the blame and blind themselves to their own miserable state. Glibly they stare: “God hates division,”

while they proceed with wanton murder within the church.

**4:4** “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (KJV).

“Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God” (ASV).

“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” (NKJV).

“You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (NIV).

“Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (RSV).

“You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (NAS).

“**Ye adulterers and**” These words do not appear in the original language, but they were added to enhance readability.

“**Adulteresses**” Lenski alludes to the meaning of the use of “adulteresses” here. “When people of God, who should (sic) be true to God as a wife should be to her husband, love the world they commit spiritual adultery...” Vincent demonstrates the appropriate and longstanding application in the spiritual sense of “adulteresses” in the Bible.

The feminine term is the general designation of all whom James here rebukes. The apostate members of the church are figuratively regarded as unfaithful spouses; according to the common Old Testament figure, in which God is the "bridegroom or husband" to whom his people are wedded. See Jer 3; Hos 2:1; 3; 4; **Isa 54:5**; 62:4-5. Also, **Matt 12:39**; **2 Cor 11:2**; **Rev 19:7**; **21:9**. [emphasis added]

*Wycliffe* expands on this to add, “The fact that James addresses his

readers as adulteresses, after the fashion of the OT prophets who spoke of Israel as the wife of Jehovah (cf. Isa 54:5; Jer 3:20; Ezek 16:23; Hos 9:1, etc.), is strong evidence for both a Jewish author and Jewish readers.” Barnes’ adds: “The idea is, ‘You have in effect broken your marriage covenant with God by loving the world more than him; and, by the indulgence of your carnal inclinations...’ Coffman likewise notes the symbolic imagery intended here with the word “adulteresses” and its application to the church of Christ.

Like “kill” in the preceding verses, this word too must be understood in the spiritual sense of unfaithfulness to God. “Spiritual adultery” is the unfaithfulness of the church, which is the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Rom. 7:1-6; Rev. 21:2; 22:17). The marriage metaphor was extensively used in the Old Testament, as in Isa. 54:5; and the new Israel of God, the church, naturally took it over. Jesus used it in John 3:29; and also in Matt. 12:39.

Sadly, as Fream states, spiritual adultery is not an uncommon sin among Christians, and this sin has significant, adverse affects on the Lord’s church.

Loving the world more than loving Christ is a sin so common with Christians that it would seem few know the terrible adultery involved. Yet James says, “Ye adulteresses, don’t you know hater than this?” The very nature of sin is to so deceive the sinner that he soon is unable to tell right from wrong. The longer the sin is embraced, the denser is the veil drawn over the eyes of understanding.

Fream continues, “Twenty-one of the Twenty-seven New Testament books are addressed to Christians and filled with pleas to shun the embrace of the world and to cling steadfastly to Christ Jesus.”

**“Know ye”** The Greek word for “know” here is *eido* (i’-do).

**“Not”** *Ou*.

**“Friendship”** The Greek for “friendship” is *philia* (fil-ee’-ah), and it means “fondness” (Strong). “It involves ‘the idea of loving as well as being loved’” (Vine). *Wycliffe* quotes another commentator respecting what is involved in “friendship with the world”: “To maintain friendship with the world ‘is to be on good terms with persons and forces and things that are at least indifferent toward God if

not openly hostile to him.” Worse, this affinity for the world leads to the reduction of a Christian’s affinity for God, his Word and the Lord’s church. Coffman phrases it this way, that “friendship with the world” “refers to a Christian’s loving the pleasures, enticements and lusts of society in general, a friendship that tends inevitably to forsaking the Lord.”

**“World”** The Greek translated “world” is *kosmos*. Plainly put, *Barnes’* writes: “The term world here is to be understood not of the physical world as God made it, for we could not well speak of the ‘friendship’ of that, but of the community, or people, called ‘the world,’ in contradistinction from the people of God.”

**“Enmity”** The word “enmity” means “hostility” and is translated also as “hatred” (Strong). “It is the opposite of agape, ‘love’” (Vine).

**“God”** *Theos*.

**“Therefore”** The Greek for “therefore” in this place means “accordingly” (Strong).

**“Whosoever”** *Barnes’* comments, “The fact of being a member of the church makes no difference in this respect, for it is as easy to be a friend of the world in the church as out of it.”

**“Will”** The word “will” means to “be willing” (Strong). Vine says of “will” that it “usually expresses the deliberate exercise of volition.” *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* concurs about “will” by writing it means “shall be resolved to be.” Lenski adds in question form, “Is this really my fixed intention?” (629).

*Barnes’* observes respecting the word “will”:

It refers to that strong desire which often exists, even among professing Christians, to secure the friendship of the world; to copy its fashions and vanities; to enjoy its pleasures; and to share its pastimes and its friendships. Wherever there is a manifested purpose to find our chosen friends and associates there rather than among Christians; wherever there is a greater desire to enjoy the smiles and approbation of the world than there is to enjoy the approbation of God and the blessings of a good conscience; and wherever there is more conscious pain because we have failed to win the applause of the world.

Woods comments that the mere “will” to be worldly is sinful. “One does not have to declare war against God to make oneself an

enemy of deity. To consort with God's enemies, to lend aid and comfort thereto, is sufficient to put oneself into a state of alienation from him. ...How horrible for one who professes to be a follower of Christ actually to be an enemy of God! ... (2 Tim. 4:10.)" (213). Fream observes the practical application of the word "will," even when the sin indicated by James here is not manifest to others.

It might even be implied from this section that the desire to be a friend of the world could be in the heart without doing the deeds of sin; and still the person could become an enemy of God because of the adultery in his heart. Thus, a person who names the name of Christ, yet spends his hours and his heart's devotion in longing and lusting for the sensuousness and rottenness of this life could develop a hearty hostility toward God that would lead him to be God's enemy. This inner hatred for God might not be evident to the saints of the church, until one day it breaks forth in an act of such hatred toward godliness and such embracing of worldliness that the entire brotherhood is "shocked" by the "sudden fall." It might appear that "overnight" the person has changed from a devoted saint to a devoted sinner. "He's not in his right mind," "he must be insane," would be typical remarks. In shocked disbelief, the saints who observe such a one might tremble at the possibility of a sudden fall that appears to completely transform the character in an instant. The warnings of the Spirit, however, indicate that the fall is not sudden, but began with a desire in the heart that was fed and nurtured to the point of making oneself an enemy of God.

**"Friend"** The Greek word for "friend" is *philos* (fee'-los), and it means "properly, dear, i.e. a friend; actively, fond, i.e. friendly" (Strong). Another resource defines "friend" as "devoted" (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**"World"** *Kosmos*.

**"Is"** The word "is" in this place means "constitute" (Strong). Robertson defines the word and its thought as "is rendered."

**"Enemy"** The word translated "enemy" means "hateful" or "an adversary" (Strong). *Barnes'* comments on the seriousness of this

assignment of “enemy,” especially regarding members of the church. “This is a most solemn declaration, and one of fearful import in its bearing on many who are members of the church. It settles the point that anyone, no matter what his professions, who is characteristically a friend of the world, cannot be a true Christian.” Clarke applies the verses, as it should be, to the contemporary church, when he writes: “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.”

Christians of all people ought to realize that they cannot embrace with love the ungodly world and God at the same time. Jesus taught the same in Matthew 6:24. Woods remarks, “Individuals whose sense of sin is blunted frequently insist that they see no harm in participation in worldly matters...It is sad when people persist in the practice of sin; more tragic still when they lose, through such participation, their ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and are without any sense of moral values” (209). Coffman cites a practical, first century example to what James addresses here: “Demas, it will be recalled, ‘loved this present age’ (2 Tim. 4:9), the result being that he forsook Paul and the gospel of Christ.”

**4:5 “Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? (KJV).**

**“Or think ye that the scripture speaketh in vain? Doth the spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying? “ (ASV).**

**“Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?’” (NKJV).**

**“Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? “ (NIV).**

**“Or do you suppose it is in vain that the scripture says, ‘He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us’?” (RSV).**

**“Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: ‘He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us’?” (NAS).**

**“Do ye think”** The Greek translated “do ye think” means “seem”

(Strong). Vine adds that the word means “to suppose, to think, to form an opinion,” which may be either right or wrong, is sometimes rendered ‘to think.’” Bauer, Gingrich and Danker add “consider” to the definition.

**“Scripture”** The Greek word translated “scripture” is *graphe* (graf-ay’), meaning “a document” (Strong). Vine adds that the word includes the meanings of “to write’ (Eng., ‘graph,’ ‘graphic,’ etc.), primarily denotes ‘a drawing, painting’; then ‘a writing.’” The usage of “Scripture” in this verse means the “designation of Scripture as a whole” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

Clarke notes the inability of commentators to uniformly approach this verse with any certainty: “This verse is exceedingly obscure. We cannot tell what scripture James refers to...There is not a critic in Europe who has considered the passage that has not been puzzled with it.”

“*Barnes’* expresses the difficulty experienced by commentators respecting this verse, as no Old Testament quotation corresponding to this attribution to Scripture can be located. *Barnes’* offers this remedy:

The only solution of the difficulty which seems to me to be at all satisfactory, is to suppose that the apostle, in the remark made here in the form of a quotation, refers to the Old Testament, but that he had not his eye on any particular passage, and did not mean to quote the words literally, but meant to refer to what was the current teaching or general spirit of the Old Testament; or that he meant to say that this sentiment was found there, and designed himself to embody the sentiment in words, and to put it into a condensed form.

In other words, we would say that James made an indirect quotation of the Old Testament rather than a direct quotation. We do that all the time, and it should not be thought strange when it appears in Scripture. Woods writes, “James did not need any particular passage to illustrate the doctrine he was led to teach the Spirit which motivated his pen. The principle to which he alludes is taught repeatedly in both Testaments” (215).

**“Saith”** The Greek for “saith” here is *lego* (leg’-o), meaning “‘lay’ forth” (Strong).

**“In vain”** The Greek word translated “in vain” means “vainly, i.e. to no purpose” (Strong). Robertson adds that “in vain” means

“‘Emptily,’ not meaning what it says.”

**“Spirit”** The word for “spirit” is *pneuma* (pnyoo'-mah), which means “a current of air, i.e. breath (blast) or a breeze” (Strong). Commentators disagree respecting whether the “spirit” here refers to the human spirit or the Holy Spirit. *Barnes*’ opts for its reference to our spirits. “The more obvious interpretation is to refer it to our spirit or disposition as we are by nature, and it is equivalent to saying that we are naturally prone to envy.” *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* agrees. Woods, at length, argues for the human spirit here and critiques the procedure of proponents of the literal, personal, bodily indwelling of the Holy Spirit to resort to this very verse as ill-attempted proof for their poor theory (218-221).

**“Dwelleth”** The Greek for “dwelleth” in this place means “to house permanently, i.e. reside (literally or figuratively)” (Strong).

**“Lusteth”** The Greek for “lusteth” here means “to dote upon, i.e. intensely crave possession (lawfully or wrongfully)” (Strong).

**“To”** The word for “to” here is *pros*, meaning “toward” (Strong).

**“Envy”** The word “envy” means “jealousy” (Strong). Vine adds that the word means, “the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others; this evil sense always attaches to this word.”

**4:6 “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (KJV).**

**“But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (NIV).**

**“More”** The word “more” means “in greater degree” (Strong). Clarke applies the “greater grace” to the contrast between what God and the world, respectively, can offer humanity. “A greater benefit, than all the goods that the world can bestow; for he gives genuine happiness, and this the world cannot confer.”

**“Grace”** The word for “grace” is *charis* (khar'-ece), and it means “graciousness” (Strong).

**“Wherefore”** The Greek for “wherefore” here means “consequently” (Strong).

**“He saith”** *Lego*.

**“Resisteth”** Vine defines “resisteth” as “‘to arrange,’ originally a military term, ‘to range in battle against.’” Clarke applies the verse as God setting “himself in battle array against him [the proud].”

