

Sermons on James-Lowell Johnson

SERMONS ON JAMES LOWELL JOHNSON

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James 1:1 James : From Scoffer To Saint

Before Reading the Passage

It's interesting to look at some of the titles given to the commentaries on the Book of James. Here are some:

The Belief That Behaves

A Functioning Faith

Getting Down To Brass Tacks

• The “Show-Me” Saint Book [James was not from Missouri, but like those folks in Missouri, he wanted Christians to show the world that they were really what they said they were.]

The Book of James is a book about Daily Practical Christian Living.

-Christianity is to be practiced daily; not once a week on Sunday, but every moment of our lives.

-A pastor asked a little boy if his dad was a Christian. The boy said, “Yes, sir, I think so, but he isn't working at it right now.” That's the problem with too many of us as God's children...we've stopped working at it.

According to James, genuine faith should make a genuine difference in the way a person lives. And those who knew James considered him qualified to address this subject. -Because of his righteous life, they called him, “James the Just.”

-He also had another nickname – “Old Camel's Knees.” It is said that he spent so much time on his knees in prayer that his knees became hard and calloused like a camel's knees.

Read the Passage

Two things I want you to see as I introduce the Book of James:

1. The Instrument God Used

Who was this James that wrote this book? Three major suggestions have been made as to the human author who penned this letter under Divine Inspiration:

1. James, the son of Zebedee

This James was the brother of John and was one of the original twelve. He, along with Peter and John, was in what we call the “inner circle” of our Lord. It is unlikely that he is the author because he was martyred by Herod in A.D. 44 (Acts 12:1-2).

2. James, the son of Alphaeus

He was also one of the twelve. He is also known as “James the Less” or “the little one.” He receives no support as the possible author in the early church.

3. The traditional view with universal support among evangelical scholars is that James, the half-brother of Jesus, was the human author.

- Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3 tells us that Jesus had at least four brothers and at least two sisters.
- When listing the brothers and sisters of Jesus, James is always listed first, which means he was born next after Jesus.

- Since James was the half-brother of our Lord, think of the awesome privilege of being reared in the same home that God chose to house His incarnate Son.

- Day by day, moment by moment, Jesus set before His brothers and sisters as well as His mother and foster father, the wonder of a perfect life.

- Jesus was transparently honest before His family. He was compassionate and ever ready to help others. He was sinless. He displayed the highest kind of wisdom. He was impeccably good, perfectly poised in every situation, and reacted in a godly way at all times.

- He was never pushy or proud; never rude, critical, or selfish. He was perfect as a babe, a child, a youth, and a man.

No doubt Mary must have told her other children about the remarkable circumstances that surrounding the birth of Jesus.

-And, yet, we are told that none of His half-brothers and sisters believed that He could be the Messiah until AFTER His resurrection.

-In fact, on one occasion His brothers went to get Him to take Him home because they said that He was “beside Himself”; that is, that He was insane or crazy.

-It seems incredible that His brothers and sisters could live in the same house with Him and remain unbelievers. That says something about the blindness of the unregenerate human heart.

But we are told after His Resurrection, the Lord appeared to James (1 Cor. 15:7) and he was instantly transformed from an unbeliever to a committed believer.

-James, as well as our Lord's other brothers and sisters, were in the Upper Room soon after His Ascension, waiting and praying until the Day of Pentecost came (Acts 1:14).

-James soon became the Senior Pastor of the church at Jerusalem and became a man of great authority.

-Gal. 1:19; 2:9 describe him as a “pillar” of the church.

Notice the humility with which James describes himself in James 1:1.

-He didn't say, “I'm the half-brother of Jesus. You had better listen to me!” “I'm the leader of the church at Jerusalem.” “Everybody knows I'm a pillar in the church. Take notice!”

-One of the marks of greatness is humility. If you want to be great in the eyes of God, then, like James, you must see yourself as nothing but a servant to Jesus.

-If you are to be great in the eyes of Jesus, you will not draw attention to yourself, who you are or what you've done.

James not only had a low consideration of himself, but he also had a lofty conception of Jesus.

-Even though he was the half-brother of Jesus, he saw Jesus as:

(1) The Sovereign One – He viewed Him as “Lord”.

(2)The Saving One – Jesus means Savior.

(3)The Special One – He saw him as Christ; Not just a man; more than just a member of his family. He saw Him as the long awaited Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ!

The secret to humility is seeing who you are and seeing whom Jesus is!

James also calls himself “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” The word “servant” is actually the word “bond slave”.

-That word “bond slave” is a word that is packed with truth.

1.It speaks of one who voluntarily serves another.

- He is not forced to serve. He serves willingly. He is bound to his master with the chords of love and chords so strong that only death could break them.

2.It is a word of dedication and commitment. He was forever on duty.

3.A bond slave had no personal freedom of his own. It was not my will, but the Master’s will.

4.A bond slave never says “no” to his master.

5.The word “bond slave” pictures one bound or handcuffed to his master. Wherever his master goes, he goes. Not to be dragged by the master. The picture is rather that of an extension of the master. Where he goes, I go. What he does, I do. How he acts, I act.

AI. The Implications God Gives

1. He wants us to be His bond slave.

2. So many don't know why they were put on this earth, so there is no purpose to their life. Man will never be complete until he knows and fulfills God's purpose for life.

3. A little first grade girl had a habit of forgetting to bring to class the things her teacher asked her to bring. One day all the pupils in the class were told to bring their birth certificates to school. The little girl forgot hers and went to the teacher's desk crying. “Teacher, I forget my reason for being born.”

4. James doesn't want us to forget our reason for being born!

From the dust of the earth, My God created Man. His breath made man a living soul And God so loved the world, He gave His only Son And that is why I love Him so

I was made in His likeness, created in His image, For I was born to serve the Lord. And I cannot deny Him, I'll always walk beside Him For I was born to serve the Lord.

My hands were made to help my neighbor,

My eyes were made to read God's word.

My feet were made to walk in His footsteps,

My body is the temple of the Lord.

A little boy got a globe for Christmas. His dad went in to get the globe after he thought the boy was asleep. The boy asked, “What are you doing in and with God's World?”

James 1:2-4 Triumphant In Trials

The Book of James is one of the most practical books in the Bible. He deals with common, everyday areas that all Christians will face.

-He discusses the Christian and his Battles, the Christian and his Bible, the Christian and his Brethren, the Christian and his Beliefs, the Christian and his Boasting, and the Christian and his Burdens. -But the very first area that James deals with is the Christian and his Battles.

-Some words bring dread to our hearts. There are some things that we had rather not have to deal with; such things as trials, problems, difficulties.

We all have to face them, but we had all rather escape them if we can.

I think of the story of a fellow that rode into a western town on a stagecoach. He was hired as the local saloon's bartender. The owner gave him a word of warning: "Remember, if you ever hear that Big John is on his way to town, drop everything and run for your life." Things went fine for several months until one day, a big strong cowhand with a ghost-white face burst through the swinging doors shouting, "Big John's a cominn', Big John's a comin'." The patrons scrambled to get out of the door, knocking the bartender to the floor, running over him as they rushed out doors and windows. The bartender gathered his senses, got up off the floor, and was dusting himself off when a giant of a man suddenly came through the saloon doors. Riding bareback on a buffalo, using a rattlesnake for a whip, he rode through the doors, splintering the doors and doorframe. The man flung the snake into the corner, knocked over the tables as he walked up to the bar, and then with his huge fist split the bar in half. "Give me drink," he yelled. "Yes sir," said the frightened bartender. The man bit the top of the bottle off with his teeth, downed the contents in one gulp, and let out a belch that shattered the saloon mirror, and then turned to leave. The bartender said, "W-w-w-would you like to have another d-d-drink?" The man roared as he jumped back on his buffalo, "I ain't got time. Big John's a comin' to town."

You may feel like troubles and trials have bullied their way into your life and you are surrounded with adversity and affliction.

-The Bible gives us this warning: Trials are going to come!

- John 16:33 "In this world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."
- John 15:20 "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you..."
- 2 Tim. 3:12 "Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

How different is the teaching of James and the other Bible writers than the teachings of the "health and wealth" boys of our day. Some teach today that if you are right with God, you will be prosperous, happy and never have trials or problems.

-The fact is, that once a person becomes a Christian, he is likely to have trials as never before.

Listen to James: "Count it all joy...lit., consider it pure joy when you experience trials...."

-Consider it what? Joy! What kind of joy? Pure joy!

-That must be a misprint! Most of us would say, Count it all joy when you Escape trials".

-If we understand that God is more interested in making us HOLY than in making us HAPPY, we will understand better why God allows trials to come in our lives.

I. The Fact of Trials - James 1:2

James uses the phrase "my brethren" no less than 15 times in his book.

-That tells us a great deal about this man, James. Though he was a leader of the early Christian church, he identified himself with every one of his readers. He saw himself as a Brother; not a Boss. -The word "brotheren" here means "to be cemented with the same blood of Jesus".

Notice that James didn't say "If" you fall into trials, but WHEN you fall into trials. It's not a matter of IF, but when. Expect them!

That word, "when you FALL INTO" is the same term used in Luke 10:30 in the story of the Good Samaritan of the man who "fell among thieves."

-The thieves fell upon this man suddenly and without warning, attacking him and robbing him. James is saying that we can fall into trials that come suddenly and without warning. We can be going our merry way without a care in the world, then all of a sudden we find ourselves engulfed in trials.

-A knock at the door, a phone call, a visit to the doctor, a pink slip on Friday can suddenly turn our calm and peaceful sea into a stormy and raging sea.

-Everything may be fine at the present, but just around the bend a trial is facing us.

-It's interesting that we get our English word "pirate" from the word translated "temptation." Like pirates that ambush the unsuspecting ship, trials can come suddenly.

Why does God allow trials to come to the Christian?

God does not allow troubles to come upon us just for trouble's sake.

-God has a goal in mind – you can count on that. Trials are meaningless, suffering is senseless, and testing is irrational unless there is some good purpose for them.

-Trials that come in our life are for a Purpose and for our Profit. The word “count” it all joy means “to think forward, to consider.”

-We must learn to look at our trial experiences from God's perspective and see the trial not as a happy experience in itself, but as the means of producing something very valuable in our life.

-The attitude of faith should be that God has permitted our trials for a purpose and He has a high and lofty goal in view. We can know that God is working something out in our lives.

-This doesn't necessarily mean that we will understand what purpose God has in it! This is the test of FAITH! Gloom now, but glory in the days to come.

Notice 1:3 The word “knowing” means “understanding .” Understand that when trials come, they are not without rhyme or reason. God always has a purpose in the trials that come our way. There is also a promised outcome in the trials that come our way.

Let me give you three purposes for the trials God allows to come to us.

A. To Enlarge Us

Warren Wiersbe tells the story: “An associate of mine, a gifted secretary, was going through great trials. She had had a stroke, her husband had gone blind, and then had to be taken to the hospital where we were sure he would die. I saw her in church on Sunday and assured her that I was praying for her. “What are you asking God to do?” she asked and her question startled me. “I'm asking God to help you

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and strengthen you,” I replied. “I appreciated that,” she said, “but pray about one more thing. Pray that I'll have the wisdom not to waste all of this!”

B. To Expose Us

Sometimes we would never see the weaknesses in our character if there were no trials.

-Simon Peter heard Jesus say, “All of you will forsake me.” Peter said, “Not me!” Jesus said, “Simon, you don't know how weak you are in that area of your life. I'll allow a trial to come in your life to show you how weak you are.” I don't think you could have convinced Peter that he would have denied the Lord. I think he meant what he said. Sometimes we think we are stronger than we really are in certain areas, so God has to show us how weak we are – often through trials.

C. To Use Us As Examples To Others

Job is the classic O.T. Example of a saint being tested so others would be inspired by his faithfulness to God. After all the trials and suffering, Job ends his book by saying, “Though He tried me by fire, I come forth as pure gold.” Job came out of his trials a wiser and better man. -Trials are not electives in God's school; they are required courses.

A saint who had experienced great trials and testings in his life wrote:

When God wants to drill a man

And thrill a man

And skill a man,

When God wants to mold a man

to play the noblest Part;

When He yearns with all His heart

To create so great and bold a man

That all the world shall be amazed,

Watch His methods, watch His ways!

How He ruthlessly perfects

Whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him
Into trial shapes of clay which
Only God understands;
While his tortured heart is crying
And he lifts beseeching hand!
How He bends but never breaks
When his good He undertakes;
How He uses whom He chooses
And with every purpose fuses him;
By every act induces him
To try His splendor out -
God knows what He's about!

Strong, mature men and women of God are molded, shaped, and made only through trials.

The Forms of Trials – James 1:2

“Diverse temptations” speaks of two things:

A. The Types of Trials

Trials come in all different sizes and shades.

-Some of the greatest trials are not the “big” trials, but the everyday kind of trials.

-Then they are multi-colored gray, dark, black.

-I Peter 1 talks about the manifold grace of God; The many colored graces of God. Trials are many colored, but the grace of God is many colored, too. God's grace will match every color of trial that comes our way.

B. The Times of Trials

God knows when we need trials in our life. They are a surprise to us, but not to Him.

III. The Facing of Trials – James 1:2

We have the option to choose how we will respond to trials. We can complain, whine, ask “why me” or we can count it all joy.

No one knows how to react to trials like Paul. When he and Silas were beaten at Philippi, then jailed, and then subjected to the torture of the stocks, they sang! They sang so well that their singing was testimony and influence to their fellow prisoners, but also led to the conversion of the jailer.

-In Acts 5:41 when the Apostles were beaten because of their bold testimony for Christ, they went out, “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for His name.” -Matt. 5:10-12; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-13; Rom. 5:3-5

IV. The Fruit of Trials – James 1:3-4

There is a Promised outcome to trials.

“The trying of our faith works patience”. The word “trying” speaks of the purging effect of trials.

-The picture behind the word is that of precious metals being heated in order for the impurities to be removed. God puts the believer into the fire in order to purge our lives of all impurities. Trials are often God's way to getting us to deal with things in our life that are displeasing to the Lord. Trials have a purifying effect.

1. Trials Produce Durability

“Worketh Patience” The word “patience” means “steadfastness, durability, brave endurance. It means to stand up under, to bear up under.”

-But it is not just the ability to bear up under things, it is the ability to turn trials into greatness and even glory.

-The thing that amazed the heathen in the centuries of persecution was that the martyred did not die grimly; they died singing!

2. Trials Produce Maturity – James 1:4

When patience has done its work in us, it causes us to be:

a. Perfect – Means mature, fully developed, complete, full grown

-This is a picture of the ripening process of fruit, say a peach or an orange. When the peach first comes on the tree, it has all the parts it's going to have, but it is not yet ripe. It takes time for the peach to ripen. You can't rush it. You must wait until the process is completed. If you pull the fruit too soon, it will be hard and bitter.

-God is never in a hurry in His developing of us. One of the hardest things for us to do is to wait upon the Lord.

• “Let patience have its perfect work” calls for our cooperation in what God is doing in our life. b. Entire means to be whole or fully developed in every part.

c. Wanting nothing means nothing lacking or left behind.

May God help us to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

James 1:9-12 Rich Man – Poor Man

Let me remind you that in James 1:1-12, James is talking about trials and testings that comes in every man's life, including Christians. Life in Christ does not mean that we will escape problems.

-In James 1:1, James says the church will have trials. He writes to the “brethren who are scattered abroad.” These were Jewish Christians who, under persecution, had been torn away from family and friends.

-Then in James 1:2-12, James says All Christians will have trials. Why do trials come?

- To make us Patient: To teach us how to bear up under hardships.
- To make us Perfect: That is, to mature us in Christ.
- To make us Perceptive: Both the rich brother and the poor brother will have trials. None are exempt.

There is often a misconception about the financial state of believers.

-Some feel that it is only the highly favored of God who receive great financial blessings from God. If the believer is blessed with great wealth, it's an indication that he is spiritual or right with God or special to God in some way. So, if a believer doesn't have much of this world's goods, God must be withholding from him because of some sin in his life or because he just doesn't measure up in some way.

-If that were true, where does that leave Jesus? Born in a cattle stall, had no place to lay His head at night, died on another's cross, placed in a borrowed tomb.

-Have you ever thought that when God blesses one of His children in a great way financially, He may be testing him to see if he will be faithful to God with what he has?

-That may be one reason God doesn't bless more of us than He does financially. He knows that He can't trust us with much.

-Jesus said that “he that is not faithful in little will not be faithful in much.”

Money does bizarre things to people. Money often turns people into strange creatures.

-Money is a big part of everybody's life, and it is a big part of everyday life. Things both wonderful and terrible happen everyday because of the way money is managed or mismanaged.

One of the greatest test of a person's spiritual character is his attitude toward his money.

-It is a great test in the life of the person who is just making ends meet. Is he going to trust God and will he give God what belongs to Him?

-I had a man say to me one time, "I don't tithe, but don't you think God understands I can't afford to tithe? He wants me to pay my bills and if I tithe I can't pay my bills." I said, "God understands you're a thief. He understands you don't trust Him and that your faith is small. He understands that you care more for the physical than the spiritual. Do you really think God would ask you to do something that He knew you couldn't do?"