**“Proud”** The compound Greek word for “proud” means “appearing above others (conspicuous), i.e. (figuratively) haughty” (Strong). Vine adds that it means “‘showing oneself above others, preeminent’ (huper, ‘above,’ phainomai, ‘to appear, be manifest’); it is always used in Scripture in the bad sense of ‘arrogant, disdainful, proud.’” *Barnes*’ distinguishes the person under consideration here:

The proud are those who have an inordinate self-esteem; who have a high and unreasonable conceit of their own excellence or importance. ...One may know that he has more strength, or higher attainments in learning or in the mechanic arts, or greater wealth than others, and yet have properly no pride in the case. He has only a correct estimate of himself, and he attaches no undue importance to himself on account of it. His heart is not lifted up; he claims no undue deference to himself; he concedes to all others what is their due; and he is humble before God, feeling that all that he has, and is, is nothing in his sight. He is willing to occupy his appropriate place in the sight of God and men, and to be esteemed just as he is. Pride goes beyond this, and gives to a man a degree of self-estimation which is not warranted by anything that he possesses.

Coffman observes, “There is no greater deterrent to righteousness than pride.”

**“Humble”** Vine says of the word “humble” that it “primarily signifies ‘low-lying.’ It is used always in a good sense in the NT.” This verse quotes Proverbs 3:34 from the Septuagint, which is quoted also in 1 Peter 5:5 (*Barnes*’).

**4:7** **“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (KJV).**

**“Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (ASV).**

**“Submit”** The compound Greek word translated “submit” means “to obey” (Strong). *Wycliffe* quotes John Calvin: “Submission is more than obedience; it involves humility.” Woods notes that James, acting on God’s behalf, does not demand more than is proper for anyone professing to be a child of God. “The verb means to place yourselves in the position of those who are in the service of God...” (223).

**“Resist”** The word “resist” means “to stand against, i.e. oppose” (Strong). Clarke notes that the faithful child of God is empowered by God to persevere even against our strongest and most dedicated foe—Satan (1 Cor. 10:13). “He [Satan] cannot conquer you if you continue to resist. Strong as he is, God never permits him to conquer the man who continues to resist him, he cannot force the human will.” Brother Woods comments about the Christian’s resistance effort:

We are...to face Satan in battle array; to recognize him as a formidable and dangerous enemy; to fight off all of his advances. All is at stake in the effort; and the issues are life and death. Man must resist (stand against) Satan, or be taken captive by him. There can be no armistice, no terms of amnesty offered; it is a war of survival. Fortunately, the Christian is not without powerful aid and effective weapons of defense...(Eph. 6:10-18). (224-225)

**“The devil”** The definite article “the” appears in the Greek before this noun. The Greek for “devil” is *diabolos* (dee-ab'-ol-os), and it also is translated “false accuser” and “slanderer” (Strong). There are several appellations by which the devil is known in Scripture. “Other names assigned to this evil being in the Scripture are Satan (an opponent), the Dragon, the Evil One, the angel of the bottomless pit, the prince of this world, the prince of the powers of the air, the god of this World, Apollyon, Belial, and Beelzebub” (Woods 225). The adversarial nature of Satan toward humanity is the subject of many passages throughout the Bible, perhaps summarizes in 1 Peter 5:8. Yet, Woods observes that Satan does not always appear as man’s adversary.

It would, however, be a fatal mistake to assume that Satan *always* identifies himself as such, or announces his intentions in advance. Often, he moves in and out among us quietly, politely, even piously, his influence as gentle as a summer zephyr until he has accomplished his evil designs. Not infrequently he is in the pulpit, affecting to be one of the Lord’s ministers: “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion

themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.” (2 Cor. 11:13-15.) (226)

**“He will flee”** The Greek translated “he will flee” means “run away” (Strong). Vine notes that the English word “fugitive” derives from the Greek word translated “flee.” Satan will “seek safety in flight” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Coffman notes that the latter half of this verse is reminiscent of and “brings to mind the initial scene in our Lord’s ministry, that of his resisting Satan in the wilderness temptation (Matt. 4:8), which ended by Satan’s ‘leaving him for a season.’”

MacKnight quotes another and makes an astute application in contradistinction to codified manmade, religious imaginations over the centuries. “We may chase away the devil, not by holy water, the sign of the cross, or any superstitious charm, but by steady virtue and resolute goodness” (598).

**4:8 “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded” (KJV).**

**“Draw nigh”** The words “draw nigh” mean “to make near” or “approach” (Strong). Robertson comments, “The priests in the sanctuary drew near to God (Ex 19:22), as we should now.” *Wycliffe* observes: “Close communion with God assures his friendship...and estranges one from the world.” Clarke paints an inviting picture of communion with a loving God: “When a soul sets out to seek God, God sets out to meet that soul; so that while we are drawing near to him, he is drawing near to us.” Lenski appropriately comments, “...the readers are not to draw a step or two nearer to God but are to approach him completely” (632). Woods offers a practical application how to draw near God. “We come near to God, when we study his word, worship him in spirit and in truth, and serve him faithfully. ...it is man’s responsibility to come to God” (227-228).

**“Cleanse”** The Greek for “cleanse” is the Greek *katharizo* (kath-ar-id'-zo), which means “to cleanse” (Strong).

**“Hands”** Vine defines the word “hands” as “‘made by hand,’ of human handiwork.” *Wycliffe* says of “cleanse your hands” that the phrase refers to “outward conduct.” *Barnes’* observes the similarity to the injunction in Isaiah 1:15-16 and the practice was also symbolic in

the first century as demonstrated by Pilate in Matthew 27:24 (cf. Deut. 21:6; Psa. 26:6). Mere symbolism devoid of godliness, though, is ineffective with God. Woods states the application when he writes that the “hands” stand “for that which the hands do” (230).

**“Sinners”** Vine defines “sinner” as “one who misses the mark” and states that “it is the most usual term to describe the fallen condition of men.” One resource defines the Greek of “sinners” here as “those living in conscious opposition to God’s will” (Kittel and Bromiley). Woods reminds us that the “sinners” under consideration are Christians (230).

**“Purify”** The word “purify” means “clean” (Strong). Vine adds to the definition, “cleanse from defilement.” One lexicon notes respecting the Greek for “purify”: “In a number of languages this phrase in Jas 4.8 may be expressed idiomatically as ‘get rid of all your bad desires.’” (Louw and Nida).

James command to “purify your hearts” is comparable to Peter’s notice that Christians have ‘purified their souls’ (1 Pet. 1:23-23), and that “through the word of God. *Wycliffe* notes that the phrase “purify your hearts” refers to “inner motives.” *Barnes*’ correctly deduces: “If the heart is wrong, nothing can be right. If, while we seek an external reformation, we still give indulgence to the secret corruptions of the heart, it is clear that we can have no true religion.”

Lenski observes “the fine synonymous parallelism...’hands’ and ‘hearts’” that “combine outward and inward renewal. ...’Hands’ makes us think of all our deeds, for they are so much employed for our deeds; while ‘hearts,’ the seat of the thoughts and of the will, constitute the inner source of all our actions” (633).

**“Hearts”** *Kardia*.

**“Double minded”** The words “double minded” come from a Greek word that means “two-spirited, i.e. vacillating (in opinion or purpose)” (Strong). Vine breaks down the compound Greek word: “lit. means ‘twosouled’ (dis, ‘twice,’ psuche, ‘a soul’), hence, ‘double-minded.’” *Wycliffe* says of the “double minded,” “A double minded man is characterized by divided allegiance. And according to this passage, worldiness is basically divided allegiance.” *Barnes*’ assesses the intent of the apostle:

The apostle here seems to have had his eye on those who were vacillating in their purposes; whose hearts were not decidedly fixed, but who were halting between

good and evil. The heart was not right in such persons. It was not settled and determined in favor of religion, but vibrated between that and the world. The proper business of such persons, therefore, was to cleanse the heart from disturbing influences, that it might settle down in unwavering attachment to that which is good.

Lenski summarizes “double minded” this way: “They have a hankering after the world while they think that they are holding to God” (633).

Fream remarks:

Verse 8 clearly pictures the mutual attraction between God and man...James makes it quite clear that God has allowed man to be master of his own destiny. Man’s choice of heaven or hell rests on man’s choice of God or the devil. ...The grace of God gives man the opportunity. The will and choice of man is the key. Man must choose to be with God, so God forces no man into heaven.

Woods describes the child of God under consideration with the reference to “double minded” as: “He would, if he could, *love* the world, and *live* with God hereafter” ...(Matt.6:33.)...(Eph. 5:11.) (231-232).

**4:9** “Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness” (KJV).

“Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom” (NKJV).

“Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom” (NIV).

“Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to dejection” (RSV).

“**Be afflicted**” The words “be afflicted” mean “to be wretched, i.e. realize one’s own misery” (Strong). Robertson defines “be afflicted” as “to endure toils.”

“**Mourn**” The Greek for “mourn” means “to grieve” and is also translated “wail” (Strong). Vincent comments that the Greek for “mourn” here, “Used of grief that is ‘manifested.’”

“**Weep**” The word “weep” means “to wail aloud” (Strong). Vine

adds that it “is used of ‘any loud expression of grief,’ especially in mourning for the dead.”

**“Let be turned”** The words “let be turned” mean “to turn around” (Strong).

**“Laughter”** “A number of languages distinguish clearly between various types of laughter: (1) laughter directed against some person as a form of ridicule; (2) laughter resulting from seeing some humorous event or as the result of listening to a humorous account; and (3) laughter which reflects happiness and joy. In Lk 6.21 and Jas 4.9 it is this third type of laughter which is relevant to the contexts” (Louw and Nida). Lenski sees the laughter as associated with sins. “These are the laughter and the joy of their past sinful pleasures” (634).

**“To”** In both instances, the word “to mourning” and “to heaviness,” the Greek word is *eis*, which is usually translated “into.”

**“Mourning”** The word “mourning” means “grief” and is also translated as “sorrow” (Strong).

**“Your”** The word for “your” in this place is the definite article, “the,” hence “the joy.”

**“Joy”** The word for “joy” means “cheerfulness, i.e. calm delight” (Strong).

**“Heaviness”** The word for “heaviness” means “downcast in look” or “sadness” (Strong). Vincent phrases it, “Properly, a ‘casting down of the eyes.’” *Wycliffe* quotes another resource, “the downcast, subdued expression of those who are ashamed and sorry.” *Barnes*’ observes respecting “heaviness” that “...it is sorrow on account of sin. God has so made us that we should feel sorrow when we are conscious that we have done wrong, and it is appropriate that we should do so.” Woods observes “that there are two pairs of contrasts drawn in this section: laughter and mourning, joy and heaviness. ...This first pair is largely outward in character; the second pair is more nearly dispositions of heart” by which one has “a sobering consciousness of the weight and guilt of sin” (234).

Woods remarks further respecting verse nine about the proper attitude penitent souls ought to have concerning their sins.

People, deeply aware of their rebellion against God, will experience and exhibit grief for their sins. Peter wept bitterly over his tragic lapse; and the sinful woman of Luke 7:27-50 cried unashamedly at the feet of Jesus. ...This passage should impress us all with the

realization that we must not regard lightly a sinful life, and should not attempt to brush off, as a trivial and inconsequential thing, our guilt; instead, we should be painfully conscious of, and feel the weight of, God's displeasure when we have sinned, and should experience and give evidence of grief therefore." (233-234)

**4:10** "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (KJV).

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you" (ASV).

"Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you" (NAS).

**"Humble"** This verse concurs with Jesus' message in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 23:12). This humbleness has to do with acknowledgement of sinfulness, which we freely admit to God (Psa. 51:4; Neh. 1:6; Luke 15:18; 18:13). Clarke elaborates, "Submission to God's authority will precede humiliation of soul, and genuine repentance is performed as in the sight of God; for when a sinner is truly awakened to a sense of his guilt and danger, he seems to see, wherever he turns, the face of a justly-incensed God turned against him." Woods notes, "Humility is the voluntary acceptance of a place of lowliness in order to be pleasing to God." (234). However, Woods, continues, "It is possible for one to appear humble when the motive is not right; to be acceptable, it must be for the purpose of pleasing God, and not in order to obtain the plaudits of men" (235).

**"In the sight of"** The phrase "in the sight of" means "in the face," and it is also translated as "in the presence" (Strong).