Think about this: It is also a great test for the man who is blessed with great wealth. The test is, will he be faithful in the much God has blessed him with.

I heard about a grandpa who won \$100,000.00 in a sweepstakes. The family knew that he had a bad heart, the preacher has a way with words, let him tell him." So, the preacher was sitting on the porch with the old man and he asked him, "If you won \$100,000.00, what would you do with it?" the old man said, "I'd give it all to the church." And the preacher fell dead!

Before I get into the message, let me point out that when it comes to the cross, the ground is level.

There is no class distinction.

-Did you notice in James 1:9 that both the rich and the poor are called brothers?

-Even though all believers are members of the family of God and we all come from the same spiritual womb, there is diversity.

-James mentions two classes of people within the family. There is the brother of "low degree" and there are "the rich". That means that within the family of God, there is diversity, differences. Sometimes there are social differences or educational differences or racial differences or political differences and the list goes on and on.

-But even though there is diversity in God's family, there is to be unity. One unique feature of the family of God is that salvation is a great leveler of all mankind.

-One is not saved because they are poor and neither is one saved because they are rich. They are both saved because they were sinners in need of a Savior.

When Gen. Robert E. Lee came forward to join a church in Richmond, VA., a Chinaman came at the same time. The pastor began to recognize the famous general first, but Gen. Lee spoke up and said, "Stop, start with the Chinaman first. The ground is level at the foot of the cross."

There is diversity, but there is also unity. We are all equal in the eyes of God, for with God there is no respecter of persons and we are all on equal ground with God. We are not rich or poor in our standing with God, but one and equal. This "brotherhood" is to be enjoyed by all in the family.

In God's family one is not better than another. That is God's plan, but sadly it is not always practiced. Not only is no one better than another, no one in God's family is to FEEL that he is better than another. -Have you noticed that wealthy people kind of like to hang around wealthy people? They're not really comfortable with the riff-raff, the rest of us. But you know, the church just breaks down all that. If you're in Christ you're stuck with the not many noble, the not many mighty, the base things of the world, the common things, just us plain folks. The rich are therefore blended together in common life with the poor.

-Sadly, all believers don't practice that. Some feel they are just a little better than others and don't fellowship with others. Today, we have rich churches or money churches or high society churches. On the other side, I know of some poorer churches that will not fellowship with wealthier churches. James says, "This, too, is a spiritual test. We are one in the bond of love." -Prov. 22:2

James deals with these two groups:

I. The Man in Poverty – James 1:9

Ps. 68:5; Deut. 10:18-19 says that God has a particular concern for the poor; that God is a Father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows, and that because God is concerned for the poor, His people should reflect that same concern.

It would be wrong, however to assume that the Bible automatically identifies the poor as being righteous and the rich as being wicked.

-The Bible tells of many wealthy men who followed God: Abraham, Job, David, Solomon, Zaccheus, and others.

-Wealth is a blessing that God often confers on the wise man, whereas poverty often results from sin or laziness.

- Proverbs 10:4; 14:23-24
- Proverbs 13:8,18 A poor man keeps himself poor when he does not heed the rebuke of laziness.
- Proverbs 28:6,11 God commends the poor when he walks in integrity.

The poor of "low degree" or humble circumstances should "rejoice" or "glory" or "boast" or "be glad". -James tells the poor BROTHER that he needs to be aware of his high position; his exalted position in Christ, which refers to his spiritual wealth in Christ.

-When a poor man trusts Christ as Savior and Lord, he instantly becomes the heir of a vast fortune. He is a child of the King of Kings, with access to all of the King's resources. -James 2:5 Notice two words, "rich in" are found in other passages:

- I Tim. 6:6-10, 17-18
- Luke 12:16-21 Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool who built larger barns and accumulated more wealth, but suddenly he died and faced judgment. He ended up with nothing on earth and stood in judgment empty handed. Verse 21 He was not rich toward God or "Rich in God's sight"
- I Cor. 1:4-5 Paul says that by Christ we are made RICH IN everything – in all wisdom and all knowledge.
- 2 Cor. 8:7 Paul says we are RICH IN everything – in faith, in speaking, in knowledge, in truly wanting to help, and in the love you learned from us.
- 2 Cor. 9:11 Paul says we will be RICH IN or enriched in every way.

In addition to being rich in faith, we have an eternal inheritance ahead of us.

II. The Man with Plenty – James 1:10-11

Some has well said, "It is harder to walk with a full cup than it is with one half full." Sometimes it's harder for those who have plenty to pass the test of his attitude toward material things than it is for those who have little.

-The rich need to remember that earthly possessions are not the mark of true wealth.

-It will take another world to see how rich you really are.

-If you want to see how rich you really are, add up everything you have that money cannot buy and death cannot take away.

The Dangers of Plenty

There is nothing wrong with having material things. In fact the Bible says that God has given us ALL things to enjoy. God wants us to have the good things of life.

-Money is not evil; nor are things. It is not money, but the love of money that's the root of all evil. What are some of the dangers of wealth?

- Great wealth makes it harder for a man to see his need of salvation and to humble himself before God and ask for forgiveness and God's salvation.

You see, most rich folks look at salvation as something they merit. Wealthy folk glory in being able to pay their own way; to do it themselves without help from anyone, including God.

No man Deserves salvation no matter what he's accomplished or done or has.

For everyman to be saved, he must humble himself before the Lord Jesus who paid the price for every man's sin on the cross.

Matt. 19:23-26

- Most rich folks are prone to arrogance and greed.

They are willing to DO almost anything but give control of their wealth to God.

-The rich young ruler came to Jesus inquiring about eternal life. Everything was going fine. He had kept commandments, the Do's and Don'ts, but he was not willing to give up all that he had for the Lord and salvation.

-Jesus asked, "What would it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" -I Tim. 6:17

3. Wealth often gives a false sense of security.

-They often don't see their need of God because life is good, they have no needs and they ignore the fact that riches have no value in the day of death.

-The rich farmer learned that a person's life does not consist in the abundance of things that he possesses.

-You can have five billion dollars in the morning and be on the undertaker's table by the evening and stand before God empty.

I read about a man who was dying and he was quite wealthy. On his deathbed, he told his wife that he wanted to be buried with his money, and he made her promise that she would put a million dollars in the casket with him. And then he died. At the funeral she took a large envelope and slipped it into the casket just before the lid was sealed. Afterward, her friends said to her, "Did you really put a million dollars in the casket with him?" And she said, "Yes, I always keep my word. I promised I would do it ...I wrote a check!"

Well, we're not going to cash any checks when we die. We're not going to make any deposits. We're not going to need one thin dime. And our lives are so uncertain. In Chapter 5, James is going to warn rich people that their lives are nothing more than a vapor that is here for a moment and then vanishes.

Job said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart." Paul said, "We brought nothing into this life, and it is certain we can take nothing out of it." So we shouldn't become too enamored with the things of this world. Well-to-do Christians should boast in the fact that they aren't going to be here very long to enjoy their wealth. So we should use it, invest it, and give it as faithful stewards who will have to give an account to God.

And when the battle's over, we shall wear a crown, O, we shall wear a crown, yes, we shall wear a crown,

And when the battle's over, we shall wear a crown In the New Jerusalem

James 1:12 The Crown of Life

The very first thing that James deals with in his book is the trials that come in our life.

-We need to understand that trials, hardships, problems, and difficulties come to every man – saved and lost.

-Job 14:1 "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble."

-James begins in 1:2 telling us that trials are going to come. He tells us how we are to respond to trials and why. He says if we don't understand why the trials come and what God's purpose is for the specific trial, then we should ask Him for wisdom to understand what He's doing in our life.

Now James 1:12 closes the first section of the Book and he says "Blessed is the man who endures the trials sent his way."

-Can "blessings" come from trials? Yes! The word "Blessed" is the same word that is used in the Beatitudes in the Sermon On the Mount that Jesus that Jesus spoke in Matthew 5.

-The word means "happy or blessed." It carries the idea of great inner joy and satisfaction.

-How can we have inner joy in the midst of trial? James says that we can have inner joy in trials when we realize that trials are for a purpose and that they are for our profit.

-James 1:12 is a summary of what he has said in James 1:2-1:11.

I. The Reality of Trials

Did you notice that James uses the same word in verse 12 as he did in verse 2? He does not say "IF" he is tried, but "WHEN" he is tried.

-James wants us to know again that trials in life are unavoidable. We can not escape them.

II. Our Responsibility in Trials

Notice the word "endureth." The word means to stand firm during the trial, to bear up under things patiently and in a godly manner, to remain true to God regardless of how long or how hard it may be.

A. Don't Let Trials Defeat You

Don't give up; don't give in; don't give over; don't quit no matter how hard the load is to bear.

The nickname of the State of North Carolina is the "Tar heel" State. There are several explanations for why it is called the "Tar heel" state but it is commonly accepted that the nickname came from the days of the Civil War. It seems that a large group of Confederate soldiers retreated during a battle when things became rather fierce, leaving the N.C. soldiers to fight alone. Supposedly the N.C.

Soldiers threatened to put tar, a product that was plentiful in N.C., on the heels of the other Confederate soldiers so that they might stick better in the next fight.

The trials of life are not always easy to bear or face, yet we are encouraged to “stick” in the fight. The load does get heavy and the path long, but we are told to stand firm and hold our ground . We should not let our trials defeat us.

As I read the Bible, I find that God will give us the strength and grace we need to stand firm. Listen to Isaiah 41:10, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

Are you going through a trial in your life? Don't let that trial defeat you. Let the Lord give you strength to enable you to stand firm. Don't give up. Stand up! Stand up under your trials!

B. Don't Let Trials Discourage You

Not only are we to stand firm under trials, we are to do so with an encouraged heart and with joy in our heart.

Life, even at its best, is often difficult. Many folks sink beneath the waves of adversity.

-We are seeing an epidemic of suicides among teenagers. Why? It is because they have no purpose in life; no sense that God has a plan for their life; no goal in life.

-I think of the 17 year old girl who walked out in front of the 18-wheeler and ran toward it and was crushed. She was determined to kill herself. She had already run out in front of two cars and they swerved to miss her. She acted as if she was going back to the side of the road until the truck got close to her, then suddenly turned, ran toward the truck. He tried to stop and to avoid her, but there was nothing he could do but hit her. What was going on in that girl's life that would make her do such a thing? What trial was it that she couldn't deal with?

I think of Rom. 8:28. God uses everything – good things, bad things, things we can't understand, to make us into what He wants us to be.

-Let me illustrate: you have a certain color you want to paint a room in your house. You saw the color in a magazine. It is a light green. You take the magazine to Lowe's , show the man in the paint department the color you want and ask him if he can get it for you. He walks over to a computer, pushes a few buttons, and gets a readout. Then he gets a can of white paint. You think to yourself, “That's not the color I want.” Then he goes and gets some dark green paint and pours a bit of it in the white paint can, puts it on a machine that shakes it up, with the top still on it, says, “Here's your paint. It is the exact color you wanted. Go pay the cashier.” You say, “Not until I see what is under the lid. You poured three different colors together and you expect me to believe that just by shaking those three colors together that its the color I want?” He takes the lid off, puts some of the paint on the page of the magazine that had the picture in it, and low – and – behold, it's the exact same color.

-That's what God does when He allows different kinds of trials to come into our lives.

-Don't be discouraged when different trials come in your life. Just trust Him to make us into what He wants us to be! In fact, count it all joy whatever trial He allows to come to us.

C. Don't Let Trials Distract You

Notice the last phrase of verse 12: “To them that love Him”. Trials shouldn't distract us from our love for the Lord. We should never take our eyes off the Lord when trials come.

Testing will either drive you TO the Lord or they will drive you AWAY from Him.

-So many Christians become bitter when going through trials. It's not going to be a pleasant experience to come someday into the presence of the Lord if we have let the very thing our Heavenly Father was using to develop our character and to bring us into a more loving relationship with Him, makes us more bitter.

I have noticed that those who understand the purpose of trials, even if they suffer a great deal in the midst of the trial, are brought into a closer loving relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Someone expressed it like this:

Is there no other way open, God,
Except through sorrow, pain, and loss,

To stamp Christ's likeness on my soul-

No other way except the cross?

And then a voice stills all my soul

As stilled the waves of Galilee,

Can'st thou not bear the furnace heat

If midst the flames I walk with thee?

I bore the cross. I know its weight.

I drank the cup I hold for thee.

Can'st thou not follow where I lead?

I'll give thee strength. Lean hard on Me."

When I think of the testings of life, I'm reminded of the old black man who got up in a testimony meeting in which the people were giving their favorite verse of scripture. The old black man got up and said, "My favorite verse is 'It came to pass'." The pastor look at him in amazement and asked, "Brother, what do you mean your favorite verse is 'It came to pass'?" The man replied, "When I have trouble and trials, I just go to the Lord and praise Him and say, 'I thank you, Lord, that it came to pass – It didn't come to stay!'" I can't think of a better way of saying it: Trouble hasn't come to stay.

III. The Reward For Trials

Those who faithfully endure the test and trials will be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ and will receive the crown of life.

-All Christians have an appointment with the Lord and must give an account of their lives to the Lord.

What is the Lord going to be looking for in us? This is not a test of our salvation – that has already been determined. Christ will examine our motives of service and our faithfulness.

-Did we do what we did with wrong motives, maybe to glorify self, or only for the glory of Christ?

-Did we neglect our duties and opportunities or were we faithful?

-Will what we did be considered unacceptable and worthless or will we hear Him say "Well Done" ?

-We will either lose our reward or receive a reward when we stand before the Lord, all depending on how we live for the Lord here and now.

-What's God going to be looking for? Notice the word REWARD in each of these passages. We will be rewarded according to:

- How we bore insults, harassment and persecution for Christ – Matt. 5:11-12

- Our financial generosity to the Lord's work – Matt. 6:3-4, 19-21

- Our secret prayer life – Matt.6:6

- Our Hospitality to others in the name of Christ – Matt. 10:40-41

- The words we speak – Matt. 12:36

- How we love the unlovable – Luke 6:27-28, 35

- Our faithfulness in our vocation – Col. 3:22-24

This is just a sample of what the Lord is going to be looking for. God help us to surrender our all to Him.

There is a story that comes to us from India. A beggar saw a wealthy prince come toward him, riding in his beautiful chariot. The beggar took the opportunity and stood by the side of the road holding out his bowl of rice, hoping for a handout. To his surprise, the prince stopped, looked at the beggar, and said, "Give me some of your rice!"

The beggar was furious. To think that his wealthy prince would expect his rice! Gingerly, he gave him one grain of rice. "Beggar, give me more of your rice!" In anger, the beggar gave him another grain of rice. "More, please!" By now the beggar was seething with resentment and bitterness. Once again he stingily gave the prince another grain of rice and then walked away. As the chariot went on its way, the beggar, in his fury looked into his bowl of rice. He noticed something glitter. It was a grain of gold. Beloved, if we clutch our bowl of rice, we shall lose our reward. If we are faithful and give God each grain, He gives us gold in return. The gold that God gives will survive His testing fire.

James 1:13-16 Look or the Hook

As we come to James 1:13, James begins to deal with the second problem area in the Christian's life – the problem of temptation to sin.

-If you have a KJV you will find the word “temptation” in verse 2 and in verse 13, but these are not the same word in the Greek. In verse 2 you have the noun form of the word and verse 13 you have the verb form of the word.

-The noun form would be better translated trials and the verb form would be better translated temptations.

Every Christian will face both trials and temptations. What's the difference in the two?

- Trials come to help us stand and to make us strong.
- Temptations come to cause us to stumble and fall.

Temptations themselves are not sin. They can lead to sin, but they are not sin themselves. Jesus was in all points tempted, but He was without sin.

Let me make a couple of observations about temptation before I get into the heart of the message.

A. Every person will face temptations to do evil – James 1:13

Again, James uses the word “WHEN” he is tempted; not “if” he is tempted.

-And our greatest problem is us, our fleshly desires. Our desires are strong and our flesh is weak in resisting them.

-When we fail to let the Spirit of God control our lives, we are susceptible to our lust and Satan knows it.

-Matt. 26:41 “Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation: The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

-Romans 7:15-25

B. We never outgrow the problem of temptation.

When I was a young Christian, I thought that some day, as I matured in the Lord, I would finally reach the place that I would be free from temptation's effects.

-But what have I learned? I've learned that as the years have passed by, temptation is just as strong and subtle as it was years ago and that I am just as weak as I ever was and just as prone to failure.

-David Jeremiah tells about two men walking down the street to a coffee shop. The older man was in his eighties and had been walking with the Lord since his early teens. The other man was in his mid twenties. As the two men approached the coffee shop, they happened to pass a young woman. Dr.

Jeremiah said that she was dressed in such a way as to take the fullest advantage of the warm weather as well as her physical attributes. As the young woman passed, there was an awkward silence between the two men, and it was confusing to the young man. He had experienced that kind of silence with men his age. He was full of uncomfortable questions like, “Do I ignore this? Do I break the tension by making a joke? Do I say something spiritual?” With his peers, he could understand it, but with an old man whose eyesight was dim and whose glands were most likely dried up, it didn't make sense. His curiosity finally got the best of him and he blurted out, “Do you ever get over that?” “Not yet,” replied the old man with a twinkle. The young man was shocked. Later sitting together in the coffee shop, the young man said, “Do you mean to tell me that it doesn't get any better?”

-Most of us assume that as we get older, we will feel the tug of temptation much less than in our younger years. In other words, if we just hang on, we will overcome. But the problem of temptation will dog us until our last days.

C. Each of us is responsible for our own sin.

-President Harry Truman had these words on his desk: “The Buck Stops Here.” Though others may shift the blame for wrong to others, he could not; nor can we.

-Blaming others for our sin is an age old problem. Man is in constant search for someone to blame his sin on.

We come up with all kinds of excuses for justifying our sins:

- I didn't know I was doing anything wrong.
- I was pressured into doing it.
- It was their fault.
- I couldn't help it.
- Everybody is doing it.
- It was just a little mistake. It was no big deal.
- Nobody is perfect.

No, we have a choice to do what is right or wrong and we can't blame anyone else for our sin.

Sometime we even try to blame God for our sin.

-That's what Adam did. When God confronted him for his sin, Adam said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Gen. 3:12. Homosexuals: God made me this way.

-James 1:13 The words "cannot be tempted" means that God is totally un-experienced with sin. Nothing in His character responds to sin and He is so holy that He would never use something as repulsive as sin to tempt anyone. His whole Being burns against sin.

Others blame Satan for their sin.

-We've adopted the Flip Wilson theology - "The devil made me do it." The devil can tempt us, but he cannot make us yield to temptation.

-I heard about a woman who bought a dress that she couldn't afford. When she got home, her husband asked, "Why did you buy the dress, knowing that we couldn't afford it?" She said, "Well, the devil made me do it." He said, "Why didn't you say, Get thee behind me Satan?" She said, "I did and he said it looks good from back here, too."

Three things I want to share with you about temptation:

I. The Cause of Temptation – James 1:13-14

Verse 13 tells us where temptation does Not come from – it does not come from God.

Verse 14 tells us where temptation Does come from.

A. From within

"When he is drawn away of his own lust"...His own sinful nature

-His own lust; his own desires; his own yearnings. These desires are not wrong within themselves. God created the earth and all that is in it for our enjoyment and pleasure.

-What is wrong, is that we often try to satisfy our cravings in ways that are inappropriate, unhealthy, perverted, and contrary to God's will for our lives. -Mark 7:21-23; Jer. 17:9

-James uses a hunting term here. "Drawn away" pictures a wild animal being lured away from his place of safety into a place where he can be attacked or captured. Out of curiosity he exposes himself. Maybe, he hears a noise and he comes out of hiding to see what's going on. To bait the trap.

The first thing Satan did was to get Eve to think about the forbidden fruit. He asked her questions about it. "What did God say about it?" Look at that fruit. Do you really think it will hurt you? It looks just like the other fruit you've been eating. Think about the fruit."

-A desire is stirred up within her. The more she thinks about it, the more she desires it. It's something she's not suppose to have and that makes her desire it even more. It's something she hasn't experienced before and that makes her desire it even more.

B. From without - "enticed"

James moves from a hunting term to a fishing term. The fisherman wants to entice the fish. He conceals the hook with a juicy bait or an enticing lure. Just an old bare hook would not attract many fish to it, but cover the hook with a juicy worm or a bright, spinning lure that looks good to the fish and he'll go after it.

-Just keep bobbing that bait or lure in front of that fish, time and again, tempting him and he might yield. The fish has been tempted and it has to have the bait, but he gets the hook, too.

-I heard about a lady that saw some boys fishing, catching fish right and left. She walked out to where the boys were and one of the

boys was pulling a big fish in. It was pulling his line and he was jerking the line and the lady said, "What are you doing? Don't you know that hook is hurting that fish's mouth? Aren't you ashamed of yourself hooking that fish like that?" The boy said, "Lady, if that fish had kept its mouth shut, it wouldn't be in the mess it's in now." -You know what, we're responsible for our own mess!

II. The Course of Temptation – James 1:15

So far, James has only talked about temptation – drawn away and enticed.

-You see, sin is a process. James now talks about a conception. He uses an illustration of a pregnant woman.

-When desire has conceived it gives birth to sin. Sin is the union of the will with lust. -Someone said it is like this: "Temptation plus opportunity equals trouble."

-A person may be tempted to commit a certain sin but not have the opportunity to fulfill their temptation. On the other hand, a person may have the opportunity to commit a certain sin, but not be tempted. It is when the two get together that you have trouble.

Just as human conception is a process, so is sin. A child is conceived that will result in a birth at the proper time. Just as a child is a person before it is ever born, so sin is present in the heart before it ever gives evidence that it is there.

-The conception of the sin and the discovery of the sin may be many months apart, but the process has been set in motion.

-Sin is the consummation of the act inwardly and outwardly.

It's tragic when people think they can get by with sin.

- "Be sure your sin will find you out." Num. 32:23

-There cannot be a stillbirth. Lust is going to bring forth something.

-When the inward evil thought of the heart is joined with the outward temptation, there is a birth – a birth of sin.

-And the wages of sin is death.

-The word "death" here primarily means "separation". For a believer, it means that when sin is born in his life, when it becomes action, his fellowship with God is broken. There is separation.

-Sin will bring forth separation of fellowship with God if you are His child, and He will judge you for it unless you judge yourself and confess and repent of the sin.

III. The Caution of Temptation – James 1:16

"Do not err" means do not wander, roam about, or stray. Don't think that somehow you can get by with sin.

-Someone said, "He that falls into sin is a man. He that grieves at sin is a saint. He that boasts of sin is a devil."

Is there a remedy?

-Gal. 5:16 "Walk in the spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh." -James 4:7 "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

A man went to his king asking, "Sir, how can I overcome temptation?" The king told the man to get a bowl and fill it to the brim with water. Then, walk through the city, carrying that bowl of water without spilling a single drop. He would be accompanied by a soldier who had orders to kill him on the spot if one drop was spilled. This exercise was further complicated by the fact that the people of the city were celebrating a holiday. The streets were lined with exciting and enticing sideshows.

The man made his walk through the crowded streets, past the alluring sights without spilling a single drop from the bowl. Arriving at the foot of the king's throne, the monarch asked, "What did you see as you walked through the city?" The man answered, "Nothing sir. I kept my eyes on the bowl, fearful of spilling a drop." The king smiled and said, "That is how you can win over temptation. Keep your eyes fastened on something with such concentration that all else is shut out."

For the Christian, attention is to be focused on Jesus Christ and He will give us the victory. The good news is, if you have yielded to sin, God can and will restore you!

James 1:19-20 Tune In, Tone Down, Sweeten Up

Someone has said that the Book of James is where the rubber meets the road.

-James is the Book that instructs us in practical, daily Christian living.

James was the pastor of the church in Jerusalem and he studied the needs as well as the problems of the folks in his church.

-After studying the needs and problems of the church, he gives this command in James 1:19 "Be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath."

-Most of the problems in churches are caused by a failure to follow what James commands here. Someone won't listen or someone says mean, hurtful things or someone explodes in anger.-We are often slow to listen to the views of others, quick to force our opinions on others, and we get mad if things don't go to suit our way of thinking.

James says that three things should characterize the believer's

I. Tune In – James 1:19

One reason there are so many broken relationships is that people stop listening to each other. Communication can break down between husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees when we stop listening to each other.

-Would you notice: "Every man..." Every believer ...every member of the family of faith is to adopt this commandment into their life.

-Others have translated the words "be swift to hear" like this: Have "fast ears", "eager ears", "willing ears", "ears that are open to hear".

Listen to Jesus:

a. Mark 4:24 Be careful what you hear.

b. Luke 8:18 Be careful how you hear.

We learn more by listening than we do by talking.

A wise old owl lived in an oak

The more he knew, the less he spoke;

The less he spoke, the more he knew;

And the same applies to me and you.

Tone Down –James 1:19

God wants us to be speedy in listening, but in talking He wants us to take our time before we begin to speak.

-Someone said: "Many things are open by mistake but none so frequently as the mouth."

-When we are swift to speak, we many times will say things we wish we had not said. As someone said, "A loose tongue will get you into tight places."

God gave us one mouth and two ears; our ears are Exposed; our tongue is Enclosed...Surely, God is trying to teach us something.

The wise man, Solomon, has a great deal to say about the way we use our words.

-Prov. 10:19; 17:28; 18:21; Ecc. 5:2

The tongue can be a dangerous weapon. Some use it for Blasting (gossip), Boasting, Blistering...or it can be used for Blessing.

-You don't have to repeat everything you hear.

-The story is told of a woman who, after years of malicious tongue- wagging, became convicted of her sin and went to her minister to ask his advice. He listened carefully to her story, then said, "If you want a clear conscience, you must get a bag of goose feathers, go around the neighborhood, and put a goose feather outside the door of every person you have offended." Off she went and a long time later she returned to the minister with an empty bag. "I have done what you told me, but I feel no better." The minister replied, "You have only done half the job. What you must now do is to go around and pick all the feathers up again." Now it so happened that there was a high wind blowing that day, so when the woman returned hours later, her bag was still empty. Slumping in a chair, she said, "It's no use. I can't find a single feather. It was easy to put them down, but I can't get even one of them back again." The

minister said, "In just the same way it was easy to scatter your words of criticism and rumor, but now that they have gone, it is impossible to bring them back."

Ecc. 3:7 When is the time to keep silent?

- When what you are going to tell is untrue.
- When you are not sure of what you want to tell is true.
- Even if what you want to tell is true, but it would be hurtful to others, it should not be said.

Matt 12:36-37 Every idle word...careless word... unproductive word.

-Ps. 141:3 "Be careful little mouth what you say."

Sweeten Up – James 1:19-20

Sometimes anger is sinful; sometimes it is justified.

-I heard about a man who was going to fly to Dallas. The flight he was on was going to New York, but they would stop in Dallas. The man asked an attendant to be sure to wake him when they stopped in Dallas. He had an appointment he could not miss. The attendant assured him, he would make sure he got off in Dallas. When the plane arrived in New York, the Captain's voice woke him as he welcomed them to New York. The man said, "New York! Where is that sorry attendant who promised me he would wake me in Dallas?" He found the attendant and gave him a chewing out. One of the other attendants said to his friend, "That guy sure was mad at you." the embarrassed attendant said, "You think he was mad, you should have seen that guy I pulled off of the plane in Dallas!"

Jesus modeled righteous anger. He got angry at hard-hardheadedness and sin. We ought to be angry at SIN.

-If you want to know a man's character, find out what makes him laugh, what makes him weep, and what makes him angry.

Anger is one letter short of DANGER.

-Notice again James 1:20 Sinful anger never Pleases God; it always Grieves God!

-Can you think of one positive thing that sinful anger does? No. Anger only increases the problem; it makes it worse.

-James 1:20 is really God restraining order to His children. If you receive a restraining order from the Law, it means there is someone or someplace you must stay away from.

There are two ways folks usually vent their anger: They either Blow up or Clam up...both are wrong!

- Some Blow up. Like firing a shotgun, there's one great explosion and it's over, except for the damage.
 - Some Clam up. They hold it in, but inwardly there is unforgiveness, rage, bitterness. They don't jump on anyone, but they vent their anger by talking about them, making them look bad while making themselves look good, always trying to damage their reputation, harboring malice. You avoid them and when you do come face to face, you give them "the eye."
- No wonder James says anger doesn't work the righteousness of God.

Listen again

James 1:19-25 The B-I-B-L-E

We were taught the little chorus as children: "The BIBLE, yes that's the Book for me. I stand alone on the word of God, the BIBLE."

What a precious treasure the Bible is!

-What if we didn't have the Bible? What if God had not revealed Himself to us? What if God had not given us His standard of living? What if we were not given the instructions in knowing how to be saved?

But it is not enough just to own a Bible. One must read the Bible and use the Bible. The Bible will do a person no good if all it does is sit on the shelf or coffee table. It must be used.

Someone has written:

I am the Bible.

I am God's wonderful library.

I am always - and above all – the Truth.

To the weary pilgrim, I am a good, strong Staff.

To the one who sits in dark gloom, I am glorious Light.

To those who are stooped beneath heavy burdens, I am sweet Rest.

To him who has lost his way, I am a safe Guide.

To those who have been hurt by sin, I am a healing Balm.

To the discouraged, I whisper a glad message of Hope.

To those who are distressed by storms of life, I am an Anchor, sure and steadfast.

To those who suffer in lonely solitude, I am as a cool, soft Hand, resting on a fevered brow.

Oh, child of man, to best defend me just use Me.

James has a pastor's heart. He not only wants the child of God to read the Word of God, but he wants him to get the most good from the Word of God.

The Bible has much to say about its message and its mission:

(1) Its Message

a. God's word will Enlighten you – Ps. 119:105, 130 b. God's word will Enlarge you – Ps. 119:32 c. God's word will Encourage you – Ps. 119:52

(2) Its Mission – 3 John 4

a. David encourages us to memorize and meditate upon God's

Memorize the Word – Ps. 119:11

Meditate upon the Word – Ps. 119:97. The word "meditate" pictures a cow chewing its cud, rowing it over and over, getting all you can from it.

• I Peter 2:2 "As newborn babes..."

c. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

James has just written that our spiritual birth was the product of God's Word (1:18). Now he is about to challenge us to take this same word seriously in their daily walk, because His wisdom is needed every day.

I. Our Affection For the Word – James 1:19-21

Our affection for the Bible is revealed in our hearing of the word.

• Luke 8:18 "Take heed therefore HOW you hear."

• Mark 4:24 "Take heed WHAT you hear."

-Notice the kind of hearer we should be. There is to be:

A. Unlimited Hearing

We are to be "swift to hear." The word "swift" means "quick, hasty, eager."

-We are to avail ourselves of every opportunity to hear God's word taught or preached. We are to be a present listener.

-Seven times while Jesus was on earth and eight times from heaven (in the Book of Rev.) He said, "If a man has ears to hear, let him hear."

-If you are going to be a learner, you must learn to listen. Most of us are poor listeners. God speaks to those who have ears to hear.

A famous naturalist was walking through a city park with a friend and suddenly stopped and asked, "Did you hear that cricket?" "No," his friend replied, "I heard nothing. How could you possibly have heard a cricket with all the noise of the traffic?" He said, "You train yourself to hear. We often hear what we want to hear."

-Ladies, you know what I mean by "selective hearing." That's what most men have. They hear what they want to hear.

-Young Samuel learned a great lesson from the aged priest, Eli. One night God called to little Samuel. The boy thought that Eli had called him, so he ran to see what the old man wanted. This happened three times in a row. It dawned on the old priest that God was speaking to the boy. Eli told the boy to lie back down, but if he heard the voice again to say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant heareth." - We need to be good listeners so we can discern the voice of God.

Then slow to Speak

-Most of the time we are quick to speak and slow to listen, and many times when we are swift to speak we will say things we wish we hadn't said.

-Our mouth gets us in more trouble sometimes. "A loose tongue will get you into tight places."

-One of the things that aggravated Job was the eagerness with which his friends tore into him with their views of why he was suffering. He told Zophar, "O that you would altogether hold your peace! And it should be your wisdom." (Job 13:5).

-James suggests "An eloquent silence".

Slow to wrath, because "The wrath of man doesn't work the righteousness of God."

-Losing one's temper can never achieve anything, least of all the righteousness of God in one's life.

How many times have you spoken or thought or done anything right or godly when you were angry.

Most of the time when we are angry we say and do things that we are later sorry for.

-The classic biblical example of man's wrath NOT working the righteousness of God is when Moses lost his temper and struck the rock to get water from it rather than speaking to it. It cost him in that it kept him out of the Promised Land.

B. Unhindered Hearing –James 1:21

There must be a Response to the word, but there must be a Removal as well. There are some things that we need to get rid of in our life as it relates to how we hear.

-The words "lay apart" is a word picture. It describes a snake shedding its skin. The skin is laid aside and the snake goes on its way, never to pick up the skin again.

We must get rid of Defiling Sins – All Filthiness. These are moral sins that would defile us.

-The Greek word is actually a compound word from which we get the words "ear wax." Sin is like having wax in our ears; it prevents the word of truth from reaching our hearts; for if it cannot penetrate through our spiritual ears, it will not come down to the heart. We must get the wax out of our ears so we can hear properly.

Then we must get rid of Deliberate Sins – All superfluity of naughtiness.

- Naughtiness speaks of all that is bad and pertains to sins that are deliberate.
- Superfluity means an abundance, an overflowing, that which is leftover that clings.

-It has to do with the old life. Get rid of the leftovers from the old life – the words, the thoughts, the actions, the deeds, the habits of the old life.