**"Lord"** *Kurios*.

**"He shall lift up"** The words "he shall lift up" come from a Greek word meaning "to elevate" (Strong). Barnes' applies God's willingness to lift up the humble as, "He will exalt you from the condition of a broken-hearted penitent to that of a forgiven child..." The father's actions toward his wayward son who returned (representing the heavenly Father) in the parable of the Prodigal Son correspond to God lifting the humble in this verse (Luke 15:22). *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* divides the benefit indicated here between this present world and the eternal world when

it records, “partly in this world, fully in that to come. See 1 Peter 5:6 for another appearance in the New Testament of the content of James 4:10. Appropriately, one resource states: “True exaltation is God’s work” (Kittel and Bromiley).

**4:11** “Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge” (KJV).

**“Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it” (NIV).**

**“Speak evil”** The Greek for “speak evil” is a compound word that means “to slander” (Strong).

**“Judgeth”** The Greek word for “judgeth” is *krino*, which means “to distinguish...by implication, to try, condemn, punish” (Strong). It is translated, depending upon the context in which it appears, “avenge, conclude, condemn, damn, decree, determine, esteem, judge, go to (sue at the) law, ordain, call in question, sentence to, think” (Strong).

**“A doer”** Strong defines the Greek for “a doer” as “a performer.”

**“But”** The Greek for “but” is *alla*, meaning “contrariwise” (Strong).

**4:12** “There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?” (KJV).

**“One (only) is the lawgiver and judge, (even) he who is able to save and to destroy: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?” (ASV).**

**“One”** The Greek word translated “one” here is sometimes translated as “only.”

**“Lawgiver”** The word “lawgiver” means “legislator” (Strong).

**“Be able”** The Greek word for “be able” means “possible” (Strong).

**“Save”** The Greek for “save” means “to deliver or protect” and is sometimes translated as “preserve” (Strong).

**“Destroy”** The Greek means “to destroy fully” (Strong).

**“Another”** Here, the Greek word translated “another” means “close by; as noun, a neighbor, i.e. fellow (as man, countryman,

Christian or friend)” and it is translated also as “near, neighbour” (Strong).

**4:13** “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:” (KJV).

“Come now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain” (ASV).

“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’” (NKJV).

“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’” (NIV).

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain’” (RSV).

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit’” (NAS).

“Go to” The Greek word for “go to” means “lead” (Strong).

“Say” The Greek *lego* translated “say” here is a primary verb, meaning “lay forth” with a “discourse” (Strong).

“To morrow” The Greek here is also translated as the “next day.”

“We will go” The Greek word translated “we will go” means “travel” (Strong).

“A city” The definite article appears before the word for city, i.e. “the city.” That suggests definite fore-planning. The Greek for “city” is polis, which means “a town (properly, with walls...” (Strong).

“Buy and sell” The compound Greek word translated “buy and sell” means “to travel in (a country as a peddler), i.e. (by implication) to trade,” and it is translated also as “make merchandise” (Strong).

**4:14** “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (KJV).

“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” (NKJV).

**“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” (NIV).**

**“whereas you do not know about tomorrow. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes” (RSV).**

**“Ye know”** The Greek word for “ye know” means “comprehend, or be acquainted with” and is sometimes translated “understand” (Strong).

**“Life”** The Greek for “life” is *zoe*, from which our English words zoo and zoology come (Vine).

**“Vapour”** The Greek word for “vapour” means “mist” (Strong). Vine gives its meaning as “smoke.” The Greek word, *atmis*, can be seen in our word “atmosphere” (Robertson). *Barnes’* comments, “All your plans must depend of course on the continuance of your life; but what a frail and uncertain thing is that!...Who can build any solid hopes on a mist?” The Bible routinely employs other symbols to convey the brevity of life. “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not” (Job 14:1-2). “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of an as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away” (1 Pet. 1:24). Compare James 1:10-11. James quotes Proverbs 27:1, “Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”

**“For”** The Greek here is *pros*, meaning “toward” (Strong).

**“A little”** The Greek word translated “a little” is sometimes translated “brief,” “short” or “small.”

**“Time”** The word “time” has no corresponding word in the Greek; translators added the word because it is implied.

**“Then”** The Greek word for “then” here means “thereafter” (Strong).

**“Vanisheth away”** The Greek meaning of “vanisheth away” is “to render unapparent...disappear” (Strong). Vine phrases the meaning as “to render unseen.”

*Wycliffe* comments on verses 13-14 and shows what God’s complaint really was. For instance, earning a living or planning ahead is not the objection of censure here.

James 4:13-14

The attitude of the merchants described here is another expression of the worldliness that brings estrangement from God. The itinerant merchants addressed were Jews who carried on a lucrative trade throughout the Mediterranean world. They are depicted as making careful plans for their business enterprises, declaring, To day or tomorrow we will go into such a city, etc. 14. There is nothing wrong with such planning in itself. However, the planners were ignoring two considerations. The first is the finiteness of human beings, which limits their knowledge - ye know not what shall be on the morrow. The second is the uncertainty of life, which James likens to a vapour, or a puff of smoke.

The rich fool made the same error here addressed by James (Luke 12:16-21). One can be moral and in many other ways be exemplary, but failing to acknowledge God is an eternally serious matter. Woods makes an interesting comment: “This statement appears to contain considerable irony. Those to whom James wrote were making plans that contained a year of tomorrows; whereas, they did not know what would occur on the first of these tomorrows!” (248).

**4:15** “For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (KJV).

“**For**” The Greek word translated “for” in this place is *anti* (an-tee’) and it means “opposite, i.e. instead...Often used in composition to denote contrast, requital, substitution, correspondence, etc.” (Strong).

“**To say**” *Lego* appears here.

“**The Lord**” The definite article appears preceding the word for “Lord.” The Greek for “Lord” is *kurios* (koo’-ree-os), which means “supreme in authority” (Strong). It is translated also as “God,” “master” and “sir.”

“**Will**” Here, the word for “will” means “to determine” (Strong). Vine observes that various translations render the same Greek word “willingly” or “willfully” in 2 Peter 3:5. The biblical exhortation to allow for the will of God in the affairs of mankind punctuates the biblical record, as Woods listed in his commentary on page 250 (Acts

18:21; 1 Cor. 4:19; 16:7). Coffman adds to these citations (Acts 21:14; Heb. 6:3).

God must be considered respecting plans for the future or else he is following closely the clueless, rich farmer of whom Jesus spoke (Luke 12:16-21). “A Christian man, in making his plans, ought to acknowledge his dependence upon God...” (*Wycliffe*).

We have to concur with MacKnight who suggest that James “does not mean that these words should always be used by us, when we speak of our purposes respecting futurity; but that on such occasion, the sentiment which these words express, should always be present to our mind” (599). However, Coffman argues that this sentiment should often sound forth from the heart in Christian speech.

**4:16** “But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil” (KJV).

“But now ye glory in your vauntings: all such glorying is evil” (ASV).

“But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil” (NKJV).

“As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil” (NIV).

“Ye rejoice” The Greek here is sometimes translated as “boast” (Strong).

“Boastings” The Greek for “boastings” means “self-confidence” and is sometimes translated as “pride” (Strong). Vine adds that the Greek for “boastings” here “denotes quackery; hence, ‘arrogant display, or boastings.’” Vincent relates the relationship between quackery and boasting when he writes: “From the empty boasts of such concerning the cures and wonders they could perform, the word passed into the sense of ‘boaster.’” Another Greek resource defines the word under consideration as “pretension” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* restates the verse, “ye boast in your arrogant presumptions that the future is certain to you.”

“All” The Greek for “all” here is *pas*, meaning “every” or “the whole” (Strong).

“Such” The Greek for “such” in this place means “of this sort” (Strong).

“Evil” The Greek for “evil” in this verse is also translated as “wicked,” “grievous” and “malicious” (Strong). Vine observes the

Greek word here comes from a word for “work” or “labor” and means “evil that causes labor, pain, sorrow, malignant evil.”

**4:17** “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (KJV).

“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins” (NIV).

“Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin” (NAS).

“**Therefore**” The word for “therefore” means “accordingly” (Strong).

“**To him that knoweth**” The Greek word from which this phrase is translated sometimes is translated as “be aware.” Vine adds that “know” here means “to know from observation.” Robertson words it “one knowing how.”

“**Good**” Robertson projects the thought to “do a good deed.”

“**Sin**” The Greek for “sin” is *hamartia* (ham-ar-tee'-ah). Vine says of “sin” that it literally means “missing of the mark.” As Robertson notes, James addresses in this verse the **sin of omission**.

*Barnes'* among other commentators observes that the primary application of this sin of omission pertains to the context in which it appears, but that its general application is far reaching. Coffman writes, “The primary application to what James had just said is evident; but, as frequently in the word of God, the principle here extends to the whole theater of faith and the obligations incumbent upon men.”

There is obviously some connection between the section preceding and his affirmation; but it is not to be restricted to the context or limited to the matters just discussed. ...one sins in knowing an act is obligatory, yet does not perform it. ...there are sins of omission as well as commission. Those of this category are careful to observe the “Thou shalt nots,” of the Scriptures, but are little concerned with the “thou shalt.” (Woods 253)

James 4:17 is not singular even in the Book of James for expressing this truth: “The general principle is here stated: knowledge without practice is imputed to a man as presumptuous sin. James reverts to James 1:22-24” (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*). Compare Jesus’

scathing rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:23 respecting the sin of omission.

Finally at this verse, Guy N. Woods makes an extremely important observation respecting the principle found in James 4:16.

Every judgment parable in the New Testament reveals the punishment meted out was not for something *bad* the individual involved *did*, but something *good* he did *not* do. It is affirmed of the one-talent man that he was “wicked.” It is quite obvious that this word is used in this parable in a sense wholly foreign to our usage today. A wicked person is, in our view, one who *does bad things*. Nothing of an evil character whatsoever is affirmed of him. We have often said that were we required to defend him in a legal action today, by obtaining a jury of brethren, we would most likely get a verdict in his favor! If one’s fitness for eternal bliss is to be determined by the things one does not do, an excellent defense might be made for him: (1) He was not an embezzler; (2) he did not squander the money in riotous living; (3) he was not remiss in the trust, in that the talent was returned whole; (4) he was not dishonest; (5) he was not a drunkard, thief, murderer, immoral character, etc. Yet, he was a *wicked* man! Why? Because of *the good he did not do*. (255)

# James Chapter Five

The first six verse of this chapter address rich Jews who do not conduct themselves appropriately before God respecting those riches. What purpose, then, have these verses when addressed to Christians?

In these six verses James continues his discussion with the nonpresent and non-Christian rich. ...He is still discussing the same type of rich he mention in chapter two, who oppress the Christians and drag them before the courts. Here James is not concerned with their ungodly actions, but their ungodly destiny. Since the rich are not present, James must be speaking for the benefit of the Christian who will read his letter. (Fream)

Lenski writes: "In this denunciation James is not concerned with the rich Jews who may never hear what he writes about them; his object is to warn the Christians lest they envy such rich Jews" (644). In addition, Woods notes that the rich are frequently rebuffed in the Bible, yet it is not necessarily laudable to know poverty. "The rich are often condemned in the sacred writings. (Jer. 4:8; Isa. 5:8; Amos 3:10; Prov. 11:28; 1 Tim. 6:19; Luke 6:24; 18:24.) We are not from this to assume that there is merit in being poor, or sin in being rich. There is, per se, no virtue in poverty, nor vice in riches. ...However, one's inner state is often affected by outward circumstances..." (256-257).

**5:1** "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you" (KJV).

**"Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you" (NIV).**

**"Now"** The word translated "now" means "the immediate present" (Vine). The words "Go to now, ye rich men" is an "[e]xclamatory interjection as in James 4:13" (Robertson).

**"Rich"** The Greek for "rich" here means "wealthy...abounding with" (Strong). Vine adds that the word means "richly, abundantly." *Barnes'* comments respecting which rich men are intended in this passage. "Not all rich men, but only that class of them who are specified as unjust and oppressive. There is no sin in merely being rich; where sin exists peculiarly among the rich, it arises from the manner in which wealth is acquired, the spirit which it tends to

engender in the heart, and the way in which it is used.” Likewise, Lenski admitted that the epistle “by no means denounces all rich men indiscriminately” (644).