Lay them apart. The picture would be like that of Jesus standing before the tomb of Lazarus. When Lazarus came forth from the grave, he was still bound by the old grave clothes. Jesus commanded the people to take the grave clothes from him; to loose him and let him go. He could make no progress in those grave clothes; nor can we make spiritual progress if we are bound with the rags of the old life.

II. Our Acceptance of the Word – James 1:21

We are not only to Hear the word, but also Receive the word.

-The word "receive" means "to welcome", as you would welcome a friend into your home. How are we to receive the word? With meekness! With teachability!

-The word was used to describe an animal that had been broken and domesticated, such as a wild horse being broken and made submissive to the master.

-It's not enough just to Hear the Word, we must submit to what we hear.

-We are to welcome what we hear into our hearts and lives. Instead of bucking and snorting, fighting what God says to us in His word, we are to welcome what He says in our life, willingly and heartily submitting to His word.

James calls it the "engrafted word" or the "implanted word." We are to allow God's word to be sown in our heart so it can take root and grow and produce Godlikeness in our lives.

-Verse 21 speaks of the the word, "which is able to save your souls." This saving is not salvation in the sense of getting saved. It is speaking of the continuing work of salvation whereby God's purpose and plans for our life are accomplished and fulfilled.

-We are to seize every opportunity we have to hear God's word, welcoming it and submitting to it, so it can work in us and bear fruit in our lives.

III. Our Abiding in the Word – James 1:22-25

Hear and Heed ... Hear and Do! The secret to getting the most from the word of God is to Trust and Obey!

The word "hearer" in verse 23 means "to audit a class." When I was in seminary, I audited some O.T. Courses. I didn't have to pay for taking the classes. I didn't have to buy the text books, or do the assignments or take the test or even attend every class; nor did I get credit for the class. There was no pressure on me at all. But the men who took the course for credit got much more out of it because they put much more into it. Often we read or hear the word like we're auditing the course.

One reason people don't read the Bible is because it shows them what they are really like and they don't like what they see. It shows us when we are dirty. It shows us when we are wrong and when we fail. We don't like to see that in ourselves.

Many years ago in eastern Tennessee the story went around about a mountaineer's contact with some tourists who had camped in the hills around his area. Because the mountain folk didn't see many tourist in those days, when the tourists left, this particular mountaineer went to look around the area where they had camped. He found several things they had left behind, including a mirror. He had never seen a mirror before. He looked into it longingly and said, "I never knew my pappy had his picture took!" He was very sentimental about it, of course, and took it home. He slipped into the house, climbed up into the loft and hid the mirror. His wife saw him do that but didn't say anything. After he went out of the house, she went up to see what he had hidden. She found the mirror, and when she looked into it, she said, "So that's the old hag he's been running around with!"

It is so easy to read the word of God and to think it is a picture of someone else. It is a picture of you, and it is a picture of me.

There are two main ways of seeing what you look like:

A. (Photo) (flattering)

One lady, after seeing her proofs, said, "I don't like any of these. They don't do me justice."

The man said, "What you need is not justice, but mercy."

Photo lab's motto: "Where there's beauty we take it; where there's none we make it." B. (Mirror) (factual)

"Careful glance"

Like a man who runs by the mirror and glances into it and goes his way. He doesn't see much and he soon forgets what he does see.

A. "Careful gaze" James 1:25

1 The word "looketh" means to bow down and look intently; to examine – John 20:1-8 Peter and John at the empty tomb.

AI. The important thing is not how many times you've been through the Bible, but how many times the Bible has been through you. We mark our Bibles but our Bibles never mark us!

AJ. We ought to read with "discernment"...with "depth"...with "discipline" (discipline yourself to discipline yourself.)

I heard of 3 old preachers who were talking about the Bible and one preacher said, "What is the best translation of the Bible that you fellows have ever come across?" He said, "The best translation I have ever come across is the New American Standard Bible. It is so accurate and so meticulous in its translation." The second man said, "Well, the best translation that I have ever come across is the Revised Standard Version. I find it to be the best and the most helpful." The third minister didn't say anything for a few moments. The two other ministers looked over at him and the tears that brimmed up in his eyes began to roll off his cheeks. He said, "Men, the best translation of the Bible I have ever come across was my Mother. She was truly the first living Bible." That's the way we ought to be. The Bible ought to be translated into daily living.

James 1:26-27 Real Religion

The Book of James is a “Show-me” book. For James, it was not enough for a person to SAY that he was saved. James wanted to SEE the evidence in a person's life that he had really been born again.

Edgar A. Guest put it this way in his poem:

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one, any day;
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way;
The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear.
Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear,
And the best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds,
For to see good put in action is what everybody needs.
I soon can learn to do it if you'll let me see it done;
I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.
And the lecture you deliver may be very wise and true,
But I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do.
For I might misunderstand you and the high advice you give,
But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.
There is a lot of counterfeit Christianity today. James calls for the real thing.

James gives three characteristics of pure religion; pure Christianity. These are not the only characteristics, but these show us Christianity at its best.

James is not talking about denominations. Some put more stock in denominations than in real Christianity.

-Religion implies that something has happened Internally and it is manifested Externally through actions, attitudes, and service. What we are on the inside reveals itself by what we do on the outside.

I hesitate to use the word “religion”...we need Christianity.

-Are you aware that the word “religion” is used only five times in the entire word of God? Four of those five times it is used in a bad sense. This passage in James is the only time it is used in a good sense and even here James says, “There is a false kind of religion that will deceive you.” -What is the difference between religion and Christianity?

a. Religion says DO something.

b. Christianity says BE something.

-Jesus was constantly battling religion and religious leaders in His day because outwardly they seemed to be religious, but inside they were like dead men.

What does it take to be religious, anyway?

- If one goes to church three times a week.
- If one serves in the church.
- If one sings or prays in the church.
- If one tithes...and, yet, a person may do all of these things and not be right with God or prepared for heaven.

One of the evidences of false religion is that it leaves a person with no inward reality ... no reality that they are saved and belong to Jesus ... no assurance that their sins are forgiven ... no assurance that they have eternal life.

If ANY man among you SEEMS.... or thinks... has an appearance...from all appearances – that he is

religious

-But Deceives his own heart...cheats

-Vain...empty, useless, without results, fruitless

James is calling for self-examination...do you have the real thing?

James gives three evidences of real religion. There are more, but these are the three he chooses to deal with.

I. Control – James 1:26

That little three inch by six inch muscle in your mouth reveals what you are inside. It is the window through which we can view a person's inmost soul.

-I heard about one woman who was known for gossiping who came to the altar and told her pastor that she wanted to lay her tongue on the altar. He said to her, "Sister, this altar is about 12 feet long. Lay as much on it as you can."

Our tongues can be used as a cruel instruments of destruction; as a wrecking crew.

The Tongue can be used for:

(a) "Lying"

- We have gotten sophisticated today...we don't tell "black lies"...we just tell "little white lies."
- The truth is that "white lies" may do more damage than "black lies".
- White lies may come through insinuations or accusations.
- Of course, a lie is a lie if it is white or black.
- You are never more like the devil than when you lie. Jesus said that Satan was a liar from the beginning and he is the father of lies.

(b) "Frying"

• Using the tongue for frying finds its form in being two-faced...Being sugar and cream to someone's face and blasting them to their back.

- None of us want to be treated that way and we should not treat others that way.

(c) "Trying"

- Judging others ...we know the real story and we are going to tell it, no matter who it hurts.
- Tell about the preacher who left the convention and met his daughter at a restaurant. Two other preachers saw him,knew she was not his wife, and declared he was "running around" on his wife.

(d) "Spying" (gossiping)

-It isn't so much the things that go in one ear and out the other that hurts as it is the things that go in one ear, gets all mixed up in the mind, and then slips out of the mouth. -Prov. 18:8

(e) "Decrying" (Fault finding)

Once while John Wesley was preaching, he noticed a lady in the audience who was known for her critical attitude. All through the service she sat and stared at his new tie. When the meeting ended, she came up to him and said very sharply, "Mr. Wesley, the strings on your bow tie are much too long. It's an offense to me!" He asked if any of the ladies present happened to have a pair of scissors in their purse. When the scissors were handed to him, he gave them to his critic and asked her to trim the streamers to her liking. After she clipped them off near the collar, he said, "Are you sure they're all right now?" "Yes, that's much better." "Then let me have those shears a moment," said Wesley. "I'm sure you wouldn't mind if I also gave you a bit of correction. I must tell you, madam, that your tongue is an offense to me – it's too long! Please stick it out ...I'd like to take some off." On another occasion someone said to Wesley, "My talent is to speak my mind." Wesley replied, "That's one talent God wouldn't care a bit if you buried!"

James says to put a bridle on the tongue. The tongue can get out of control and do the damage of a run-a-way horse.

-A bridle gives the rider control of his horse. He is able to hold the horse in check or restrain him. You can correct the direction of the animal with the correct use of the reins.

AK. Compassion – James 1:27

2 "Orphans and widows" were the most helpless people in Jewish society...those on the bottom of this world's list.

3 A young school boy came running to his teacher one day shouting, "Teacher, two boys are fighting and I think the one on the bottom would like to see you!" Those on the bottom in the struggles of life would like to see those of us who call ourselves by the

name of Jesus Christ lend a helping hand. As we minister to needs in the name of Christ, as we lend a helping hand, then we are reflecting the kind of faith which is approved by God.

The word “visit” means more than just going to see someone. It means “to look after, to care for, to minister to, to meet their needs.

-Pro. 21:13 “Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.”

-The Good Samaritan: Don't just pass by the hurting.

-Lady in N.Y. City who noticed a poor boy standing on a vent where steam was coming out, trying to stay warm. The lady bought him some shoes, coat, etc. The boy asked, “Are you God's wife?” She said, “No.” He said, “Well, I heard He cares for boys like me.” She said, “No, I'm not God's wife. I'm just one of His children.” He said, “Oh, I knew you were some kin.”

III. Cleanness – James 1:27b

The word “keep” is a military word that means “to carefully guard.” -The tense of the verb means regular, continuous, constant action.

God keeps us, but we are to keep ourselves unsoiled from this world.

-Jude 24, 21 Keep yourself” means your total self. Your body as well as your mind. Many are not involved with some of the things of the world because they lack opportunity. But that doesn't stop them from dreaming about it and thinking about it.

There is a progression to becoming soiled, spotted by the world:

4. James 4:4 – You become a Friend of the world; get friendly with.
5. I John 2:15-16 – You begin to love the world and the things of the world
6. Rom. 12:1-2 – You begin to be conformed or you fit into the world
7. I Cor. 11:32 – You become condemned with the world; like Lot

During W.W.II a young man would never go to town and do some of the things other men would do. When they asked him to go with them he would say, “No, I want to keep myself pure for the girl I love on the other side of the ocean.”

We have a Savior on the other side that we are to keep ourself pure for.

James 2:1-13 Are You A Church Snob?

Before Reading the Passage:

What is the test of a friendly church? It's friendly!

-Have you ever been to a place – any place – and felt like you were not wanted there? It's not a good feeling is it?

-One place that EVERYONE should feel welcome and wanted is church, but that is not always the case. It is not the case today and it was not the case in James' day. -James sets before us “The Case of the Snooty Usher.”

Read the Passage

One of the reasons I like the Book of James is because he doesn't sidestep any issues.

-How long has it been since you have heard a message on showing favoritism or partiality?

Showing partiality is a sin no matter what form it takes .

-Four times in 13 verses James talks about partiality; having respect of persons:

- James 2:1 - “with respect of persons”
- James 2:3 - “and you have respect to him”
- James 2:9 - “But if ye have respect to persons”
- James 2:4 - “Are ye not then partial in yourselves”

Showing favoritism in the church is always wrong.

Three things James deals with in these verses:

I. The Prohibition –James 2:1

2:1 is a divine command and it is given to every person who has received the Lord Jesus Christ by grace through faith.

The word “faith” here is not referring to saving faith. James is referring to the body of truth referred to as Christianity.

• “Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ” should be “Hold not the faith of the Lord Jesus”. The words “with respect of persons” means “to show partiality or favoritism because of one's face.”

Proverbs 28:21 “To have respect of persons (to show partiality) is not good.”

-When God called Jeremiah to preach he was intimidated by the people he was called to preach to. In Jer. 1:8, God told him, “Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee... saith the Lord.”

Why would God command us to not show respect or partiality?

- Showing favoritism is inconsistent with the character of God. He is completely impartial.

In the O.T., God Himself declares that he is no respecter of persons; so does Moses, Samuel, Jonah, 1

and David.

-In the N.T. Jesus reminds us of the same truth; so do Paul, Peter, James, Luke, and the enemies of Jesus.

-Thank God He is no respecter of persons. If God had shown favoritism, there are some of us that I am sure would have been left out of His offer of salvation.

-If Jesus had shown partiality, He would not have died for the sins of the whole world. I am a part of God's family because God is no respecter of persons.

-When you consider the fact that we belong to one who never showed favoritism or discrimination, it is a dishonor to our faith when we show favoritism or discriminate.

-1 Sam. 16:7 “for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance but the Lord looketh on the heart.”

- Showing favoritism is inconsistent with Christianity.

Christianity teaches that every person is of value and worth to God and is loved by God.

-The cross levels the ground for all men.

-Gal. 3:28 “ye are all one in Christ Jesus”

- 4 Showing favoritism is inconsistent with Christ – Mark 12:14 He showed compassion and dignity to everyone.

5. To a Defiled woman taken in adultery – John 8:1-11

6. To a Diseased man who was a leper – Mark 1:40-45

7. To a Despised man named Zacchaeus

8. To a Dying man, a thief on a cross.

8. Showing favoritism is inconsistent with the way we want to be treated. Matt. 7:12

9. Showing favoritism is inconsistent with how will be treated at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Showing favoritism is wrong because:

- 1.It breeds pride in the one who is shown favoritism.

- 2.It creates resentment in the heart of the one who is not shown favoritism.

- 3.It destroys all basis of fellowship.

“To show partiality is not good.”

We can discriminate on the basis of Appearance...Ancestry...Age...Achievement...Affluence.

AI. The Illustration – James 2:2-4

James parades three people before us:

A. The Prosperous Man

Literally, "gold rings" or a gold – ringed person."Gold rings on every finger spoke of wealth.

-He was not just wearing gold rings, he put them on display. He was showing his gold rings off to everyone.

"Gay clothing" means "fine apparel" or "bright and shining, gorgeous robe." It also refers to glittering, sparkling clothing.

It's as though this rich man makes his entrance into church with flags flying and a fanfare of trumpets. He drives up in his gold Cadillac, getting out as his chauffeur opens the door for him. He walks in, strutting like a peacock. He's like the rich man Jesus tells about in Luke 16, he "fared sumptuously every day. Life was one continual party for him.

B. The Poor Man

The word "poor man" means "to be destitute or in want." It is the same word used of Lazarus, the beggar, who sat at the gate of the rich man, eagerly hoping for some crumbs from the rich man's table. -The poor man, but there is evidence of patches and poverty. He is shabby and shoddy. He doesn't have any Sunday clothes.

C. The Pitiful Man

The usher apparently had a well-developed "respect of persons."

-Both of these men were strangers or visitors; one got the preferential treatment and the other got the punitive treatment. All was solely based on the outward appearance of the two men.

-The well-to-do man was ushered to his seat as though he were a prince. The poor man was dumped in the most undesirable seat in the meeting place.

And this kind of thing still happens today.

David Jeremiah in his book on James tells a story about a Sunday morning in the Bel Aire Presbyterian Church where Ronald Reagan and Nancy attended Church when he was governor of California. When in attendance, the Reagan's usually sat in the same seats just off the center aisle about two-thirds of the way into the sanctuary. On this particular morning the governor and his wife were late and by the time they got there, two college students were sitting in those seats. An usher came down the aisle and asked the students if they would take different seats. They moved, and the Reagan's were brought in and seated. The pastor of the church, got up and left the platform, walked down and over to the college students and said, "As long as I am pastor of this Church that will never happen to you again."

I applaud that pastor because I don't care if it is the president of the United States; the church is not a place to show favoritism or discrimination. In the church, anybody and everybody should be somebody.

-A woman who lived across the tracks wanted to join a very fashionable church. She talked to the pastor about it, and he suggested she go home and think about it carefully for a week. At the end of the week she came back. He said, "Now, let's not be hasty. Go home and read your Bible for an hour every day this week. Then come back and tell me if you feel you should join." Although she wasn't happy about this, she agreed to do it. The next week she was back, assuring the pastor she wanted to become a member of the church. In exasperation he said, "I have one more suggestion. You pray every day this week and ask the Lord if He wants you to come into our fellowship." The pastor did not see the woman for six months. He met her on the street one day and asked her what she had decided. She said, "I did what you asked me to do. I went home and prayed. One day while I was praying, the Lord said to me, "Don't worry about not getting into that church. I've been trying to get into it myself for the last twenty years."

An anonymous poem says it well:

I dreamt death came the other night

And heaven's gate swung wide;

An angel with a halo bright

Ushered me inside.