**“Men”** There is no Greek word at this place for “men”; the translators added “men” because they thought it assisted readers, for instance, to distinguish between wealth and a wealthy person.

**“Weep”** The Greek word for “weep” in this verse means “to sob...wail aloud” (Strong). Vine notes that the word means “any loud expression of grief, especially in mourning for the dead.”

**“And”** The word “and” was added also. Vincent, observing the absence of the conjunction “and,” comments that it should be understood “Literally, ‘weep, howling.’”

**“Howl”** To “howl” means to “shriek” (Strong). *Barnes’* comments: “This would be expressive of very deep distress. The language is intensive in a high degree, showing the calamities which were coming upon them were not only such as would produce tears, but tears accompanied with loud lamentations. In the East, it is customary to give expression to deep sorrow by loud outcries.”

**“Miseries”** The word “miseries” means “wretchedness...calamity” (Strong). *Barnes’* disputes that impending judgment of sinful rich people can refer to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, since poor people as well suffered in that tragic event and no special judgment against wicked rich is apparent. Clarke and Lenski (652), on the other hand, believe that the “last days of the Jewish commonwealth,” which occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, is under consideration here. MacKnight, likewise, opts for the A.D. 70 application.

The miseries of which the apostle speaks, were those in which the Jews were to be involved in their war with the Romans, and which, by the signs pointed out in our Lord’s prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem... (600)

Coffman concurs with the foregoing except for *Barnes’* in thinking that James foresaw the impending destruction of Jerusalem for the Jews who were the object of this section.

This paragraph (James 5:1-6) is parallel to those passages in the gospels which Jesus Christ pronounced against Jerusalem, and the similar pronouncement of the apostle Paul in Acts 28:25-28. Calvin was probably

correct in failing to find here any call to repentance. It was past time for that. The hour was approaching when the wrath of God would be poured out upon Israel for their final rejection of Christ; and James adopted the stern lag. of the Old Testament prophets for pronouncing their doom.

We concur, though, with *Barnes'* as well as the comments of Woods that the following respecting when these miseries as a result of a judgment of God will occur. "...[T]his is simply a picture of the retribution and judgment which shall come, at the end of the age, and the following the general judgment, upon all those who have lived in the fashion here described" (257). Fream is of the same opinion.

**"Shall come upon"** The single word translated "shall come upon" means "occur" (Strong).

**"You"** The word "you" was added as well.

**5:2 "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten" (KJV).**

**"Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes" (NIV).**

**"Riches"** The word "riches" means "wealth...(literally) money, possessions" (Strong).

**"Are corrupted"** The Greek translated "are corrupted" means "(figuratively) perish" (Strong). The Greek word here appears but once in the New Testament. Another resource defines the Greek here as "to decay" (Kittle and Bromiley).

Robertson comments of the worthlessness of riches alone and that they are fleeting: "Rich robes as heirlooms, but moth-eaten. Vivid picture. Witness the 250 'lost millionaires' in the United States in 1931 as compared with 1929. Riches have wings." Woods notes: "Riches are evil only when they impair the soul's health, and become thorns which choke out the wheat. (Luke 8:14.)" (259).

**5:3 "Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days" (KJV).**

**"Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days" (ASV).**

**“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” (NKJV).**

**“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” (NIV).**

**“Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days” (RSV).**

**“Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!” (NAS).**

**“Gold”** Compare Jesus’ statement in Matthew 6:19-21.

**“Silver”** Vine observes regarding this word that it means “‘shining,’ denotes ‘silver.’ In each occurrence in the NT it follows the mention of gold, Matt 10:9; Acts 17:29; James 5:3; Rev 18:12.”

**“Is cankered”** The Greek here means “rust down, i.e. corrode” (Strong). Robertson describes the meaning of this word as “to rust through (down to the bottom).”

**“Rust”** Depending upon the context in which it appears, the word translated “rust” here may be translated “poison” as in James 3:8 (Vincent). See also Romans 3:13 (Robertson). Robertson observes: “Silver does corrode and gold will tarnish.”

**“Shall be”** The Greek here pertains to the “future” (Strong).

**“A witness”** Strong says of the Greek word here that it means “something evidential.” Vine defines the word “witness” as “a declaration of facts.” Another resource defines “witness” as “Witness for the Prosecution” (Kittel and Bromiley).

**“Shall eat”** Strong defines the Greek word in this place “to eat (literally or figuratively).” Vine notes that the Greek word for “eat” here means “to eat, devour, consume” and that it includes “eating and drinking” without making a distinction between the two.

**“Flesh”** Vincent observes, “the noun is plural: the ‘fleshy parts’ of the bod.”

**“As”** The word “as” here means “in that manner” (Strong).

**“It were”** These words were added by the translators.

**“Fire”** Strong notes that the Greek *pur* means “fire (literally or figurative, specifically, lightning).” *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* observes that fire essentially accomplishes what rust accomplishes, but

more quickly. If the Final Judgment is meant as the time when recompense for evil in this passage will be fulfilled, then the fire may refer to fiery torment of hell (gehenna) (Fream).

**“Ye have heaped treasure together”** The single Greek word translated “ye have heaped treasure together” means “to amass or reserve” (Strong).

**“For”** The word translated “for” is the Greek *en* that is usually translated as “in.”

**“Last”** The Greek word for “last” in this verse is *eschatos* (es<sup>2</sup>-khat-os) and means “final (of place or time)” (Strong). This Greek word appears in our English word “eschatology.”

**“Days”** The Greek word here means “(literally) the time space between dawn and dark, or the whole 24 hours” (Strong). Vine confirms that the first definition of the word “day” here is “the period of natural light,” but that it may be applied beyond that to “a period.” “The phrase, ‘in the last days,’ must undoubtedly refer to the period immediately preceding the coming of the Lord in judgment” (Woods 262).

**5:4 “Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth” (KJV).**

**“Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth”**

**(ASV)**

**“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” (NKJV).**

**“Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty” (NIV).**

**“Hire”** The “hire” refers to “wages” (Robertson).

**“Labourers”** The Greek word for “labourers” means “a toiler” (Strong).

**“Have reaped down”** The Greek word translated “have reaped down” means “to collect, i.e. (by implication) reap” (Strong). Vincent remarks, “The primary meaning is ‘to reap corn’; also in Classical

Greek of ‘mowing down in battle.’ The secondary, which some mistake for the primary sense, is ‘to gather,’ as for harvest.”

**“Fields”** Vincent notes that the Greek word used here is different from the ordinary word for “field” and means “a broad area or series of fields.” Robertson writes that these are “[e]states or farms.” Bauer, Gingrich and Danker remark that the word can mean “the (open) country in contrast to the city” or “(dry) land in contrast to the sea.”

**“Is kept back by fraud”** The Greek word translated “is kept back by fraud” means “to deprive...to despoil” (Strong). Barnes’ observes so far two degrees of sinfulness among the rich people entertained in this passage. “In the previous verses the form of the sin which the apostle specified was that they had hoarded their property. He now states another form of their guilt, that, while doing this, they had withheld what was due from the very laborers who had cultivated their fields, and to whose labor they were indebted for what they had.” Jewish law required employers to pay their employees at the end of each workday (Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:15). In addition, the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard demonstrates the requirement under Judaism to compensate one’s workers at the close of each workday (Matt. 20:1-16). Jeremiah also addressed the fraudulent retention of the wages due one’s neighbor (22:13).

**“Crieth”** The Greek word for “crieth” means “scream...to call aloud (shriek, exclaim, intreat)” (Strong). Vincent adds to the definition that it is “[a]n inarticulate cry.”

**“Cries”** The Greek word fro “cries” means “a halloo, i.e. call (for aid...)” (Strong). One commentary notices that effectively there is “a double cry: both that of the hire and that of the labourers hired” (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*). Lenski comments on the verb tenses in this verses that the mowing or harvesting is complete and the fraudulent retention of at least some of the laborers’ wages is permanent, but the cries that reach God’s ears are continuous (650). “It is an interesting observation, often made, that the withholding of that which id due others is one of the four sins which are said to cry out to heaven. (Cf. Gen. 4:9-13; Heb. 12:18-29; Gen. 19:13; Job 16:18; 31:38; Rev. 6:6-9.)” (Woods 265).

**“Which have reaped”** The Greek word for “which have reaped” means “to harvest” (Strong).

**“Sabaoth”** The Greek “sabaoth” means “armies” (Strong). Robertson observes: “‘Of the Lord of Hosts,’ quotation from Isa 5:9 as

in Rom 9:29, transliterating the Hebrew word for ‘Hosts,’ an expression for the omnipotence of God...” Consequently, *Wycliffe* remarks: “God, who is her ecalled Lord of sabaoth, a title tha tsuggest his sovereign omnipotence, was not oblivious to this injustice. His ears were open to the cries of the poor workmen.” Clarke defines “sabaoth” as God’s “uncontrollable power.” *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* makes a useful observation: “It reminds the rich, who think the poor have no protector, that the Lord of the hole hosts in heaven is avenger of the latter.” Woods notes that the “Lord of Sabaoth” or “Lord of Hosts” frequently used in the Old Testament, which is quoted in Romans 9:29 from Isaiah 1:6 and also appears here in James 5:4, is rendered “God Almighty” in the Septuagint (265).

**5:5** “Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter” (KJV).

“Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter” (ASV).

“You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter” (NKJV).

“You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter” (NIV).

“**Ye have lived in pleasure**” The Greek word for the phrase “ye have lived in pleasure” means “to indulge in luxury” (Strong). *Barnes*’ remarks that these under consideration “live for enjoyment.” That description may indict many who do not consider themselves wealthy, as well as many Christians.

“**Earth**” The Greek word here for “earth” is *ge* (ghay) and means “soil; by extension a region, or the solid part or the whole of the terrene globe (including the occupants in each application)” (Strong).

“**Been wanton**” Compare Luke 21:34-35.

“**Ye have nourished**” The Greek word for “ye have nourished” means “to rear, feed, nourish” (Vine). *Barnes*’ comments, “The meaning is, that they appeared to have been fattening themselves, like stall-fed beasts, for the day of slaughter. As cattle are carefully fed, and are fattened with a view to their beign slaughtered, so they seemed to have been fattened for the slaughter that was to come on them—the day of vengeance. Thus many now live.” *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* portrays the scene as the rich under consideration “glutted your bodies like beasts to your heart’s desire: ye live to eat, not eat to live.”

**“Hearts”** The Greek word for “hearts” is *kardia*.

**“Slaughter”** The Greek word for “slaughter” means “butchery (of animals for food or sacrifice, or [figuratively] of men [destruction])” (Strong). Vincent presents some views respecting the application of the “day of slaughter”:

The meaning of the passage is disputed. Some find the key to it in the words “last days” (James 5:3). The phrase “day of slaughter” is used for “a day of judgment,” Jer 12:3; 25:34 (Septuagint). According to this, the meaning is, “the day of judgment,” at the supposed near coming of Christ. Others explain that these men are like beasts, which, on the very day of their slaughter, gorge themselves in unconscious security.

**5:6 “Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you” (KJV).**

**“Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous (one); he doth not resist you” (ASV).**

**“You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.” (NKJV).**

**“You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you” (NIV).**

**“You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you” (RSV).**

**“Ye have condemned”** The Greek word translated “ye have condemned” means “to adjudge against, i.e. pronounce guilty” (Strong). Vine includes in the meaning “to exercise right or law against anyone.”

**“Killed”** The Greek word for “killed” here means “to be a murderer” (Strong).

**“Just”** The Greek word translated “just” in this verse means “by implication, innocent, holy” (Strong).

**“He doth resist”** The words “he doth resist” come from a Greek word that means “oppose” (Strong).

Though certainly Jesus Christ was the Just One in the special sense of the only and sinless Son of God (Acts 7:52; 22:14), in the context of James Chapter Five, the primary reference is to honest

persons victimized by rich people. Woods, though, disagrees when he writes: “The phraseology, the context, and the facts all point impressively to Christ as the ‘Righteous One’ intended” (270). Coffman and Woods agree that the primary application of references to the “just one” concern Jesus Christ, though Coffman adds: “Despite the original application of these verses, however, there remains an eloquent warning for all men who may be tempted to amass their wealth through selfishness and exploitation.” Fream acknowledges that the references to the “just one” could refer to Jesus Christ, but they may actually apply to “a righteous man.” It makes little difference nearly two millennium later which was the primary application, noting that the application that remains applies to any honest person who is so abused.

**5:7** “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain” (KJV).

“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” (NKJV).

“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains” (NIV).

“Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains” (NAS).

“**Be patient**” The Greek word translated “be patient” means “long-spirited...forbearing” and is elsewhere translated as “longsuffering” (Strong). Vine adds, “long-tempered.” Vincent comments that the word here includes in its meaning “a patient holding out under trial; a long-protracted restraint of the soul from yielding to passion, especially the passion of ‘anger.’”

“**Therefore**” The word “therefore” means “accordingly” (Strong). Vincent relates the foregoing to the present discussion thus: “Since things are so. Referring to the condition of things described in the previous passage.”

**“Brethren”** The word here is the Greek *adelphos*. Vincent contrasts “brethren” with the ungodly rich Jews addressed immediately preceding these verses.

**“Unto”** The Greek word for “unto” here means “until” (Strong).

**“Coming”** The Greek for “coming” in this verse is *parousia* (par-oo-see’-ah) and means “being near” (Strong). It can refer to anyone who is coming (1 Cor. 16:17) or to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, as it does here (Matt. 24:3). Vine adds that “coming” “denotes both an ‘arrival’ and a consequent ‘presence with.’”

**“Lord”** The Greek here is *kurios*.

**“Husbandman”** The Greek word translated “husbandman” means “landworker, i.e. farmer” (Strong). The Greek word is a compound word from the Greek for “earth” and the Greek for “work.” Hence, the husbandman is “a tiller of the ground” (Vine), or what we refer to as a farmer.

**“Waiteth for”** Vincent notes that the Greek word for “waiteth for” contains the idea of “expectation.” Robertson intensifies the thought with “eager expectation.” Another commentator observes that as for the farmer, the harvest “will amply compensate for all the past” (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*), God will amply compensate all those who wait with expectation (Rev. 2:10).

**“Precious”** The word “precious” in this place means “valuable, i.e. (objectively) costly, or (subjectively) honored, esteemed, or (figuratively) beloved” (Strong).

**“Fruit”** The Greek word for “fruit” is used in the various ways in which our English word is used, depending upon the context in which it appears. Here, it refers to the produce or crops of harvest.

**“Earth”** The Greek word for “earth” is used in the same ways we use the English word, varying its meaning depending upon the context in which it appears. Here, “earth” means “arable land” (Strong).

**“Hath long patience”** this is the same Greek word as earlier in this verse is translated “be patient.”

**“Until”** This is from the same Greek word translated “unto” earlier in this verse.

**“He receive”** The Greek word translated “he receive” is *lambano*, which is the primary word for “receive” or “take.”

**“Early”** The Greek word here means “autumn rain, early rain” (Strong).

**“Latter”** The Greek word for “latter” means “later” (Strong).

**“Rain”** There is no corresponding word in Greek at this place for “rain,” but the translators added it because it is implied by the word for “early.” Vincent explains the rainy season in Palestine to which this verse refers.

The “early” rain fell in October, November, and December, and extended into January and February. These rains do not come suddenly, but by degrees, so that the farmer can sow his wheat or barley. The rains are mostly from the west or southwest (Luke 12:54), continuing two or three days at a time, and falling mostly in the night. Then the wind shifts to the north or east, and fine weather ensues (Prov 25:28). The “latter” rains, which are much lighter, fall in March and April. Rain in harvest was regarded as a miracle (1 Sam 12:16-18).

Both the early and the latter rains “were crucial for the success of the crops” (*Wycliffe*), and it was equally important that there be no rain during harvest.

Robertson suggests the intent of this and the following verses when he writes, “The appeal is to the oppressed brethren. Catch your wind for a long race...” Similarly, *Wycliffe* records: “James turns now from addressing the wicked rich to counseling the oppressed poor. His instruction is that the poor should bear patiently their social and economic situation in view of the imminent return of the Lord.” We hasten, though, to qualify *Wycliffe* uses of the word “imminent” in view of the fact that no one knows when Jesus will return and it has been nearly 2,000 years since the Epistle of James was penned. However, with Lenski we must concur when he writes, “It is true that the Christians of apostolic times lived in constant expectation of the Parousia as we all ought still to live” (653). Woods records in his commentary: “The suffering saints, oppressed by their rich and dishonest employers, were to endure patiently whatever life held for them, assured that the Lord would eventually come, end their oppression, punish their oppressors, and reward them for their faithfulness, longsuffering and fidelity to his cause” (275).

**5:8** “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (KJV).

**“Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the**

**Lord is at hand” (ASV).**

**“You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near” (NIV).**

**“Be...patient”** See previous verse.

**“Also”** The Greek word for “also” is *kai*, which usually is translated as “and.”

**“Stablish”** The Greek word for “stablish” means “to turn resolutely in a certain direction” (Strong). “Stablish” also means “to strengthen” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* speaks to the beneficial affect of contemplating the final return of Jesus: “We are to live in a continued expectancy of the Lord’s coming as always nigh. Nothing can more ‘stablish the heart’ amidst troubles than His coming realized as at hand.”

**“Hearts”** The Greek for “hearts” is *kardia*.

**“For”** The Greek word here translated “for” means “because” (Strong).

**“Coming”** See previous verse.

**“Lord”** See previous verse.

**“Draweth nigh”** The Greek word translated “draweth nigh” means “to make near...approach” (Strong). *Barnes’* comments that the coming judgment on Jerusalem may be “the coming” entertained here, rather than the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Clarke, Coffman and MacKnight (601) also suppose that the reference is to the judgment of the Jewish nation at the destruction of Jerusalem. Lenski (653) and Woods (273) allow that James may actually refer to the Second Coming. Even if James had the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem in mind, still Christians thereafter through the present need to transfer that attitude of expectation to watching for the eventual Second Coming of Jesus. When Jesus answered the questions of the disciples in Matthew 24-25, the two consecutive subjects were the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming.

**5:9 “Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door” (KJV).**

**“Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the judge standeth before the doors” (ASV).**

**“Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!” (NKJV).**

**“Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door” (NAS).**

**“Grudge”** The word “grudge” means “to sigh, murmur” (Strong). Robertson writes, “‘Stop groaning against one another,’ as some were already doing in view of their troubles. In view of the hope of the Second Coming lift up your heads.” Louw and Nida define “grudge” here as “to complain in an intensive and excessive manner – ‘to complain strongly,’ ...’do not complain against one another, fellow believers, so that you will not be judge.’ Fream writes, “One of the immediate results of lack of patience is groaning in complaint. This murmuring often makes life miserable for those who are closest. In the church it takes the form of groaning against a brother.”

**“One”** The Greek word for “one” in this verse is *allelon* (al-lay’-lone), and it means “one another” (Strong).

**“Brethren”** The Greek here is *adelphos*.

**“Lest”** The two Greek words translated “lest” means “that not” (Strong).

**“Ye be condemned”** The Greek word here is *krino* (kree’-no), meaning “properly, to distinguish, i.e. decide (mentally or judicially); by implication, to try, condemn, punish”; it is often translated as “judge” (Strong). The Greek here is a strengthened form of *krino* and “signifies to give judgment against, pass sentence upon” (Vine).

**“Behold”** The same word as in verse 7 appears here.

**“Judge”** The Greek word for “judge” in this verse means “one who reaches a decision, passes judgment” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**“Before”** The Greek word here is *pro*, meaning “in front of” (Strong).

**“Door”** The Greek word for “door” is *thura* (thoo’-rah), and it is once translated as “gate” (Acts 3:2). The word means “a portal or entrance” (Strong). If James refers to the destruction of Jerusalem instead of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, then this verse compares favorably to Matthew 24:33.

**5:10 “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience” (KJV).**

**“Take”** The Greek word for “take” here is *lambano*, the same word translated “receive” in verse 7.

**“Brethren”** The Greek here is *adelphos*.

**“Prophets”** The Greek word for “prophets” is *prophetes* (prof-ay’-tace), meaning “a foreteller (‘prophet’); by analogy, an inspired speaker” (Strong). *Wycliffe* notes respecting the mention of “prophets” here: “In addition to farmers, the prophets are now cited as illustrations of suffering and patience (RSV). It is strange that Christ’s example is not cited here as it is in 1 Peter 2:21-23.” Compare Matthew 5:12 and Acts 7:52. Woods represents the reference to the persecuted prophets to mean: “Those godly men did not escape persecution; we may, therefore, expect it; these men endured faithfully the trials of life; so should we” (281).

**“Have spoken”** The Greek word for “have spoken” here is *laleo* (lal-eh’-o), which means “to talk, i.e. utter words” (Strong). It is translated “preach,” “say,” “speak,” “talk,” “tell” and “utter.”

**“Name”** The Greek for “name” here is *onoma* (on’-om-ah), and means “called” (Strong). Robertson writes that the meaning of the words “in the name of” is “[w]ith the authority of.”

**“Of the Lord”** The Greek word here is *kurios*.

**“For example”** The single Greek word translated as “for an example” means “an exhibit for imitation or warning” (Strong). The same Greek word is translated as “patterns” in Hebrews 9:23. Robertson writes of “for example,” “to copy under.” *Barnes’* notes respecting the nature of the example under consideration, “That is, they showed us how evils are to be borne.” One resource gives “footprint” as an illustration of the use of “example” (Kittel and Bromiley). Woods writes that “example” here means “a copy to be imitated” (281).

**“Suffering affliction”** A single Greek word translates to “suffering affliction” and means “hardship” (Strong). Vincent comments, “The word does not mean the ‘endurance’ of affliction, but ‘affliction itself.’” Robertson writes that “suffering evil” is meant. Another resource records of “suffering affliction” that it includes the idea of “a strenuous effort that one makes” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Louw and Nida add, “suffering hardship with patience.”

**“Patience”** The Greek word for “patience” in verse 7 and the Greek word for “patience” here both come from the same Greek word. Here, “patience” means “forbearance” (Strong).

**5:11** “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (KJV).

“Behold, we call them blessed that endured: ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful” (ASV).

“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” (NKJV).

“Behold, we call those happy who were steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful” (RSV).

“Behold, we count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful” (NAS).

“**Behold**” The same word as in verses 7 and 9 appears here.

“**We count them happy**” The single Greek word translated “we count them happy” means “to beatify, i.e. pronounce (or esteem) fortunate” (Strong). Woods places the happiness or blessedness in perspective when he writes:

It was not James' intention to leave the impression that the reward inherent in the term 'blessed' would be received in this life: on the contrary, many evils persist, and are never corrected here; but it is a matter of faith that in God's own good time, he will redress the wrongs of the poor, and mete out to the wicked the punishment they deserve in the day of final accounts. ...Not here, but in the judgment will the wicked answer for their misdeeds. (284-285)

“**Endure**” The Greek word translated “endure” means “to stay under (behind), i.e. remain; figuratively, to undergo, i.e. bear (trials), have fortitude, persevere” (Strong). The Greek word appearing here is a strengthened form of the Greek for “abide”; Vine defines our word as “to abide under, to bear up courageously’ (under suffering).”

“**Ye have heard**” The Greek for “ye have heard” in this verse is *akouo* (ak-oo'-o), which means “to hear” (Strong).

**“Patience”** The Greek word for “patience” this time differs from the family of words already appearing in this chapter and translated “patience.” Here, “patience” means “cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy” (Strong).