And there to my astonishment,

Stood folks I'd judged and labeled;

As quite unfit – of little worth,
And spiritually disable.
Indignant words rose to my lips
But never were set free
For every face showed stunned surprise,
Not one expected me!

B. The Application

James asks a series of questions:

A. Aren't you a poor judge when you judge someone by appearance only instead of the real quality of man's heart? 2:4-6

"You despised the poor" means you "insult, treat with contempt, to shame or dishonor." -2:6 But don't the rich despise you – insult you, dishonor you, treat you with contempt. -People with large amounts of money sometimes become arrogant and cocky.

-Money can buy most things in this world. Sometimes the rich try to buy folks. Whom they can buy, they bully. Those they can't bully, they belittle. Those they can't belittle, they try to bury and they end up blaspheming Christ.

2:5 God has chosen the poor Rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.

B. Aren't the very folks you are showing special treatment to the very ones who are abusing you?

Don't they oppress you? James 2:6

-Don't they drag you into court? James 2:6

-Don't they blaspheme the worthy name of Jesus?

James says If we fulfill the Royal Law we will treat all people right.

-What is the Royal Law? James 2:8 Why is this called the Royal Law?

1. It was given by the King, God the Father and reaffirmed by the Son to His disciples – John 13:34
2. The Spirit of God fills our hearts with God's love and expects us to share it with others – Rom. 5:5
3. True believers are "taught of God to love one another" – I Thess. 4:9
4. Obeying the Royal Law fulfills the Law – Rom. 13:10 "Love is the fulfillment of the Law."

Love does not leave a person where it finds him – It helps the poor to do better; it builds up. James mentions another Law: The Law of Liberty – 2:10-13

-If we show no mercy to others, we will be shown no mercy as we stand before the Lord Jesus. -Mercy! What a wonderful word! No mercy! Without mercy!

-How we treat others won't affect our salvation, but it will affect our rewards.

One of the tests, of the reality of our faith, is how we treat other people. Can we pass the test?

James 3:1-12 The Meanest Member In Our Church (or.. Don't Let Your Tongue Lick You)

The Christian faith has always been closely associated with the tongue...with verbal communication...with talking.

-We refer to the Bible as The Word of God.

-Jesus Christ is introduced to us in the Gospel of John as the "Word." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God."

-In its earliest days Christianity was spread by words. There were no printing presses in the days of Jesus or in the early church. There were no printed Bibles or commentaries or gospel tracks.

James wants us to understand that not only does the tongue have potential for great good, but it also has potential for great evil.

-The Bible makes it clear that we are responsible for the words we speak. Jesus said that we shall give an account for every idle word we speak.

-We don't like to hear about our responsibilities. We want to talk about our freedom of speech or our right to speak, but James tells us we are responsible for the words we speak.

-Sometimes freedom of speech for some means they can brainwash you according to their liberal viewpoint, and freedom of speech means that you can use vile language.

-I would like for someone to grant us freedom of hearing to protect us from all the freedom of speech.

Did you know that God bugs your conversations? There is no question that God has the right to bug what we say, or to listen in on our conversations. He has had that right for a long time. He has heard everything that you and I have said.

-It is estimated that the average person speaks about 30,000 words every day. (I know some who exceeds that by lunch every day!) That's enough to make a good-sized book. In a lifetime, you or I could fill a library with the words we have said. God has that recorded, by the way, because He bugs our conversation.

Our words can get us into trouble or get us out of trouble.

I read about a man that worked in the produce department of a grocery store. One day a lady asked if she could have a half- ahead of lettuce. He replied, "Half- a-head? Are you serious? God grows full heads and that is how we sell them." The lady said, "You mean that after all the years I've shopped here, you will not sell me half-a-head of lettuce?" The man said, "Look, if you like I'll ask the store manager." The lady said she would appreciate that. The man marched to the front of the store and to manager's office.

He said to the manager, "You won't believe this, but there's a lame-brain idiot of a lady that wants to know if she can buy half-a-head of lettuce." About that time he noticed that the lady was standing behind him. Quickly he added, "And this nice lady was wondering if she could buy the other half."

Later that day, the manager said to the man, "That was the best example of thinking on your feet I have ever seen. Where did you learn that?" He replied, "I grew up in Grand Rapids and if you know anything about Grand Rapids, you know that it's known for its great hockey teams and its ugly women." The manager's face flushed and he interrupted, "My wife is from Grand Rapids." Without batting an eye, the man asked, "And which hockey team did she play for?"

I think about a preacher whose doorbell rang and when he looked out the window he saw one of his church members, Mrs. Anderson, standing at the door. He said to his wife, "Honey, will you please answer the door. I've had enough of Sister Anderson's gossip. I'm going into my study to work on my sermon." About two hours later he shouted from his study, "Honey, has that old gossiping wind-bag left yet?" His wife answered, "Yes, dear, she left some time ago, but Sister Anderson is here now. Wouldn't you like to come in and say "Hello" to her?"

These people in James' day had a tongue problem; not with speaking in tongues, but with abusing their tongues in other ways.

-In every chapter in James, James has something to say about the tongue. There are 108 verses in the Book of James and 20 refer to the tongue.

I. The Influence of the Tongue – James 3:1-2

James begins his discussion in James 3:1 on the tongue by addressing his words primarily to teachers of the word.

-The word "masters" speaks of teachers. Words and speech are important to a teacher. They are the means by which truth is communicated.

-It is understandable that when talking about the tongue, James speaks directly to those who use the tongue.

James tells us that teachers are held to a higher standard and will face a stricter judgment. Why?

-What teachers say has great influence over others; so it is important that a teacher of God's Word be faithful to the word of God so as to influence people for the good and not for the bad. What he teaches must Truthful, Accurate, Right.

-Preachers and teachers are also under special obligation to practice what they preach.

James 3:2 - "In many things we offend all". The word "offend" means "to cause one to stumble or fall."

-There are many ways teachers can cause those they teach to stumble, but so often we do so with our tongues.

- Sometimes we cause them to stumble when we teach something wrong.
- Sometimes teachers are themselves tripped up or stumble and slip up or are taken off guard. Maybe we lose our temper and we suffer a slip of the tongue and say things we later regret. We may gossip about another person or judge another person and the teacher is disappointed in themselves, but they also disappoint those they have taught and cause them to stumble.

If we don't offend others with our words, that shows that we are a "perfect" mature, full grown saint -Our tongues give us away; they tell who we are.

-Your tongue can tell a lot about you. You go to the doctor. He will say, "Stick out your tongue." The tongue is an indicator of the body's health.

-You can tell a lot about a person's spiritual health if you listen to a person's speech.

A Tongue's Soliloquy

I AM YOUR TONGUE! I am an important fellow. The Bible mentions me about 215 times (Pro. 18:21; 21:23). When I speak kind, thoughtful and true words, there is happiness; when I speak mean, untrue, angry or complaining words, there is trouble.

I AM INDISPENSABLE TO YOU: You never say a word without me; however, I never say a word without your orders. You are my boss. Sometimes when you have hurt someone, you try to excuse yourself by saying, "Oh, that was a slip of the tongue. I didn't mean it."

THAT SLIP YOU REFER TO WAS NOT A SLIP AT ALL. Don't try to put the blame on me. That "slip" you made was further back along the line-in your thoughts. The things you don't actually mean to speak do have deep-seated origins.

YOUR TONGUE GIVES AWAY THE SECRETS OF YOUR HEART. Jesus understood this very well when He said, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34b). "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil" (Luke 6:45). "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:37).

MY CHALLENGE TO YOU is this: "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" (James 1:26).

James gives illustrations of an unbridled, unrestrained, uncontrolled and unruly tongue. A. The Tongue is a little member with Great Power – 3:5

A whole lot of things in your body are bigger than your tongue, but your tongue has the greatest affect on others than any other muscle in your body.

-Your hand is bigger than your tongue; so is your foot, your stomach; your brain.

-Your tongue is small, but it is more powerful than your arm or leg.

-That little muscle can start wars or stop them, create stress or relieve it, express love or renounce it, build up friendships or tear them down.

Our tongues are small but they can be Very Beneficial or Very Bad.

(1) The Horse and the Bridle – James 3:3

Notice where the bit is put: In the horse's mouth!

-The horse cannot bridle itself; this must be done by man: nor can man bridle his own tongue, God must do it.

-Without direction a horse can serve no useful purpose to man. It is only when a bit is placed in the horse's mouth that it becomes disciplined and directed.

-A little 100 pound woman pulls the reins and the bit in the huge horse obeys and goes to the right or to the left.

-A bit can bring a high-spirited, runaway horse under control. In the same way, the tongue can run away, and will, if God doesn't control it.

(2) The Ship and the Rudder – James 3:4

Large ships can be controlled by a little rudder which few people will even see.

-The ship can even find itself in a fierce storm, yet by the rudder the governor (pilot) can control where he wants the ship to go and bring it to safety.

The tongue can be beneficial or it can be bad:

(3) A Forest Fire started by a Spark – James 3:6

Fire has been one of the greatest friends of man. When it is under control, it warms our bodies, cooks our food, generates power to turn the wheels of industry.

-But it is dangerous when it is out of control. One match can burn thousands of acres of tall pines, stately oaks, and majestic red woods.

-If you have ever heard the sirens in the night and see the trucks pull up to a friend's house and stand outside, watching as a lifetime of work and life goes up in smoke, you know how devastating fire out of control can be.

- The tongue can “defile” or pollute the whole body.
- “It can set on fire the course of nature.” The course or the life cycle of a man; the ups and downs of life.
- “It is set on fire of hell” Hell is a synonym of Satan. Our tongue can become an instrument of the devil.

It does make a difference whose in control of your tongue. Peter's tongue denied three times he never knew the Lord. But what did the Lord use on the Day of Pentecost? Peter's tongue! Our tongue can be a curse or a cure.

(4) An Animal and an Animal Trainer – James 3:7-8

We are able to control every kind of beast and animal, but we have not learned to control the tongue. -We have dancing bears, trained seals, dogs jumping through hoops, but the tongue is untamable without God's help.

-Like a poisonous snake whose tongue is never at rest and whose fangs are filled with lethal, death-bringing poison, so is man's tongue. It only takes a few drops (few words) to destroy someone's name and reputation.

Where is the one place you don't want poison? In your mouth....on your tongue.

The picture is of a snake who slips up on its victim and deposits its poison and slides away.

How often people do that to other people.

Take the Poison of Gossip

-If anybody ever starts off by saying, **“Now this is not gossip”... It's gossip.**

-Prov. 16:27-28 (“froward” in v. 28 means “perverse”); 17:9b; 26:18-20,22 (“am not I in sport” in v.19 means “I was only joking”).

The flying rumors gathered as they rolled,
Scarce any tale was sooner heard than told,
And all who told it added something new,
And all who heard it made enlargements too,
In every ear it spread, on ev'ry tongue it grew.
A careless word may kindle strife;
A cruel word may wreck a life;
A bitter word may hate instill;
A brutal word may smite and kill.
A gracious word may smooth the way;
A joyous word may lighten the day;
A timely word may lessen stress;
A loving word may heal and bless.
Author Unknown

II. The Inconsistency of the Tongue – James 3:9-12

As destructive as the tongue is, it can also be one of the greatest powers for good in this world.

Let me close by suggesting that you start using Twelve words that can transform your life. If you use these words and sincerely mean them from your heart, you will find that God will use you to be a blessing and encouragement to others.

“Please” and “Thank you”

When you use these three words, you are treating others like people and not things. You are showing appreciation.

“I’m sorry”

These two words have a way of breaking down walls and building bridges.

“I love you”

These are not just words of romance. They go much deeper. As Christians we should love the brethren and even our enemies. “I love you” is a statement that can carry tremendous power.

“I’m praying for you”

And be sure that you are. When you talk to God about people, then you can talk to people about God.

Ps. 19:14 “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength, and my Redeemer.”

James 3:13-18 Real Wisdom

Before Reading the Scripture:

James places a high premium on “Reality” in our Christianity in every chapter.

- James 1:27 – He tells us to make sure our “Religion is Real”. “Real (Pure) religion is this...”
- James 2:20 – He tells us to make sure our “Faith is real” “Faith without works is dead
- James 3:17 – He tells us to make sure our “Wisdom is Real” “Wisdom that is from above is (this)...”

There is a great difference between “knowledge” and “wisdom”.

- Today knowledge is exploding.
- There are more young people graduating from college than in any previous generation.
- Textbooks and encyclopedias are behind the times almost as soon as they are printed.
- We can travel farther and higher and faster than anyone before us.
- The computer age continues to advance at such a pace that technology is outdated with each passing month.

But in the midst of this explosion of knowledge, wisdom is practically nonexistent .

- Many people's lives are in shambles.
- Suicides and divorce rates are on the rise.
- Homes are disintegrating.

People know how to make a living, but they don't know how to make a life.

Knowledge is the accumulation of facts.

Wisdom is spiritual intelligence. This has to do with our understanding of God and life.

The Bible has much to say about the worth of wisdom or spiritual intelligence:

- Wisdom is greater than “Monetary Power”. Proverbs 3:13-15 “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom....for the merchandise of it is better than silver and ...fine gold...more precious than rubies ...nothing can compare with (it)”.
- Wisdom is greater than “Military Power” Ecc. 9:16, 18 “Wisdom is better than strength...wisdom is better than weapons of war.”
- Wisdom is better than “Mental Power” Proverbs 4:5,7 “Get wisdom, get understanding: forget

it not ...wisdom is the principle thing: therefore get wisdom.”

Here, James deals with Real Wisdom.

Have you ever had a wisdom test? That's what James is doing in these verses.

-He comes before the spiritual teachers and asks, “How many of you are wise men and endued with knowledge?”

-Many of them would have said with confidence, “I am!” and they undoubtedly thought they were.

James points out that there are two kinds of wisdom: Distorted wisdom and Divine wisdom.

I. The Characteristics of Distorted Wisdom – James 3:14-16

A. Selfishness – James 3:14

The basis of the world's wisdom is always seeking to promote self.

-Much like James and John who came to Jesus and said, “Lord, would you let one of us sit on your right hand and the other sit on your left side when you come into your kingdom?”

-It is the age-old game of pushing oneself up by pushing someone else down. It would Demote others so you could Promote self.

-In other words, this person is all wrapped up in himself. As someone said, “A person all wrapped up in himself makes a pretty small package.”

B. Spitefulness – James 3:14

AI. Because distorted wisdom seeks self-exaltation, it becomes spiteful when others are exalted.

AJ. “Bitter envying” refers to a jealous, resentful attitude and spirit. It describes an attitude of animosity toward others who have been blessed or used in special ways.

AK. If our main focus is upon self, we become envious when anyone else gets more attention or achieves a higher level.

AL. Envy is discontent at the good fortune of others.

AM. Our envy level is revealed by the question, “What do we do... how do we respond when others succeed?”

AN. Do you have an “I-focus” or a “you-focus”?

9. Sensuality – James 3:15-16

A We identify the word “sensual” with the word “sexual.” Such was not the case in James' day. Sensual means something is “earthly, natural, and demonic.”

B A person who is sensual gives his allegiance to things that are of the earth... things that are temporary.

C Distorted wisdom focuses only on the things of this earth....things that are here today and gone tomorrow.

D Tradition says that when the tomb of Charlemagne was opened centuries after his burial, the corpse was clothed in a robe of purple, holding a scepter in his bony hand, seated on a marble slab, with a New Testament on his knee. A finger was pointing to a verse in the scripture. The verse was Mark 8:36 - For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

What is the outcome of Distorted or worldly wisdom?

1. Confusion – James 3:16

The word means instability, disturbance, commotion, a state of disorder.

-That's what happens when we get bitter and jealous. The bitter and envious man is never at rest.

2. Every Evil Work

The word “evil” here does not mean bad; it means “worthless” or “good for nothing.” “without any value”

-Sadly, there are some who enjoy keeping a little undercurrent of confusion going in the church. They will not allow any confusion going in the church to die out. That is not of God.

William Barclay summarized this passage when he writes: James describes this arrogant and bitter wisdom in its effects. The most notable thing about it is this, that it issues in disorder. That is to say, instead of bringing people together, it drives them apart.

10. Instead of producing peace, it produces strife.

11. Instead of producing a fellowship, it produces a disruption in personal relationships.

II. The Characteristics of Divine Wisdom – James 3:17-18

Godly Wisdom is :

A. Pure – James 3:17

The word means “not contaminated, free from defilement, pure enough to approach God.

-There are no hidden motives in God's wisdom. It is clean and transparent. There is nothing under the surface. It is all up front.

A “Blessed are the pure in heart” Am I pure? In Thoughts? In Words? In Action? In my heart? B. Peaceable – James 3:17

True peace is always an outgrowth of purity. Purity always brings peace. The absence of purity will always be accompanied by the absence of peace.

-The word “peaceable” carries the idea of having a right relationship with men and God. Man's wisdom leads to competition, rivalry, and war.

-Godly wisdom is never quarrelsome or contentious, but always seeking the peaceful way with a peaceful spirit.

-James is talking about the kind of spirit that:

A Preserves Peace – with no militant spirit shown to those who disagree with them.

B Promotes Peace – Peacemakers

-The word “peace” means to put together; not to tear apart.

-Is. 26:3 “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”

4. Perceptive

The word “gentle” means “forbearing.” The complete absence of harsh criticism of others...the quality that is always ready to make allowances, sweet reasonableness, being considerate.

It is always ready to go the second mile with someone.

A well-known story tells of an incident in the White House during Lincoln's presidency. An hour or so before a dinner party, some of Lincoln's former country store friends dropped in to see him. They obviously planned to stay for dinner. Lincoln ordered the table rearranged, and seated

the politicians and backwoods friends together around the table. During the meal, one of Lincoln's country friends poured coffee into his saucer, blew over it to cool it, and drank from the saucer. The high-society politicians raised their eyebrows and exchanged critical glances. They looked to the President to see if he would censure this obvious break of etiquette. Instead, President Lincoln lifted his cup, poured coffee into the saucer, blew over it, and drank from his saucer. The politicians took his cue, and all poured their coffee into their saucers. That is the spirit James captured with the word “gentle”.

We need to learn to be gentle- to make allowances for others, for we fail so often, we need for folks to make allowances for us.

D. Pliable

1. “Easy to be intreated” means to be willing to yield...to be open to reason...to listen to all sides and to get all the facts, teachable.
2. Bumper sticker: My mind is made up. Don't confuse me with all the facts.
3. A person who thinks they have all the answers is not wise.
4. James is talking about a readiness to consider another's view...a readiness to admit that even we might be wrong.

E. Pardoning

1. Being “full of mercy and good fruits” means mercy in practice.
2. Wisdom does not just see needs, analyze them, and condemn the causes that led to them. Wisdom issues in practical help.
3. Kindness or good will toward those who need help.

F. Precise

1. Without Partiality...Without Pretense
2. A sign above the entrance of a church read:

O God, may the door of this house be wide enough to include all who need divine love and human friendship: Narrow enough to shut out envy, pride and strife. May its threshold be smooth enough to be no stumbling block to children or to straying folk, yet rugged enough to turn back the tempter's power.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom!!

James 4:1-6 Fussin', Feudin', and Fightin'

Before Reading the Passage

If I were to ask, "Where is the most unlikely place for you to experience temptation?" Where would you say? How about, "Where is the least likely place for you to experience fights, conflict, jealousy, covetousness, and slander?"

-Most of us would say, "Well, the most unlikely place would be in church," but would it be? -Satan is a master at tripping us up at the most unlikely times and places.

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness after forty days and nights of fasting and, no doubt, praying, where is the second place Satan took the Lord to tempt him? Well the first place was there in the wilderness where the stones on the ground looked like little loaves of bread (especially when you had not eaten in 40 days). He told Jesus to turn the stones into bread. But the second place was from the top of the temple in the holy city. He told Jesus to jump off the top of the temple and the angels would keep Him safe.

-Did you know that still today, Satan uses the church to tempt us? How it must break the heart of God to see His Children sin in the very place designed to worship Him!

I think of a parable that an unknown author has left us. It goes like this:

The wedding guests have gathered in great anticipation; the ceremony to be performed today has long been awaited. The orchestra begins to play an anthem, and the choir rises in proper precision. The bridegroom and his attendants gather in front of the chancel. One little saint, her flowered hat bobbing, leans to her companion and whispers, "Isn't he handsome?" The response is agreement, "My, yes. The handsomest..."

The sound of the organ rises, a joyous announcement that the bride is coming. Everyone stands and strains to get a proper glimpse of the beauty. Then a horrible gasp explodes from the congregation. This is a bride like no other.

In she stumbles. Something terrible has happened! One leg is twisted; she limps pronouncedly. The wedding garment is tattered and muddy; great rents in her dress leave her scarcely modest. Black bruises can be seen welting her bare arms; the bride's nose is bloody. An eye is swollen, yellow and purple in its discoloration. Patches of hair look as if they had actually been pulled from her scalp.

Fumbling over the keys, the organist begins again after his shocked pause. The attendants cast their eyes down. The congregation mourns silently. Surely the bridegroom deserved better than this! That handsome prince who has kept himself faithful to his love should find consummation with the most beautiful of women – not this. His bride, the church, has been fighting again.

In Charles Colson's book *The Body*, there is a chapter entitled "Extending the Right Fist of Fellowship." It is built around an event that took place in the Emmanuel Baptist Church of Newton, Massachusetts, when a church conflict actually broke out in a fistfight at the altar of the church. Here is Colson's description of that incident:

It was the right hook that got him. Pastor Waite might have stood in front of the Communion table trading punches with head deacon Ray Bryson all morning, had not Ray's fist caught him on the chin two minutes and fifteen seconds into the fight. Waite went down for the count at the altar where most members of Emmanuel Baptist had first declared their commitment to Christ...

Within an instant the majority of the congregation converged on the Communion table, punching or shoving ...the melee soon spilled over to an open space beside the organ...Mary Dahl, the director of Dorcas Society, threw the hymnal...the missile sailed high and wide and splashed down in the baptistery behind the choir...

When Ray's right hook finally took the pastor down, someone grabbed the spring flower arrangement from the altar and threw it high in the air in Ray's direction. Water sprinkled everyone in the first two rows on the right side, and a visiting Presbyterian experienced complete immersion when the vase shattered against the wall next to his seat...The fight ended when the police arrived on the scene.

James wanted the church to be healthy and holy, but he has been hinting that the church was unhealthy. So far he has talked about keeping yourself unspotted from the world and prejudice and discrimination and the damage caused by the tongue and by foolish words, and now he talks about improper desires that causes conflicts in the church.

Read the passage

The first question James ask is what causes quarrels, fights, and conflicts in the church? What's the source of conflicts?

-God desires and delights in love and unity among His people – Ps. 122:1 -Sadly, there have always been quarrels among God's people:

- Lot caused a quarrel with his Uncle Abraham (Gen. 13).
- Absalom created a war for his father, David (2 Sam. 13-18).
- Even the disciples created problems for the Lord when they argued over who was the greatest in the Kingdom (Luke 9:46-48).

1.The Corinthian Church

1 Cor 1:11 "I hear there are contentions among you." They were suing each other, too. 2.

The Galatian Church

Gal 5:15 "If you bite and devour each other, you'll consume one another." 3.

The Ephesian Church

Eph 4:31 "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and evil speaking be put away from you."

The Philippian Church

Phil 4:2 Euodias and Syntyche were at odds with each other.

God has given us different gifts and abilities that can accomplish great things when we are working together.

Poem: "Trouble in the Carpenter's Shop"

There was trouble in the carpenter's workshop and the tools were having a row. One of them said, "It's the hammer's fault. He is much too noisy." "Nonsense," the hammer protested, "I think the blame lies with the saw.

He keeps going backwards and forwards all the time."

The saw shouted, "I'm not to blame,

I think it's the plane's fault. His work is too shallow, he does nothing but just skim the surface."

The plane objected loudly: "I think the real trouble lies with the screwdriver, always going round in circles."

"That's ridiculous," The screwdriver said. "The whole trouble began with the ruler, because he is always measuring other people by his own standards." The ruler was furious: "Then what about the sandpaper? Surely, he is always rubbing people up the wrong way." "Why pick me?" said the sandpaper. "I think you ought to blame the drill for being so boring." Just as the drill was about to protest, the carpenter came in and began to work. Using every one of those tools, he eventually built a beautiful pulpit, from which the gospel of peace was eventually preached to thousands of people.

Four things I want to share with you about conflict in the church:

I. The Cause of Conflict in the Church – James 4:1 James asked two questions, and the second question answers the first.

-The word "lust" is found four times in the first six verses. The word "desire" in James 4:2 is the same word; So, five times in these six verses the word "lust" is found. -What causes conflicts in the church? Your own lust.

The word "lust" here is not referring to only sexual desires. Here it speaks of the gratification of our sensual, natural, and fleshly desires.

-It describes a person that lives for self. They want things done the way THEY want them done. They want things to go the way THEY want them to go. They only think about what they want and only do things their way. They want their way and if they don't get their way, they create conflict.

-The root of most church conflict is that somebody could not have his or her way. They did not get what they wanted or what

happened was not what they liked. It all stems from their lusts, their desires, their wants; desires that are selfish and self-centered, rather than God-centered.

-Now we all have our likes and dislikes. We all have our opinions and ideas of how things should be done. We all have our wants and wishes. Yet, when it comes to the church, the issue is not what we want, like, or think, but what is beneficial and best for the church as a whole, and first and foremost what God wants.

II. The Consequences of Conflict in the Church –James 4:2-3 In James 4:1 James mentions “wars and fightings.”

- The word “war” means “feuds”. It means to carry on a long-lasting campaign. It speaks of prolonged hostilities and serious disputing.
- The word “fightings” means “struggles”. It speaks of a sharp outburst. Business meetings turn into arguing and people yelling at one another. Church services become everything and anything but worship.

When that happens it not only creates division, but it cost the church certain blessings. It deprives the church. What of?

A. Our Peace – James 4:1 “Your lust war in your own members”

When we live only to gratify our own desires and are selfish and self-centered, always wanting our way with no concern for others, we have a real problem within our own heart.

-Some folks are a walking civil war. In their heart they are unsettled and filled with unrest.

-If there is war on the inside, there will ultimately be war on the outside.

-People who are at war with themselves because of selfish desires are always unhappy people. They never really enjoy life. They can't get along with other people and they think the problem is other people when the real problem would be solved if people would only look into their own hearts and see the battles raging there.

B. Our Passions – James 4:2

History has proven that an insatiable desire for more can often lead to murder.

- . David murdered Uriah because of his lust for Bathsheba.
- . Ahab murdered Naboth because of his desire for a vineyard.

-Murder is the extreme to which frustrated desire may lead.

Here are the steps: A man allows himself to desire something. That thing begins to dominate his mind. He thinks about it when he's awake and dreams about it when he's asleep. He begins to form imaginary schemes to obtain it, even if it involves eliminating those who stand in their way to get it. Then one day the imaginings blaze into actions. Every crime came from a desire in the heart that ended in action.

C. Our Praying – James 4:2-3

Two kinds of prayers God will not answer: unoffered prayers and unworthy prayers.

-People who live for their own lust and desires are people who try to make things happen themselves. They have no need to pray and they don't pray because they know it would be contrary to what God wants.

-Prayer is never for the purpose of getting our will done in heaven, but for the purpose of getting God's will done on earth.

III. The Condemnation of Conflict in the church – James 4:4-5

This verse talks about bereavement. We break God's heart when we are unfaithful to Him. As His spiritual bride He wants us to be faithful to Him.

-Job 35:6 “If thou sinnest, what doest thou against Him?”

IV. The Cure for Conflict in the Church – James 4:6

James moves from Man's unfaithfulness to show that the Lord reaches out to the unfaithful.

-The word “resisteth” is a boxing term; which means to counter-punch, but more than that, to actively counter-punch.

-James says the proud are actively striking out against God and that God is actively counter-punching against us.

-You can see it in the life of Jonah. He rebelled against God and God counter-punched: He sent a wind, a whale, a worm.

-If there's one Person I don't want actively against me, it is God! -It's much easier to cooperate with God than to fight against God.

Nothing between my soul and the Savior

So that His blessed face may be seen.

Nothing preventing the least of His favor,

Keep the way clear! Let nothing between.

James 4:7-10 A Call To Personal Revival

James 4 starts a new section in the Book of James.

-James 1-3 deals with admonition; Tell Christians how they can grow in the Lord.

-In James 4, James says that some have already stopped growing in the Lord and some are now going away from Him.

-It is clear that James is trying to get those who have gone away from the Lord to come to the place of Repentance and confess their sin before the Lord; to have personal revival in their life.

Because of our sinful nature, all saints experience a gravitational pull back to the world system.

-In frustration and grief, Paul puts it like this: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?For what I want to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I dofor I

know that in me (that is in my flesh) nothing good dwells ...but sin dwells in me." (Rom. 7:24, 18, 20). -Robert Robinson put it this way in his hymn, "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; Prone to leave the God I love; Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above."

Though we have been saved, we still have the sin nature and we still sin. The question is, what do we do about those sins in our lives?

- Some just ignore their sins.

"Don't make a big deal out of it. Don't get too serious about sin in your life." But we can't have sin in our life and be right with God.

- Some just change their view of sin.

-They sophisticate sin; give it a new name. After all, times have changed!

-Folks no longer steal; they embezzle. Folks no longer commit adultery; they have an affair. But "a rose by any other name smells the same."

-Times have changed, but what God says about sin has not changed. Sin, whatever name we give it, is still sin in the sight of God.

There is only one right response when it comes to sin in our lives: Turn from our sins and turn toward God. The Bible calls it repentance.

-James gives us ten commandments when it comes to experiencing personal revival: submit, resist, draw nigh, cleanse, purify, be afflicted, mourn, weep, turn, and humble yourself.

Here is the way to Personal Revival:

A. Shape Up – James 4:7a

The word "submit" is an ugly word to our human pride. Today's slogan is Assert yourself, Promote yourself, Push yourself.

-The word "submit" is a military term that means "to place yourself under orders, to get in proper rank, to take rank under.

-It is an action of the will. It describes a willing, conscious submission to God's authority as sovereign; to give allegiance to God, obey His commands, and follow His leadership. The word speaks of the disposition of the heart.

-A Nazareth shepherd was asked by a man visiting Israel, "Is it true that when the shepherd calls his sheep, they follow him?" The shepherd said, "Yes, that is true with one exception. If the sheep is ill...if the sheep is unhealthy, it will not obey the call of the shepherd. That is the first indication that something is wrong with the sheep."

-At sometime or another most of us have committed our lives to the Lord, but if we fail to obey His voice, it is an indication that something is wrong with us spiritually.

B. Stand Up – James 4:7b

This is the flip side of the first command. "Resist" is another military term that means "to take your stand against, to refuse to yield, to be combat ready."

-Satan will always come against the child of God, so, spiritually, we should always be combat ready.

Preachers often quote only the second sentence of this verse: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

-But that is not true. Satan is not the least bit afraid of us. He is more clever than we are; much stronger than we. In terms of creation, he is far older than the human race and much higher in the order of things. He belongs with the cherubim. Before his fall, he was the highest, wisest, and most powerful of all created beings. Even in his fallen state, he is so awesome in power that not even the archangel Michael, dared rail against him when contending for the body of Moses (Jude 9). He is the ruler of countless legions of fallen angels and demon host. He is the master of deception and he knows all about us.

-The Devil is not afraid of "us", nor is he going to flee from "us". We can resist him as much as we want to, but, when he puts forth his power, down we go.

The Holy Spirit does NOT say, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." That is a text taken out of context. What the Holy Spirit DOES say is this: "Submit yourselves unto God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." That changes the equation! When we submit ourselves to God, that leaves the Devil face-to-face with HIM! The devil will flee from you because he doesn't like God's company.

There was a day when people were afraid of the devil. Today people laugh at the devil, as if he were some fictitious character who wears a red suit, has a pitchfork in his hand, hoofed feet, a long tail and horns. That's not the devil of the Bible. The devil is real and he's no laughing matter. Satan doesn't mind folks thinking about him like that. It just makes it easier for him to accomplish his purpose.

The devil of the Bible is very real, very subtle. The Bible gives us names for him: "Devil" means "slanderer"; "Satan" means "accuser". He is called "the god of this world" and "the tempter".

-He deceives, lies, cheats, steals, kills, destroys, confuses, blinds people's eyes and hearts. We are at war with him!

-But you and I cannot stand against him in our own power. He's too big, too cunning, too strong. But we can stand against him in the power of God. That's why we must first submit to God and then resist the devil.

Put your emphasis on God; not on the devil.

-On their final exam a Seminary professor told his class to spend thirty minutes writing on the Holy Spirit and the last thirty minutes writing on the devil. One student wrote steadily for an hour on the Holy Spirit. On the bottom of his paper he wrote, "I have no time for the devil." I don't know what kind of grade he received, but he was wise. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." -The devil will not get to you unless you get too far away from God.

C. Move Up – James 4:8a

James says submit and then commit. Draw nigh to God.

-James would not have told his readers to draw near to God if he had not felt that they were not as close to God as they should be.

-This is God's invitation to intimacy with Himself.

-Many people claim to be Christians who have nothing more than a casual relationship with God. They think about Him from time to time, especially on Sunday. But for the rest of the time, they had just as soon Him not bother their lifestyle. They know Him in a casual way, like they know the teller at the bank or the clerk at the grocery store or the mail man who delivers the mail.

Sometimes folks say, "I'm just not as close to the Lord as I want to be." Yes you are. You are exactly as close to the Lord as you want to be. Because if you wanted to be closer to Him, you would be and could be.

I am thine O Lord, I have heard thy voice, and it told thy love to me. But I long to rise in the arms of faith and be closer drawn to thee. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord, to the cross where thou has died. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord, to thy precious bleeding side.