**“Job”** *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* makes a valid comment here: “He was therefore a real, not an imaginary person; otherwise his case would not be an example at all. Though he showed impatience, he always returned to committing himself wholly to God, and at last showed a perfect spirit of enduring submission.” MacKnight writes: “This passage of scripture, as well as Ezek. xiv. 14, where Job is mentioned with Noah and Daniel as one eminently righteous, shews that Job was a real person, and that his history is not a dramatic fable, as many have supposed.” “Job was traditionally considered to be a prophet, and here he is explicitly cited as an example of steadfastness. This is the only place in the NT where Job is mentioned” (*Wycliffe*).

Job is a most appropriate case study and worthy of imitation by the child of God. “It exhibits in clear and striking fashion the struggles of one who, while he cannot understand, at the moment, the occasion for his sore trials, does not blame God with them, and maintains his faith in Deity. Job and his experiences provide us with an object lesson in unwavering faith in the face of tremendous trial” (Woods 286). Job is only mentioned here in the New Testament, but Coffman notes that “the book of Job is quoted in 1 Cor. 3:19, which refers to Job 5:13.”

**“Have seen”** The Greek word for “have seen” means “to know” and is sometimes translated as “be aware” or “perceive” (Strong).

**“End”** The Greek word for “end” here is *telos* (tel'-os), and it means “properly, the point aimed at as a limit, i.e. (by implication) the conclusion of an act or state” (Strong).

**“Of the Lord”** The Greek here for “of the Lord” is *kurios*.

**“That”** The Greek word for “that” in this verse means “because” (Strong).

**“The Lord”** *Kurios* appears here again with the definite article “the” preceding it.

**“Very pitiful”** The Greek word translated “very pitiful” means “extremely compassionate” (Strong).

**“Of tender mercy”** The Greek word translated “of tender mercy” is a different Greek word from the one translated “very pitiful” that also means “compassionate (Strong). Vine adds that it means “compassionate for the ills of others.” Woods observes respecting the

pity and mercy of God, “God is tender-hearted; he is not unmindful of the agonies of his people, nor does he turn a deaf ear to their cries” (287).

**5:12** “But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation” (KJV).

“But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; that ye fall not under judgment” (ASV).

“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” (NKJV).

“**Above**” The Greek word translated “above” in this verse is *pro*, meaning “in front of” (Strong). The same Greek word is translated “before” in verse 9.

“**All things**” The Greek *pas* is translated “all things” in this verse.

“**Brethren**” The Greek *adelphos* appears here.

“**Swear**” The Greek word translated “swear” means “to take an oath” (Strong).

“**Heaven**” The Greek word translated “heaven” here means “sky; by extension, heaven” (Strong). Consequently, the Greek word is translated as “air” in Matthew 6:26 respecting birds that fly in the air and as “sky” in Matthew 16:3.

“**Earth**” The Greek word for “soil” appears again here.

“**Other**” The Greek word for “other” in this verse is *allos* (al’-los).

“**Oath**” A different Greek word for “oath” than the one formerly in this verse translated “swear,” meaning “oath,” appears at this place. Here the meaning is “a limit, i.e. (sacred) restraint (specifically, an oath)” (Strong).

“**Let be**” The form of the Greek verb for “let” is only used when “emphatic” (Strong).

“**Yea**” The Greek word translated “yea” means a “strong affirmation” (Strong).

“**Nay**” The Greek word translated “nay” means an “absolute negative” (Strong).

**“Lest”** The Greek for “lest” is translated from two words that mean “that not” (Strong).

**“Into”** The Greek word translated “into” in this verse is usually translated as “under.”

**“Condemnation”** The Greek word translated “condemnation” is *krisis* (kree’-sis), and it means “decision (subjectively or objectively, for or against); by extension, a tribunal” (Strong). This word is also translated as “judgment,” “damnation” and “accusation.”

Compare this verse with Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:33-37. Clarke adds consideration of questionable ethics that should not be characteristic of the child of God. “Do not pretend to say yea with your lips, and annual it in your heart; let the yea or the nay which you express be bona fide such. Do not imagine that any mental reservation can cancel any such expression of obligation in the sight of God.” *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* states the obvious intent of this verse when it records, “do not use oaths in everyday conversation: let a simple affirmative or denial be enough to establish your word.” MacKnight pens, “...I rather think he forbade them, when brought before the tribunals of their persecutors, to deny their faith with oaths; which some of them, it seems, thought they might do with a safe conscience, if the oath was one of those which were reckoned not binding. For that the Jews thought some oaths obligatory and others not...” (602).

Lenski correctly comments:

There is a good deal of discussion as to whether absolutely all oaths are forbidden by James...God sword (Heb. 6:17), Jesus swore (Matt. 26:63, 64). Like Jesus, James forbids the taking of oaths in our ordinary conversation. ...Oaths that dot our conversation are not a mild and excusable habit even when they do not name God outright. Since we are honest and truthful people, our “yes” ought to be a “yes,” our “no” a “no.” (658-659)

Coffman records in his commentary about oaths: “Agreement is felt with Roberts and many others who have insisted that ‘This passage has nothing to do with solemn and serious civil and religious oaths.’ Christ himself permitted himself to be placed under oath for his Great Confession (Mark 14:61, 62).” Fream writes: “Most commentators do

not believe that this prohibition is referring to the civil and religious oaths or vows that solemnly use the name of God for court uses.”

**5:13** “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (KJV).

“Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise” (ASV).

“Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise” (NIV).

“**Is afflicted**” The Greek word for “is afflicted” means “to undergo hardship” (Strong). Vine notes that the Greek here is a compound word from words meaning “evil” and “suffering.”

“**Any**” The word “any” here is an indefinite pronoun, *tis*, meaning “some or any person or object” (Strong).

“**Among**” The Greek for “among” is *en*.

“**Let him pray**” The Greek word translated “let him pray” is *prosechomai* (pros-yoo’-khom-ahee), meaning “to pray to God, i.e. supplicate, worship” (Strong). Robertson observes the tense of the verb and remarks that it means “let him keep on praying”; Woods makes the same observation (295).

“**Is merry**” The other three times the Greek word appears in the KJV, it is translated “be of good cheer.” Vine observes that the Greek here is a compound word where the words mean “well” and “the soul.” *Barnes*’ records the idea behind the word “merry” when it records that the “word properly denotes ‘cheerful, pleasant, agreeable,’ and is applied to a state of mind free from trouble...”

“**Sing psalms**” The Greek *psallo* appears here, as it does in Romans 15:9; twice in 1 Corinthians 14:15 and Ephesians 5:19. In each instance, it is translated “sing” except in Ephesians 5:19 where it is translated “making melody,” which is preceded by “singing” and followed by “in your heart.” Vine says of *psallo* that it “denotes, in the NT, ‘to sing a hymn, sin praise.’” Woods observes that the verb tense means “Let him keep on singing” (297).

Whether to use instrumental music in Christian worship has been a seed of unrest for over 1,000 years. The simple truth of the matter is that the New Testament does not authorized the use of instrumental music in worship, but the New Testament does authorize a particular kind of vocal music in Christian worship—singing. For religious people who have little concern for what the Bible authorizes (and there

are many), whether to use instrumental music in Christian worship must seem to be a trivial matter. However, for anyone whose religious convictions are based on the authority of the Holy Word of God (for us now living, the New Testament), whether we use instrumental music in worship is vital because instrumental music is not authorized for Christian worship, but singing is authorized.

...instrumental music in so-called Christian worship was first used...in A.D. 670...it created such a furor therein that it was speedily removed to avert a split; and, it was not until A.D. 800 that it came to be common...*Our Lord never authorized it, no apostle ever sanctioned it, no New Testament writer ever commanded it, not New Testament church ever practiced it.* It was born in the bosom of the apostasy, and is used with no greater sanction than the burning of incense, the counting of beads, the sprinkling of babies. (Woods 299)

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* and MacKnight (602) suggest comparing the disposition and action of Paul and Silas after they had been beaten for the faith and cast into prison (Acts 16:23-26).

**5:14** **“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:” (KJV).**

“**Sick**” The Greek word for “sick” here means “to be feeble” (Strong). Vine adds that the word means “to be weak.”

“**Let him call for**” The Greek word translated “let him call for” means “to call toward oneself, i.e. summon, invite” (Strong). *Barnes’* contains a paragraph that, excepting for the misuse of the word “pastor,” publicizes an often-misplaced complaint toward church leaders and other members.

It may be added, as worthy of note, that the apostle says they should “call” for the elders of the church; that is, they should send for them. They should not wait for them to hear of their sickness, as they might happen to, but they should cause them to be informed of it, and give them an opportunity of visiting them and praying with them. Nothing is more common than for persons—even

members of the church-to be sick a long time, and to presume that their pastor must know all about it; and then they wonder that he does not come to see them, and think hard of him because he does not. A pastor cannot be supposed to know everything; nor can it be presumed that he knows when persons are sick, any more than he can know anything else, unless he is apprized of it; and may hard thoughts, and may suspicions of neglect would be avoided, if, when persons are sick, they would in some way inform their pastor of it. It should always be presumed of a minister of the gospel that he is ready to visit the sick. But how can he go unless he is in some way apprized of the illness of those who need his counsel and his prayers? The sick send for their family physician; why should they presume that their pastor will know of their illness any more than their physician will?

**“The elders”** The definite article appears before “elders,” indication that a definitive group is under consideration. The word “elders” here is from *presbuteros* (pres-boo’-ter-os). Context determines whether the reference pertains solely to age or whether it pertains to Jewish elders or elders of the church. With one exception (Rom. 9:12), this is the Greek word translated as “elder” or “elders” in every occasion in the New Testament. In this case, as *Wycliffe* notes, the reference is “to definite officers) of the church.” These elders were miraculously endowed (though some commentators deny it) and a miracle was entertained in this verse (Eph. 4:11-14). “These elders are not just charismatic older believers but officebearers, although obviously with a gift of healing intercession” (Kittel and Bromiley). Since the miraculous age has ended (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-14), and though elders and other Christians may pray for the sick, anointing with olive oil (which was a symbol of the miraculous healing) is a poor medicinal cure (especially given the wide variety of health problems possible) and should be avoided today by church leaders. MacKnight correctly evaluates the distribution of miraculous gifts in the first century (1 Cor. 12:8-10). “In the first age the spiritual gifts were dispensed in such plenty, that no church was without these gifts; and particularly, in every church were some who possessed the gift of miraculously healing the sick” (602). “...[I]t must be quite obvious to

the discerning student that this passage was applicable to the period of miraculous gifts in the church and limited to it. ...One who *rejects* these means today—such as medicine, surgery, and all other approved techniques—and alleges dependence upon God alone, actually *rejects* God who chooses to work in this manner now” (Woods 303-304).

To members of the churches of Christ, it is automatic that we think of elders in fully organized congregations being responsible to God for the spiritual welfare of that congregation. However, most of the denominations either prescribe to a form of church government larger than and foreign to the New Testament record, or if they have “elders” they do not correspond to the New Testament qualifications (e.g., Mormon elders, female elders, elders that take their orders from higher-ups elsewhere). Lenski notes the correct biblical significance of the mention of elders in this verse, despite departures in his sect as well. “From its earliest days each congregation had several ‘elders’ to manage its affairs, to teach, to see to the teaching, etc. This arrangement was taken over from the synagogue” (660). Later, Lenski makes another astute observation respecting the place of elders in the local church when he writes, “As officers of the church the elders do not act merely on their own behalf but also on behalf of the church” (662).

**“The church”** The definite article appears before the word for church, indicating a particular group is under consideration in this verse. The Greek word for “church” is *ekklesia*, meaning “a calling out” (Strong). This word is translated both as “church” and “assembly,” and depending upon the context can refer to (1) the Lord’s church over which he is head and spanning the centuries since its establishment (Matt. 16:18), (2) local congregations of the Lord’s church (Acts 9:31; 14:23; 1Cor 1:2), (3) the worship assembly of a local congregation of the Lord’s church (1 Cor. 11:18, 22; 14:4-5, 12, 19, 23, 28, 33-35) and (4) a public assembly of persons not necessarily associated with any religious group (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). The KJV does translate a totally different word as “churches” when referring to “robbers of churches [temples]”; that Greek word in Acts 19:32 means “a templedespoiler” (Strong). The Lord’s church (whether speaking of the universal body of Christ over which Jesus is head and which spans the Christian Age, whether speaking of a local congregation of the Lord’s church or whether speaking of the worship assembly of a local congregation) is called out of a sinful world by the Gospel of Jesus

Christ. In this verse, “[t]he ‘church’ referred to here is, obviously the local congregation, inasmuch as it has ‘elders’” (Woods 300).