If distance has grown between God and us, we can be sure of one thing – God hasn't moved!

-All kinds of things contribute to distance: Failure to maintain a meaningful daily quiet time of Bible reading and prayer. Willful disobedience to God. Neglecting fellowship with God's people. Ignoring the prompting of the Holy Spirit to confess our sins.

When we draw close to Him, He will draw close to us. As the Prodigal Son was going to meet his father, his father was going out to meet him.

D. Wash Up – James 4:8b

There can be no communion without cleansing.

-Hands speak of our Actions...our morals;

Hearts speak of our Attitude...our minds.

-Ps. 24:3-4

-The old time preachers use to urge us to “keep short accounts with God.” That is, the moment the Holy Spirit convicts us of something, we should confess it and seek cleansing. That's good advice.

E. Sober Up – James 4:9

When we removed the mourner's bench from our churches, we also removed man's ability to see his need to be broken over his sin.

-Many of our young people have never seen or even heard of a mourner's bench where people come to bow before the Lord and weep over their sins.

-How long has it been since you and I have actually wept over our sins?

-Ps. 51:1-12a, 17

-Matt. 27:75 Peter

F. Line Up – James 4:10

Arrogance never repents. Pride never bows the knee. There can never be blessing until first there is brokenness. That's humility.

James 4:10b “And He shall lift you up.”

-It is a picture of a little child who is crying and hurting and longing to be held in the arms of his father. The father sees him in brokenness and in humility with a genuine longing for intimacy. And the father reaches down and lifts him up and draws him to his bosom. That's intimacy with God. And every Christian can have it.

James 4:11-12 The Command Most Baptist Disobey

James has more to say about the tongue – its use and its abuse- than any other epistle in all the N.T.

- James 1:19 “let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak”
- James 1:26 “if a man doesn't bridle his tongue, his religion is vain, useless.”
- James 3:1-12 “The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison”
- James 4:11-12 James speaks again about the tongue and speaking evil against your spiritual brother.

Why would James belabor the issue of the tongue? Because we can tell everything we want to know about a person by their speech.

-A man's speech reveals his heart. Oh, yes, all of us from time to time say things that are malicious, slanderous, gossip, or untrue. All can fall to that. But where that's the pattern of life and pride dominates the heart, that person has a serious problem and it may indicate that the person is not really saved.

Three simple truths I want to share with you:

I. The Command Given – James 4:11

“Do not speak evil of one another” means “do not slander one another; do not talk down to one another; do not speak against your brother” and “do not judge your brother.”

All of us form judgments of others. As soon as we meet someone, we form a first impression about that person.

-Often, we'll pass that impression on to someone else. It's a natural tendency – and dangerous

-Judging, criticism and gossip are among the worse sins. In the Book of Romans, Paul lumps those sins with murder and adultery.

Remember that James 4:1 deals with resolving conflicts among the people of God. To resolve conflicts we must stop slandering one another and stop judging one another. -Understand that James is dealing with brothers and sisters in Christ.

-Three times in 4:11 James says “brethren”, “brother”, “brother”.

Two terms we need to understand:

A. “Do not speak evil” means “to slander, to speak down to, or to put someone down, do not run down another person.

-Notice: “Do not slander your brother.” Slander within the community of faith is slander against a ...what?...a brother.

-Understand: How we speak TO and ABOUT our brothers in Christ tells what we think about others. -Understand, they're brothers in Christ, children of God, joint heirs in Christ Jesus, special objects of affection of the Savior who chose them in Him before the foundation of the world. They are indeed precious to God.

- Rom. 12:10 “Be kindly affectioned one to another”; “preferring one another”
- Rom. 15:7 “receive ye one another”
- Rom. 15:14 “admonish one another”
- Gal. 5:13 “serve one another”

- Eph. 4:2 “forgiving one another”
- I Thess. 4:9 “love one another”
- I Thess. 4:18 “comfort one another”
- I Thess. 5:11 “edify one another”

All these suggest to make every effort and to constantly aim at developing our relationship as brethren, not dividing.

When we slander our brothers in Christ, we do the work of the devil. We are acting like the devil.

-The word “devil” means “slanderer, false accuser”.

-Rev. 12:10 – The devil is called “the accuser of the brethren.”

We know we are not to slander our brother with that which is false. Passing lies about someone is wrong, but we act like it's our moral duty to pass on damaging truth.

-No, truth alone is not good enough. Only love is good enough. Even if it's true but will do harm, tear down rather than build up, don't speak it.

-Love does not tear down, it builds up in Christ.

Slander often takes place when the person is not present.

Folks will run others down or be critical or tell untrue things about a person to his back.

-We call it backbiting. We bite them in the back, where they can't hear what's going on and they're not able to defend themselves.

-But may I tell you that face to face is no excuse. Fault – finding can be just as bad to the face as behind the back.

B. Do Not Judge Your Brother

James elaborates on Jesus' command against judging one another in Matt. 7:1.

-There is hardly any verse of the Bible that is more misunderstood than these words, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged.”

-There is hardly any verse that is more frequently disobeyed among Christians than this verse.

-To my shame, over the years, I have disobeyed it many times, and I'm sure you have, too.

Keep in mind that it is a SIN to judge another in your heart, even if you keep your thoughts to yourself.

-Judgmental words eventually will follow out of a judgmental heart, but the sin begins in the heart.

What does it mean to judge not lest you be judged?

In a court room a man was being tried for driving drunk, running into someone and doing great bodily harm to another. No one thought they would be in the jury room for very long, but one lady would not vote "guilty". She kept saying that "he looked like a nice man. Some could drink as much as he did and drive alright." Finally, the woman said, "I could never vote to convict him, because the Bible says, "Judge not, lest you be judged."

(A.) What judging others does NOT mean:

(1.) It does not mean we are not to make judgments about character.

We can and must make judgments. We have a duty to make judgments.

-We are to EXERCISE judgment without passing judgment.

-When Christians condemn things like homosexuality, abortion, or immorality, the world says, "Judge not. Shame on you. You ought to know better."

-Listen : The things God has already condemned have already been judged – BY HIM! Christians are not judgmental about those things; God has already judged them.

-Matt. 7:6,15,20

-I John 4:1

-John 7:24

-I Cor. 6:2 "Do you not know that the Saints will judge the world?" (2.) It is not judging someone to talk to them about their sin

"I could never confront anyone about their sin, because we are not suppose to judge others. Let him who is without sin cast the first stone!"

-James 5:19-20; Gal. 6:1; Matt. 18:15-18

(B.) What judging others wrongly does mean:

- We judge someone wrongly when we do not first judge our own sin before trying to help one with his sin – Matt. 7:1-5

Both the mote (sawdust) and the beam are pieces of wood; they are of the same material, only different sizes. It is a contrast between little faults and great faults.

(2) We judge wrongly when we judge with the wrong motive.

We judge with slander or jealousy or bitterness or self ambition and to tear down rather than to build up.

5 We judge wrongly when we assume we know all of the facts and motives behind another person's words or actions.

One of the most famous preachers of the 1800's was Charles Spurgeon. He was Queen Victoria's favorite preacher, and he was a Baptist. Spurgeon and his wife had a practice of selling, but refusing to give away, the eggs their chickens laid. Even close relatives were told, "If you want them, you have to pay for them." Since he had a huge church and a salary to match, some people labeled the Spurgeons as greedy. The Spurgeons accepted the criticism without defending themselves. It was only after Mrs. Spurgeon died that the whole story was revealed. All of the profits from the sale of eggs went to support two elderly widows. The critics never knew this. Most of the time it is best to leave our doubts about others to Almighty God. He is still in charge; He'll know what to do with criticisms.

10. We judge someone wrongly when we make an authoritative pronouncement about his eternal destiny.

The Bible gives many tests to determine if our faith is genuine (see I John), and Jesus said "by their fruit you will know them, but in

the final analysis, only God knows the heart.

The Caution Given – James 4:11-12

“Who are you to judge another” means “who made you God?” A. Judging is outside our Assignment

God has not called us to be judges, but friends, encouragers, ministers of one another. We are not to push each other down, but pick one another up.

B. Judging is outside our Authority

We are unfit fallen human beings. Only God is wise enough, good enough, loving enough and all-knowing enough to judge.

C. Judging is outside our Ability

We never have all the facts. Only God can know the motives and intent of the heart.

-We are not in charge; God is. We wouldn't even know what to look for to judge rightly.

B The Conclusion Given

We are to judge by the Royal Law; the Law of Love. Ps. 15:3 gives us the marks of a godly man.

On April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee put on his finest dress uniform, mounted his horse Traveler, and rode away from his tired and battered troops to Appomattox where he would surrender his army to Grant. Lee fully expected that his men would be herded like cattle into railroad cars and taken to a Union prison and that he, as their general, would be tried and executed as a traitor. In the living room of the home where the vanquished and victor met, Lee asked Grant what his terms of surrender were to be. Grant told Lee that his men were free to take their horses with them and go back to their farms and that Lee was free to go home to begin a new life. Lee offered Grant his sword, but Grant refused it. Lee heaved a sigh; he came expecting to be humiliated, but was able to leave with dignity and honor. As Grant watched Lee mount Traveler, Grant took off his hat and saluted his defeated enemy. General Lee was deeply affected by the act and actions of General Grant. And as long as General Lee lived, he never allowed one critical word about Grant to be spoken in his presence.

Understanding what James has said about slander, as believers, we should never allow a single negative word to be spoken in our presence about another.

What should we do when we find ourselves thinking judgmentally about others? Judge our pride! God could have rightly judged us, but He didn't. Let God do the judging. It's not our place to do so. Our responsibility is to humble ourselves before God.

What should we do if someone shares damaging or critical information about another person with us. -Often the person with the evil report will test our spirit to detect if we're open to hearing it. He may ask for our opinion about a person or he may drop a negative comment about a person and watch our

response. He may try to peak our curiosity by asking. “Have you heard about so-and so?” You may discover that he's already shared the situation with many others that had no need to know.

Sometimes we can't stop the person before they share the judgmental information, but we can try to ask some questions as soon as we can.

C What is your reason for telling me?

D Where did you get your information? If the person will not reveal his sources, he is probably spreading rumors or unreliable information.

E Have you gone to those directly involved to seek to restore them?

F Have you personally checked out all the facts?

G Can I quote you if I check this out. If someone is spreading judgmental falsehoods or half truths, he won't want to be quoted.

James asks, “Who are you to judge your neighbor? Judge yourself instead.”

James 4:17 An Examination of Sin

Sometimes when Dr. James Travis would teach or preach on the subject of sin, he would begin by saying something like this: “I want you to know that I am full of my subject today.” Then he would announce that he was going to be talking about sin. -The truth is that

we are all sinful.

-We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners.

Sin is something most folks do not want to talk about.

-Our society has tried to describe away or rationalize out the very existence of sin.

-But God and His Word are very clear as to the existence and the power of sin.

Sin is the blight of all human existence.

-Sin disturbs every human relationship. Because of sin there are tears. There is pain and fighting and war and anxiety and conflict and unrest and fear and sickness and death.

-Every time a new baby is born into the world, sin awaits to greet it upon its entrance.

-David said, "In sin did my mother conceive me," realizing that from the very womb, sin would be reality.

-Sin rules every heart. Sin is the King of humanity.

Everybody dies. It is appointed unto man once to die and it is true also that all who die, whether they die in childbirth or a childhood disease or an accident or heart disease or cancer or war or murder or whatever it is, all die as a result of sin.

-Sin is the disease that gets everybody. And is the disease that eventually gets everybody. The Bible says the wages of sin is death.

Every broken marriage, every disrupted home, every wayward child, every shattered friendship, every argument and every disagreement can be attributed at the source to sin.

In Joshua 7:13 God called sin the "accursed thing."

-In the Bible sin is compared to the venom of snakes and the stench of a corpse.

-Sin corrupts the soul. It defiles everything it touches. It cheapens, devalues and defaces everything it comes in contact with.

-Sin is more than just an Act or Action; it's an Attitude; more than just evil Deeds; it's evil Desires.

A great principle of the word of God concerning sin is this: If you are bound to sin, you are bound to suffer.

-The Bible says:

- "Be sure your sin will find you out."
- "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die."
- "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap."

Well, if sin is as bad as God says it is, and it is, let me ask and answer some questions about sin:

I. What is Sin?

The N.T. gives us five definitions of sin:

A. Sin is transgression of the law – I John 3:4

When I saw "the Law", I mean more than the written Law, like the Ten Commandments. Romans 2:14-16 says that God has written His Law on the hearts of every person to know right from wrong, so all are without excuse if they disobey God's Law, even if they have never read the Ten Commandments.

B. All unrighteousness is sin – I John 5:17

Unrighteousness is all that does not match the character of Jesus in action, attitude, or thought.

-It is injustice which causes one to be out of harmony with what God says is right and fit.

C. Sin is coming short of the glory of God, which is the Person of the Lord Jesus, Himself – Rom. 3:23

Some say sin is just missing the mark, but it is more than that. It is missing the mark in only one direction- we are always Below God's mark.

-We never go over God's mark and it is not just going wide of God's mark. We never, ever reach God's standard.

-Fact is, we so often don't even aim at God's standard. And as someone has said, "If we never aim at anything, we'll hit it every time!"

D. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin – Rom. 14:23

If we do something that violates our conscience, we sin.

-If we yield to doubtful things, we sin. A great rule-of-thumb is, if you have a doubt about something, don't yield to it.

E. Sins of omission – James 4:17

We usually put sin in two broad list: sins of commission and sins of omission.

-Sins of commission is rebellion of the direct commands of God

-What are sins of omission? A little boy said that sins of omission are sins we should have committed, but didn't." Most of us have not omitted too many sins.

The sin of omission is the sin of knowing and not doing.

-Sin is not just doing Hurtful things, but failure to do Helpful things.

-It is just as bad NOT to do a good deed as it is to actually Do a bad deed.

-God holds us just as accountable for what we do not do as for what we do.

- The classic N.T. illustration is found in our Lord's parable of the Good Samaritan.
- In Matt. 25:41-46, Jesus condemned folks for not giving food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty and lodging to the stranger and clothes to the naked and a visit to those who were sick or in prison.
- See Luke 12:47-48

II. What is sin like?

The Bible uses several words for sin; each with different shades of meaning:

- Transgression: To Violate and overstep the bounds of decency which God has marked off; to willfully and knowingly step out of bounds or to rebel against God's rules or law, especially in a moral sense.
- Iniquity: Twisted, perverted, conscious and deliberate acts of unrighteousness, injustice, or injury done to man or God.
- Ungodliness: A lack of respect, reverence, awe, and love for God.
- Unbelief: Faithlessness, distrust or lack of confidence in Christ.

a.Sin is defiling and pollutes the sinner. When God looks at sin, He sees it as defiling, as polluting, as filthy. Why? Because sin has stained the soul of man which has blotted the image of God. Sin in man's life is seen by God and is compared to oozing, ugly sores of a death plague.

b.Sin is seen as open opposition and rebellion against God Himself.

c.Sin in God's eyes is ingratitude. Do you realize that even the lost man who has never bowed the knee before the only Almighty and loving God is nevertheless the beneficiary of His wonderful grace and mercy?

-Acts 17:28 "In Him we live and move and have our being." Without Him we have no life. And "He makes the sun to rise on the evil and the good. He sends rain to the just and unjust."

d.Sin is Incurable- Isa. 1:4-6 ("laden" - v.1= "just loaded with it")

- And sinful man can't do anything about it! He can't change his condition!
- Jer. 13:23
- Even the everlasting, burning fires in Hell couldn't purify the least sin because confession and punishment don't eliminate sin. There is no human cure. You see, sin is a disease that can only be cured by the blood of the Great Physician who shed His blood to provide the cure. "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin."

e.Sin is opposition to and hostility toward God

Sin is the only thing God resist.

-God doesn't resist homely people. Aren't you glad of that? I am! -He doesn't resist poor people or ignorant people or sick people.

-There's only one thing that God does resist. That one thing is sin. That's all, because sin destroys the image of God and pollutes God's universe. It will rob man's joy and will destroy the soul of man!

The evil of sin is not so much seen in the millions that are damned by it, as it is seen in the fact that Jesus Christ had to die for it. It cost the blood of God to conquer sin!

III. How many people does sin affect?

-Rom. 5:12; 3:23,10 ALL of us!

IV. What are the results of sin?

1.Sin causes evil to overpower us. It dominates our mind so that our thinking patterns are susceptible to evil. We are desperately wicked and our mind affects our will.

2.Sin brings us under the control of Satan and makes us objects of God's wrath.

3.Sin subjects us to all the miseries of life. We've got trouble because sin makes trouble.

4.Sin damns the soul of man to Hell.

Hell: "Where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched, but burneth forever and ever."

V. Is there anything we can do about our sins?

Jesus comes along and says, "I know your sin is bad. I know you're guilty, but I want to offer you forgiveness.

If you understand sin, then you understand the tremendous significance of John 3:16. "For God so loved"

-Why would God love a sinner like me? God not only loved you, but He loved a whole world of sinners.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"

-Why would God give His Son for such wretched, vile sinners, people like those we've been describing?