**“Let them pray”** See the previous verse for the same Greek word. Lenski notes that the main verb here involves praying, whereas the “anointing with oil” “is a participle, which thus marks the minor and subsidiary act...Praying was the main act, using oil in the name of the Lord was a second and minor act” (660-661).

**“Anointing”** The Greek word translated “anointing” means “to oil” (Strong).

**“With oil”** The Greek word translated “with oil” here means “olive oil” (Strong). Commentators disagree whether the oil was a medicinal cure, but *Wycliffe* seems correct in saying, “In some cases oil may have therapeutic value, but...It is clear from this verse that is not the oil that heals the sick man, but rather the Lord shall raise him up in answer to the prayer of faith.” The olive oil was symbolic in the appointment of prophets (1 Kings 19:16; Isa. 61:1), priests (Exod. 29:7; 40:13-15; Lev. 4:3) and kings (1 Sam. 1:13; 15:1; 26:9, 11; 1 Kings 1:34, 39; 2 Kings 9:3-6) as well as in this passage respecting miraculous cures. MacKnight observes: “The anointing the sick with oil was not prescribed, either by our Lord or by his apostles, as a natural remedy, but as a sensible token to the sick person himself, and to those who were present, that a miracle is to be performed, to use anointing, as a religious rite, is a vain superstition” (602). Mark 6:13 indicates that the apostles used oil symbolically in the healing that they did (Lenski 663). This use of “oil was *symbolic*, and not medicinal...*Elders*, not doctors, were to be sent for” (Woods 301).

**“In”** The Greek *en* appears here.

**“The name”** The definite article appears before the word for “name.”

**“Of the Lord”** The definite article appears before the word for “Lord.” *Barnes*’ says of the phrase “in the name of the Lord,” “By the authority or direction of the Lord; or as an act in accordance with his will...”; Woods comments likewise (302).

The erroneous Catholic doctrine of Extreme Unction mistakenly claims this verse as its biblical example and validation. Extreme Unction refers to “a sacrament in which a priest anoints and prays for the recovery and salvation of a critically ill or injured person” (*Merriam*).

**5:15** “And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord

**shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him” (KJV).**

**“And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven” (NIV).**

**“Prayer”** The Greek word for “payer” is *euche* (yoo-khay’), which means “properly, a wish, expressed as a petition to God, or in votive obligation” (Strong). Two of the three times this word appears in the New Testament, it is translated as “vow” (Acts 18:18; 21:23).

**“Of faith”** The Greek word for “faith” is *pistis*. Strong defines the word as: “persuasion, i.e. credence; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially reliance upon Christ for salvation; abstractly, constancy in such profession; by extension, the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself.” *Pistis* is translated “assurance” (Acts 17:31) and “believeth” (Rom. 3:26; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 10:39), “fidelity” (Titus 2:10) and “faith” the balance of the 244 times it appears in the New Testament. Vine defines *pistis* as “‘firm persuasion,’ a conviction based upon hearing.” See Vine for some of the various ways in which the word “faith” is used in the New Testament.

**“Shall save”** The Greek word translated “shall save” means “to save, i.e. deliver or protect” (Strong). It is translated “make whole” or “heal” in addition to “save” in the New Testament. Whereas the word may be applied spiritually to the preservation of the soul or physically as to avoid death, here it pertains to healing the sick. “In some instances the reference of *sozo* is to the healing of the sick” (Kittel and Bromiley). This verse attributes the recovery under consideration to the “prayer,” not the oil” (Woods 302).

**“Shall raise up”** Here the particular reference is to restoration of one’s health. The Greek word here means “to cause to stand up” (Louw and Nida). The Catholic doctrine of Extreme Unction cannot be correctly attributed to this verse, especially since the effect is to raise one up (he recovers, not dies) (Woods 302-303). See also Coffman at this place for greater detail as to when Extreme Unction was implemented in Catholicism and how it *contrasts* with these verses.

**“Sins”** The Greek word here is *hamartia*; it means “missing the mark” (Vine).

**“Forgiven”** The Greek word translated “forgiven” means to “send away” (Vine). Vincent adds that the definition means “discharge.”

This sins forgiven, I context, are additional to the physical healing (Woods 303).

Vincent comments about the sinful state represented in this verse: “The Greek gives a shade of meaning which can hardly be transferred neatly into English, representing not merely the ‘fact’ that the man has sinned, but his ‘condition’ as a sinner. Literally the words read, ‘if he be having committed sins;’ i.e., ‘in a state of having committed,’ and under the moral or physical consequences of transgression.” *Wycliffe* observes respecting the mention of sin in this verse, “Sometimes, certainly not always, sickness is the result of personal sin.” *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*, though, observes that sometimes sickness is the result of sin (Matt. 9:2; John 5:14).

**5:16** “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (KJV).

“Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working” (ASV).

“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” (NKJV).

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (NIV).

“Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects” (RSV; NAS).

“**Confess**” The Greek word translated “confess” means “to acknowledge or (by implication of assent) agree fully” (Strong). Another resource adds “admit” to the definition (Kittle and Bromiley). Woods notes that the verb tense indicates one should:

“Keep on confessing your sins one to another, and keep on praying one for another...” Taught here is the simple obligation of all Christians both to confess their sins to each other and to pray for each other. ...It is necessary in the nature of the case that those who have know of the sins should have equal knowledge of the penitence. ...It is, therefore, a practical ruled that the confession

*should be as public as the sin.*” ...This passage does not therefore deal exclusively with the “formal confession” made by one who has committed public, open sin and is making confession before the church for it, though it includes such. (304-306)

**“Your”** The Greek word here is the definite article. The effect is reference to “the sins.”

**“Faults”** The Greek word *hamartia* that in the last verse was translated “sins” appears here, and its definition has been observed earlier in the notes on this book.

**“One to another”** The Greek word here is *allelon* from *allos*. Strong writes that *allelon* means “reduplicated.” This definition compares to the definition of *allos*, which includes the idea of another of the same kind. The acknowledgement of sins as well as the prayers for fellow Christians is to be **mutual**. Auricular confession and prayer partners are not justifiable by this passage. Clarke Comments that “...auricular confession to a priest, such as is prescribed by the Romish church, has no foundation in this passage. Indeed, had it any foundation here it would prove more than they wish, for it would require the priest to confess his sins to the people, as well as the people to confess theirs to the priest.” See also MacKnight (602).

**“Pray”** The Greek word here is related to the word for “prayer” in the previous verse; the Greek word for “pray” in this verse means “to wish; by implication, to pray to God” (Strong). The apostle Paul often prayed for brethren and apprised them that he prayed for them (Phil. 1:3; 2 Thess. 3:1), and brethren were prone to pray (Acts 12:5) (Woods 306).

**“For”** The Greek word in this place translated “for” means “over” (Strong).

**“Ye may be healed”** The Greek word translated “ye may be healed” means “to cure” (Strong).

**“Effectual fervent”** The single Greek word translated “effectual fervent” means “to be active, efficient” (Strong). Vine defines the word as “to put forth power.” The persons who possess these prayerful characteristics are competent or able in prayer (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**“Prayer”** Still an additional Greek word appears in this verse translated as “prayer”; here the Greek means “a petition” (Strong).

Vine adds that the word means “a wanting, a need.” Here is “the usual word for petition from an inferior to a superior” (Woods 306).

**“Of a righteous man”** The word “man” was added by the translators. The Greek for “of a righteous” means “by implication, innocent, holy” (Strong). Bauer, Gingrich and Danker add that the word “righteous” means “not violating the sovereignty of God, and keeping his laws.”

**“Avaieth”** The Greek word translated “avaieth” means “to have (or exercise) force” (Strong).

Especially in times of distress, including grave illness, people ordinarily approach God in prayer. More so, if one’s illness is severe enough to threaten one’s life, he certainly will review his life’s deeds and seek forgiveness of any outstanding sins. Lenski writes, “The sins referred to in v. 15, 16 are conscious sins which distress the conscience, fall heavily upon it especially when sickness sets in” (665).

**5:17** **“Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months” (KJV).**

**“Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months” (ASV).**

**“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” (NKJV).**

**“Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years” (NIV)**

**“A man”** The Greek word translated “man” here is *anthropos*, meaning “a human being” (Strong). *Anthropos* is distinguished from *aner* meaning “male” or other words such as the indefinite pronoun *tis*.

**“Subject to like passions”** The Greek word translated “subject to like passions” means “similarly affected” (Strong). The idea is “similar feelings, circumstances, experiences” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Lenski accounts for James’ comparison of Elijah to any person who might pray. “It was necessary for James to say that Elijah was ‘a man of like sensations with us’ (the same expression found in Acts 14:15) because the Jews made so much of Elijah. The readers are not to

attribute the great effect of Elijah's prayers to any exceptional qualities that were inherent in the person of this prophet himself. He was an anthropos, a human being, just as we are" (668). Coffman puts the man Elijah in perspective. "The argument is that Elijah, despite the fact of his being a noted prophet, was nevertheless a fallible and sinful man like the Christians of all generations; but that, in spite of his mortality, sin and imperfections, God mightily answers his prayers, and he will do the same for us."

**"Earnestly"** The Greek word *proseuche* for "earnestly" also means "prayer" (Strong). Therefore, Vincent says of "prayed earnestly" that the two words mean "[I]terally, 'he prayed with prayer.'" Several commentators ascribe this duplication as a "Hebraism."

**"It might rain"** The word translated "rain" here means "to wet" (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**"Earth"** The Greek for "earth" here is *ge*, which we have visited already in this study.

**"By the space of"** These words have no corresponding Greek words and were added by the translators.

**"Three"** The Greek word for "three" is *treis* (trice).

**"Six"** The Greek word for "six" is *hex*.

*Wycliffe* notes that, "James seems to be drawing on other sources than the OT, since Elijah's prayers for the drought and its cessation are not mentioned in the OT account. The length of the drought as being three and one half years is also not found in the OT." Of course, that resource other than the Old Testament is **inspiration!** Jesus likewise stated the time respecting the drought under consideration as three years and six months (Luke 4:25). The Old Testament account is in 1 Kings 17-18.

If some think there is a possible contradiction between the Old Testament account of the duration of the drought in Elijah's day versus the New Testament references, one only has to consider the same thoughts relative to other so-called apparent contradictions respecting Bible references to times (e.g., are the beginning and ending times in various records synchronized?). Lenski writes:

"In the third year" (I Kings 18:1) has long been understood correctly. It does not indicate the entire time of the drought but marks the time after the events that are recorded in chapter 17. Elijah spent over two years

in Zarephath, and thus “in the third year” he was sent to confront Ahab. That the drought lasted three and one half years is a well-known fact of history, one that was certainly not forgotten by the Jews who knew that history far better than we know that of our own nation. (670)

Coffman writes:

The event in view in these words is recorded in 1 Kings 17:1—18:1ff, where the exact duration of the drought is nowhere mentioned. Despite this, the Old Testament expression “in the third year” in that passage is sometimes construed as a “contradiction” of the “three years and six months” of this passage and the one in Luke 4:25. Of course, this is another well-known “pseudocon.” As Haley said, “We may reckon ‘the third year’ of the Old Testament, not as indicating the length of the drought, but a reference to the sojourn of Elijah with the widow of Zarephath.” <57> In other words, the drought began six months before the famine did, the Old Testament “third year” having reference to the duration of the famine, and the New Testament “three years and six months” referring to the duration of the drought itself. Jesus himself endorsed this calculation (Luke 4:25).

Fream summarizes the connection between the Old Testament and New Testament accounts surrounding this incident in Elijah’s ministry. “The same Holy Spirit that inspired the writing of the Old Testament account also inspired the revealing of this additional information in James: it rained not for three and a half years because of Elijah’s prayers.”

The occasion of rain Elijah’s day corresponds technically to God’s providential answer to prayer rather than to a miraculous demonstration. Otherwise, Elijah would hardly serve as an example for effective prayer today during a time when Bible miracles no longer occur “It is by no means necessary to assume that the incident to which James refers was a miracle—above and beyond the ordinary laws of nature” (Woods 310). Fream writes:

Strictly speaking, this is God working through providence (or through His normal way of working). Had there been no cloud in the sky with the sun shining sparkling and clear, and at the same time a tremendous rain was falling, this would have been God working through the miraculous (or through something other than His normal way of working). Although God sometimes answered prayers through miraculous means in the period when new revelations were being given through the prophets, we have no right to demand that God answer through His miracles today.

**5:18** “And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit” (KJV).

“And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit” (NKJV).

“Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops” (NIV).

“And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit” (NAS).

“**Prayed**” The Greek word for “prayed” here is *proseuchomai*. Clarke observes respecting this specific prayer, “This second prayer is not mentioned in the history in express words, but as in 1 Kings 17:42, it is said, He cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees; that was probably the time of the second praying, namely, that rain might come, as this was the proper posture of prayer.”

“**The heaven**” The definite article appears before “heaven.” The word for “heaven” here means “sky” (Strong). However, depending upon the context in which the Greek word appears, it can refer to the various meanings of the English word “heaven.”

“**Gave**” *Didomi* (did’-o-mee) appears here and can be “send” as well (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker), or it can mean “to cause to happen” (Louw and Nida).

“**Rain**” Another Greek word for “rain” appears here: *huetos* (hoo-et-os’). It means “showers.”

“**Earth**” The Greek for “earth” is *ge*.

**“Brought forth”** The Greek word translated “brought forth” means “to germinate; by implication, to yield fruit” (Strong). Vine adds to the definition “to bud, spring up.”

**“Fruit”** The Greek word *karpos* appears here and means “fruit (as plucked)” (Strong).

**5:19** **“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him” (KJV).**

**“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back” (NKJV).**

**“My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back” (NIV).**

**“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back” (NAS).**

**“Brethren”** “A loving address prefaces this sweet gospel assurance with which James would stimulate every brother to restore every other brother who wanders from the saving truth into sin and spiritual death” (Lenski 71).

**“Do err”** The Greek for “do err” means “roam (from safety, truth, or virtue)” (Strong). Vine includes in the definition “to cause to wander, lead astray, deceive.” Robertson adds “to go astray.” Coffman notes: “The implications of this are profound. That a Christian can err from the truth is not merely a possibility, but a frequent occurrence.” Fream distinguishes between the erring child of God and one who is not truly a child of God (to whom this verse has no direct application). “James here is referring to the sinning Christian. He is not speaking of someone who has sinned and has already repented. Nor is he speaking of someone who is sinning and has never been a Christian. He is speaking concerning the Christian who has erred from the truth and is now a sinner. If he is not converted, he is in danger of eternal death.”

**“From”** The Greek word translated “from” here usually means “off” (Strong).

**“The truth”** The definite article appears before the word “truth.” The word “truth” in this passages means “the content of Christianity as the absolute truth” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). Lenski pens, “Doctrine and faith are never mere ‘opinions’ or just ‘ways of thinking’” (672).

**“Convert”** The Greek word translated “convert” means “to revert” (Strong). Vine adds that the word means “to turn about, turn

towards.” “When a Christian loses the truth, it is notoriously difficult to turn him back to it. It is not easy to revive a lost faith” (Lanski 672). See Hebrews 6:4-6. Yet, Christian duty and Christian compassion demands that we attempt to recover the fallen child of God (Gal. 6:1-2; Jude 23) because his eternal destiny otherwise is unthinkable (2 Pet. 2:20-22). Hebrews 10:26-31 explicitly paints the horrible future of a fallen Christian. The apostle Paul was well aware of the possibility that even he, such a noble worker for God since his conversion, could be eternally lost (1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Cor. 13:5).

Coffman correctly considers the reclamation of fallen brethren a rightful part of Christian evangelism—we might say Part Two of the Great Commission. “He [James] closed on the note of every Christian’s concern for the reclamation of the backslider, including also the larger sphere of winning the alien lost to Christ. As Tasker aptly phrased it: ‘No duty laid upon Christians is more in keeping with the mind of their Lord, or more expressive of Christian love, than the duty of reclaiming the backslider.’” Fream, likewise, adds: “One who was once a Christian may need conversion as desperately as any other man. When the saint errs from the truth, the brethren should be most concerned to convert him to save his soul from death.”

**5:20** “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (KJV).

“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” (NKJV).

“let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (RSV).

“Let him know” The Greek word translated “let him know” is *ginosko*. The verb tense signifies, “Let him keep on knowing...” (Woods 313).

“Converted” See “convert” in the previous verse.

“The sinner” There is no corresponding word for “the” preceding the word “sinner” in this verse. The word for “sinner” differs some from but is related to the previous word in this context translated “sins” and “faults”; here the word means “sinful” (Strong). Vine notes that the Greek means “lit., ‘one who misses the mark.’”

**“From”** In this instance, the word “from” is translated from *ek*, meaning “out.”

**“Error”** The Greek word translated “error” means “a straying from orthodoxy or piety” (Strong). Another resource comments that it can mean to “be mistaken in one’s judgment, deceive oneself” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**“Way”** The Greek word translated “way” in this verse means “road” (Strong). In this context, the word means “way of life, way of acting, conduct” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).

**“Soul”** Vine lists a number of different ways in which the Greek word here is used in the New Testament.

**“From death”** The word “from” is again the Greek *ek*. The idea is “out of death.” Lenski states what should be obvious to every right-thinking mortal, but alas sometimes the obvious is obscure. “What a great thing it is to rescue a person from physical death! This is a greater thing, for spiritual death is far worse than physical death. ... There is only one objective means to save such a sinner, namely the truth...” (672-673).

**“Shall hide”** The Greek word for “shall hide” means “to cover up” (Strong). Vine adds that the definition includes “to cover, conceal, so that no trace of it can be seen.” Robertson includes in the definition “to veil.” Another resource says of “hide” in this verse that it means to “remove from sight” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). MacKnight notes, “The covering of sin is a phrase which often occurs in the Old Testament, and always signifies the pardoning of sin” (603). Compare 1 Peter 4:8.

The expression “to hide” sins is taken from the Old Testament: Ps. 32:1; 85:2; cf., also I Pet. 4:8. “To hide sins” does not mean to keep them secret; the word is used in the intensified sense, to hide them from God, from whom nothing can be kept secret (Matt. 6:4, 6). There is only one way in which this hiding or covering can be done—under the blood of Christ. If sins are hidden, God will not see them, for they have actually disappeared. Blessed is the man who can aid another in this way! (Lenski 673)

Woods adds Romans 4:6-8 for comparison (314).

**“A multitude”** The Greek word translated “a multitude” is *plethos* (play’-thos), which means “a fullness, i.e. a large number,

throng, populace” (Strong). Once, the word is translated as “a bundle.” Another resource defines the word as “a crowd” or “to indicate the greatness of the number” (Kittel and Bromiley). Louw and Nida add to the definition that it means “a large number of countable objects or events.”

**“Of sins”** The Greek word for “of sins” is *hamartia*, already observed in this context.

Lenski compares the closure of James to the closure of 1 John, unlike the typical writings of Paul and Peter. “His last ‘my brethren’ is enough” (Lenski 673). “There is no formal conclusion; the Letter ends on the high and fraternal plane on which it begins: an earnest and impressive appeal to ‘my brethren.’ (1:2; 5:19.)” (Woods 315).

# Test on the Book of James

(**Note:** You may open only your Bible for the questions marked with an asterisk. Neither your Bible nor any other resource, including notes, may be used for any other questions.)

1. What in James 1:21 is said to save souls? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Quote James 1:27, "Pure religion and \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_"
3. \*(3 pts.) Explain James 3:7-8. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Quote James 4:4, "Ye adulterers and \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_"
5. In your **opinion**, what spirit lusts to envy in James 4:5?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How does James say to make the devil flee from us? (James 4:7)  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What prompts the Lord to exalt a Christian? (James 4:10)  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Quote James 4:17, "Therefore to him \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_"
9. \*In your **opinion**, what does James 5:13-17 teach us today? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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10. Name the Protestant Reformer who referred to the Book of James as an epistle of straw? \_\_\_\_\_
11. James has been called “The Gospel of Common \_\_\_\_\_.”
12. Name the famous fleshly brother of the author of the Book of James. \_\_\_\_\_
13. To whom James was written. \_\_\_\_\_
14. Name the city from which James was written based on internal references and Acts 15. \_\_\_\_\_
15. How many chapters are in the Book of James? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Name the New Testament writer with whom James in his epistle is thought by many to contradict. \_\_\_\_\_
17. Religious group whose doctrine states “. . . the doctrine of faith, and faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.” \_\_\_\_\_
18. Who was called the “friend of God?” \_\_\_\_\_
19. Who was offered upon the altar? \_\_\_\_\_
20. What was the first tongue illustration in James? \_\_\_\_\_
21. What is the second tongue illustration \_\_\_\_\_
22. What is the third tongue illustration \_\_\_\_\_
23. The words “bitter” and “sweet” pertain to what in James? \_\_\_\_\_
24. Of what fruit does James speak? \_\_\_\_\_
25. What is the subject of James Chapter Three? \_\_\_\_\_
26. Who shall have the greater condemnation? \_\_\_\_\_
27. \*(3 pts.) Explain the use of the word “temptation” in James 1. \_\_\_\_\_

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31. \*(5 pts.) Explain Jam. 5:19-20. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Correct \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ = Grade \_\_\_\_\_  
47 Total

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Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Test Answers

1. What in James 1:21 is said to save souls? **the Word**
2. Quote James 1:27, “Pure religion and **undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.**”
3. \*(3 pts.) Explain James 3:7-8. **Tongue cannot be once for all time tamed; we must be ever vigilant to keep it under control**
4. Quote James 4:4, “Ye adulterers **and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.**”
5. In your **opinion**, what spirit lusts to envy in James 4:5? **human or Holy Spirit**
6. How does James say to make the devil flee from us? (James 4:7) **resist him**
7. What prompts the Lord to exalt a Christian? (James 4:10) **humility**
8. Quote James 4:17, “Therefore to him **that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.**”
9. \*In your **opinion**, what does James 5:13-17 teach us today?
10. Name the Protestant Reformer who referred to the Book of James as an epistle of straw? **Martin Luther**
11. James has been called “The Gospel of Common **Sense.**”
12. Name the famous fleshly brother of the author of the Book of James. **Jesus**
13. To whom James was written. **Christians**
14. Name the city from which James was written based on internal references and Acts 15. **Jerusalem**
15. How many chapters are in the Book of James? **Five**
16. Name the New Testament writer with whom James in his epistle is thought by many to contradict. **Paul**

17. Religious group whose doctrine states “. . . the doctrine of faith, and faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.” **Methodist**
18. Who was called the “friend of God?” **Abraham**
19. Who was offered upon the altar? **Isaac**
20. What was the first tongue illustration in James? **bit**
21. What is the second tongue illustration **rudder or helm**
22. What is the third tongue illustration **fire**
23. The words “bitter” and “sweet” pertain to what in James? **fountain**
24. Of what fruit does James speak? **figs**
25. What is the subject of James Chapter Three? **tongue**
26. Who shall have the greater condemnation? **teachers or masters**
27. \*(3 pts.) Explain the use of the word “temptation” in James 1. **Jam. 1:2ff pertains to trials of life; Jam. 1:12ff pertains to enticement to sin.**
28. \*(3 pts.) Explain Jam. 2:10-11. **Irrespective of which law one breaks, though he may keep all other laws, breaking any law makes one a law breaker.**
29. \*(5 pts.) Contrast the faith and works of Jam. 2:14-26 with the faith and works in Romans. **James = personal faith demonstrated; Romans = law of Moses vs. system of faith.**
30. \*(3 pts.) Explain Jam. 4:13-16. **Left God out; not wrong to plan, but planning must be according to the will of God.**
31. \*(5 pts.) Explain Jam. 5:19-20.

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