"That whosoever believes in Him"

-Why would He make it so simple, when we were so wicked, as to only call upon Him in repentance and faith?

"Should not perish"

-Why would God want to excuse us from judgment? Why would He want to rescue us from hell?

"but have everlasting life"

-Why would God want to give everlasting life in His presence to people who are as sinful as we were? -The answer: Now you are beginning to understand His grace!

6 "The wages of sin is death – BUT – the gift of God is eternal life." The one who knew no sin became SIN for us that we who know no righteousness might be made righteous in Him.

-Jesus dying on the cross took our sin away.

-1 John 2:12b "He has forgiven all your iniquities for His name sake." -Rom. 4:7-8; Micah 7:18-19 What a message of forgiveness!

The Hebrew word for sin carries the idea of:

-To bind; to wrap around. It pictures a vine wrapped around a tree.

-To strip; It pictures an animal stripping the bark off of a tree to leave it exposed to disease, insects and the weather.

James 5:1-6 The Wallet Takes the Witness Stand

(If you could have more of three things, what would those three things be? "Money" for the first time I saw I was materialistic." Sense

more of the presence of God, wisdom, compassion)

Would you like to be rich?

-Very few would say, "Nah, it doesn't interest me!"

A common phrase used today is "money talks"! One famous comedian said, "If money talks, all it says to me is "Good-bye."" Nevertheless, money does talk.

James has already mentioned the rich on three other occasions.

- James 1:9-11 Here the rich are obviously believers.
- James 2:2-3 and 2:6, the rich are non-believers

Most conservative Bible teachers believe that James' main target in James 5:1-6 was the ungodly rich outside of the church.

-Why would James spend six verses denouncing those who are outside of the church, who would most likely never read this warning anyway?

-The warnings serve two main purposes:

- To encourage us who know God to be faithful and endure, knowing that in due time He will judge the wicked.
- It should warn us not to fall into any of the sins that will bring judgment on the wicked.

It's easy when you're poor and oppressed to think, "If I can just get rich, I will no longer have to deal with these problems. I know I can find happiness if I were rich."

When we come to this passage of scripture, we should understand that James is not condemning riches.

-Riches in themselves are not immoral; they are not moral, either.

The Bible does not condemn money. Many think there is something dirty about money; they call it "filthy lucre." Scripture doesn't say that.

-What scripture does say is that "the LOVE of money – not money itself, but the LOVE of money is the root of all evil." I Tim. 6:10.

There is something about the love of money for its own sake that brings out the worst in people:

- Achan's lust for money and possessions brought death to himself, his family, and dozens of men in battle – Joshua 7
- The prophet Balaam would have cursed God's people for Balak's payment – Num. 22:4-25
- Delilah betrayed Samson to the Philistines for a fee – Judges 16
- To gain wealth, Gehazi lied to Naaman and then to Elisha and was afflicted with leprosy – 2 Kings 5:20-27
- Ananias and Sapphira withheld money they said was given to the Lord and were struck dead for it – Acts 5:1-11
- In the ultimate act of betrayal Judas betrayed the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver – Matt. 26-27

What James says here is not an indictment of wealth per se.

-There is nothing in the Bible to support the idea that it is wrong to be wealthy. In fact, there is evidence to the contrary.

- Prov. 10:22 "The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it."

-In fact, God's word tells us how to increase wealth by using its principles of saving and investing.

-When Jesus told the parable of the talents, He commended the servants who invested their talents and got gain, but He condemned the man for not putting his money to good use.

With that being said, the Bible does give us many warnings related to money. You see, it is good to have riches in your HANDS as long as they do not get into your HEART.

Keep in mind that it is typical of James to offer test of living faith. How a person feels about his money and how he handles his money is a test. It is a test which reveals the spiritual state of our heart. -By the way, James didn't invent this test. He is simply echoing the test that our Lord originated.

-Matt. 6:19-21 Show me where your treasure is and I'll tell you where your heart is. Where do you spend your time, your energy, your money? What do you think about the most and dream about the most and talk about the most? Whatever it is, is where your heart is.

-How we deal with money is a reflection on our spiritual health.

Money is a good tool, but terrible master. That's why the Bible gives us some dangers of money and of pursuing wealth.

-1 Tim. 6:6-10, 17-19 Most of us read that and think, "Well, I could handle wealth, or at least I'd like to try!" We think that more money would solve a whole lot of our problems, but we often forget that wealth can create a lot of problems as well.

James deals with three things in these verses:

I. How We Get Our Money – 5:1,4,6

James 5:1 is an interesting verse because for the second time in just a few verses, James uses the strong exhortation, "Go to now."

-He uses the same phrase in 4:13 when he admonishes his readers, "Don't forget God; Don't leave God out of your plans." The words, "Go to now" means "Come now; listen up, now look here or Get this." He is saying, "Now I want you to get this and I want you to get it good."

Then he uses words in James 5:1 that sound much like the instructions he gave back in James 4:9.

7 In James 4:9 he says "Be afflicted, mourn, weep, let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness." These are words of repentance, calling believers to personal revival.

8 But in James 5:1, James is speaking to the ungodly rich. These wicked merchants are called upon to weep and howl. The tears are not the tears of repentance, but because of the judgment that is sure to fall on them. At the time, they may think they are living well. If they could only know what is to happen to them, they would begin at once to weep and mourn in sorrow.

The word "weep" means "to sob bitterly aloud." It is used of wailing bitterly for the dead or when one felt intense shame or guilt.

The word "misery" means hardship, suffering, or distress." James warns the ungodly wealthy that what they are putting their security in is not secure. Their riches will rot and their clothes will be consumed by moths.

Notice James 5:2-3 In James' times, there were three main indicators of wealth – food, wearing fine clothes, gold and silver, or grain, garments, and gold.

James says "you think your wealth will bring you satisfaction and security, but look at it: grain rots...garments ruin...gold rusts (tarnishes).

The Bible instructs us to make sure we get our money honestly, fairly, without cheating others and without neglecting others.

-But look how the ungodly rich got or made their riches:

11. James 5:4,6 – You didn't pay your workers a fair wage. You took advantage of your workers. You looked for excuses or loopholes for not paying your workers.

12. In that day the employer would try to get around paying a farmhand by saying, "The row is not straight enough" or "The growth of the grain show that you did not scatter enough seed."

13. They got rich at the expense of other people.

12. How We Guard (Use) Our Money – James 5:3,5

Jesus gave two stories that illustrate the wrong use of money.

Luke 12:16-21 Here's the point: Saving is not wrong; hoarding is wrong.

-Saving is acceptable to God; hoarding never is. God is trusting us with certain resources; He as owner and we as stewards. God is honored by funnels and dishonored by sponges.

-If we hoard our goods when we could be using and sharing our goods, our goods will deceive and mock us.

-Here's a man who has stockpiled grain in a barn or silo – more than he needs, but rather than giving it to others who needs it, he just lets it rot. What good is silos full of grain if, when you go to get a bag full, it's spoiled or full of mold.

-Here's someone who has closets full of clothes; many they never wear, but instead of giving to someone in need, they ruin because the moths have eaten them.

-Here's someone with plenty of gold, but instead of sharing it, it sits there, doing no one any good.

Don't spend your life collecting junk that you never need or use. Give it away! -And do it while you can. Death always separates a rich man from his money.

Look back at James 5:5

-In Luke 16:19-31 Jesus tells of a rich man who was "clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously EVERY day." He also told of a poor beggar who was "laid at his gate and desired to be fed with the crumbs that fell from his table." He was in poor health but was provided with no medicine; only dogs to lick his sores.

Could I just point out that both of these rich men used their money in a sinful manner?

-The miser says, "Dollars are flat to stack them," but the spendthrift says, "They are round to roll them."

One wanted to store it up and the other wanted to live it up. Both were wrong.

The rich man in Luke 16 lived in luxury and self-indulgence and a great lack of compassion for the needs of one right under his feet.

-He lived the lifestyle of the rich and famous – lands, homes, cars, travel, hot tubs, materialism, but he was not prepared for life beyond the grave.

It's good to have things money can buy, but it is better to have the things money cannot buy.

-What would happen if everything you have was suddenly taken away from you? Would you still have something to hold on to?

III. How We Give Our Money

The Christian must get his money honestly, guard it loosely and give it selflessly to Christ and His glory.

This life is not final, whether we have little or much in this life.

-Each of us will stand before God utterly stripped of Mastercards, checkbooks, credit lines, stocks or image clothes. We will all be on level ground with absolutely nothing in our hands, possessing only what we bring in our heart.

Solomon prayed an interesting prayer in Prov. 30:7-9.

A businessman pulled out his change from his pocket. Among the coins was a very small cross. "What a strange place to carry a cross," someone remarked. "Not really," the Christian businessman replied, "When I'm tempted to spend money foolishly, I'm reminded that the cross has first claim on it."

Matt. 6:19-21

James 5:7-12 How To Live Until the Lord Comes

Three times in these three verses James refers to the second coming of our Lord to the earth.

- James 5:7 "Be patient until the coming of the Lord"
- James 5:8 "For the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."
- James 5:9 "Behold the Judge is standing before the door."

Jesus is going to come again. We don't know the exact time, but He is coming again.

-It may be today, next week, next year; Maybe not in our lifetime, but He's coming. How does He want us to live until He comes?

Three truths I would share with you:

I. The Expectation of our Lord's coming James 5:7-9

James is echoing the great truth found throughout the Bible that one day Jesus will come again.

- Jesus gave us His promise – John 14:1-3
- Paul gave us His promise – I Thess. 4:16-18
- Peter gave us His promise – 2 Peter 3:9
- Angels gave us their promise – Acts 1:11

There are three Greek words used in reference to the second coming of our Lord.

1. Epiphaneia

-This word describes a manifestation. It has reference to the appearance of a god to his worshipers. -The idea is that Jesus will come and manifest Himself in all His glory and majesty and appear to believers as their God so they can bow down and worship Him.

- Apokalypsis from which we get our word apocalypse.

-The word speaks of unveiling or laying bare or to reveal and uncover.

-At the second coming Jesus will unveil the power and glory of God in His full glory and majesty.

- Parousia , which is the word used here.

-The word means “a presence that is alongside of” or “to be present with”. It describes the arrival of a person.

Well, when is that going to happen?

-We don't know exactly when, but we are told that our Lord's return is imminent. It can happen at anytime.

-"The Judge is near...at the door."

Martin Luther said, “I preach as though Christ died yesterday, arose from the dead today, and is coming back tomorrow.

Jesus is coming to earth again, What if it were today?

Coming in power and love to reign, what if it were today?

Coming to claim His chosen bride,

All the redeemed and purified,

Over this whole world scattered wide,

What if it were today?

.The Exhortation Because of Our Lord's Coming

There are two negative and two positive exhortations here. A. The Negative Exhortations

A A warning against Intolerance – James 5:9

The word's “grudge not” speaks of complaining and grumbling and it emphasizes patience with people; not trials or circumstances.

-It describes an inner feeling of dissatisfaction that involves a feeling of criticism and faultfinding.

-They were venting their feelings against each other, against their brothers and sisters in the Lord.

James tell them that knowing the Lord could return at any moment should motivate believers to patiently endure mistreatment.

-James reminds us that there is coming a time and a place when our complaints will be dealt with.

13. A warning against Irreverence – 5:12 “Above all” means “especially”

If you're ever called to testify in court, you will be asked, “Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?”

-Are you violating scripture to put yourself under such an oath? Some Christians would answer, “Yes.” I would be among those who would say, “No.”

-James is repeating Jesus' words in Matt. 5:33-37.

The issue goes beyond taking oaths and deals with the issue of truthful speech.

-To understand James' words here, we must understand how the Jews of that day were using oaths. Oaths ought to promote truthful communication, but in reality they had become a facade for lying. The Jews said that if you swore using God's name in your oath, you had to keep your word, but if you swore by some lesser thing – Jerusalem, the temple, or whatever – you were not bound to tell the truth. -Jesus confronts this in Mat. 23:16-22

-Jesus said, "Let your statement be, 'yes, yes' or 'no, no' (Matt. 5:37). In other words, the real issue is speaking the truth all the time.

The Bible does not prohibit all oaths, but it does restrict them.

-I remind you that Paul often swore by the Lord when he said, "God is my witness" (Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23; Phil. 1:8; 1 Thess. 2:5, 10).

-Even more significantly, God sometimes swears by Himself in enacting his covenant (David, Acts 2:30; Abraham, Heb. 6:13-14).

A boy was on the witness stand in an important lawsuit. The prosecuting attorney cross-examined him, then delivered, he thought, a crushing blow to the boy's testimony. "Your father has been telling you how to testify, hasn't he?" "Yes." The boy didn't hesitate with the answer. "Now", said the lawyer triumphantly, "just tell us how your father told you to testify." "Well," the boy said modestly, "Father told me that the lawyers would try to tangle me in my testimony, but if I would just be careful to tell the truth, I could repeat the same thing every time."

B. The Positive Exhortation

C A Call For Restraint – 5:7

The word "patient" means "to be long-tempered or to be of a long spirit, not to lose heart, to be patient in enduring misfortunes and troubles as well as in bearing the offenses and injuries of others.

-It describes the attitude of self-restraint that does not try to get even for an offense or when wrong has been done to them, enduring difficult people.

-Count on it – you will be wronged by others! Don't hastily retaliate a wrong.

I don't need patience when things are going smoothly, but when things go wrong, I need it all at once.

-Paul says, "Love is patient" I Cor. 13:4

-Patience is a fruit of the spirit. Gal. 5:22

-Patience is a quality of God Himself. 2 Peter 3:9

-For the Christian, we must be as patient with our fellow-man as God has been with us.

H A Call to Resolution – James 5:8

"Stablish your hearts" means "to strengthen your heart" or "to put iron in your heart." -Don't run away from your problems. Stand in the strength of the Lord!

5. The Examples Worth Noting

5. The Patient Farmer

No farmer plants his seed and expects it to come up the next day. He knows it takes time.

-The farmer teaches us that we need to be as patient as he is.

He cannot control the weather. Once he has planted his crops, he can do nothing to hurry the process up. He can only wait for the harvest and trust the Lord for his blessings. -We must wait for the Lord's return and trust Him with our lives.

G. The Patient Prophet – James 5:10

The Prophets were faithful to proclaim God's word and suffered many hardships. They often saw few results. But they kept preaching faithfully, knowing God's word would not return void.

3. Patient Job – James 5:11

When you face trials for no apparent reason, consider Job and trust in God's compassion and mercy.

-Job was not always patient, but he did endure. God graciously brought him through and rewarded him in the end in spite of his struggles and shortcomings.

-If Job had handled it all perfectly, none of us could have related to him.

Notice: "You have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy"

- "You've seen the outcome ...the end of Job's story. No matter how difficult our trials, we must never doubt God's goodness or love in His sovereign purpose.

Jesus is coming! Be patient! Never give up, give over, or give out!

-He'll work His will in us until He comes!

James 5:13-18 A Prescription For Every Condition

We come now to one of the most difficult and misunderstood passages in the Book of James. It is also one of the most abused and misused passages of scripture in the entire word of God. -Some religious groups have built much of their teaching on this passage of scripture.

- Roman Catholic Church: Extreme Unction

In the thirteenth century, "Extreme unction" became one of seven sacraments recognized by the Roman Catholic Church. The priest anoints with oil a person who is at the point of death and prays for the remission of his sins and in doing so insures the person that he may bypass purgatory. -At least three things are wrong with that:

- The Bible never talks about a place called purgatory where the soul of the dead goes for a time after death to be purified so it can transfer to heaven when it is pure enough.
- NO human priest can do anything to forgive another man's sins. Only God can forgive sin.
- Extreme unction is only administered by Catholics when the sick person is expected to DIE; whereas, James is speaking of someone who is expected to RECOVER.
- Charismatics or Faith Healers

These folks claim to have the gifts of healing and the gift of tongues. First Cor. 12 states that there is a gift of healing and of tongues but these were temporary gifts given to the Apostles to authenticate and confirm the Gospel message and messenger. Before the completion of the N.T., even by the time of James, the gift of healing was coming to an end; that's why James said the elders were to use oil, wine, and prayer for the sick.

-Don't misunderstand: God still heals. You may ask, "Preacher, do you believe in Divine Healing?" My reply, "I didn't know there was any other kind!"

-I believe in Divine Healing; I do not believe in divine healers. God is the healer. He uses doctors and medicine, but God heals.

-We must keep in mind that for every good thing that God does, Satan has a counterfeit.

According to scripture, the Lord's House is to be a house of prayer.

- Isa. 56:7

-God's people are to be a people of prayer

9 I Thess. 5:17 "Pray without ceasing"

10 Rom. 12:12 "...continuing instant in prayer"

11 Luke 18:1 "men ought always to pray, and not to faint"

12 Eph. 6:18 "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit"

-However, prayer and prayer meetings have become the step-children of the church.

One godly deacon tells the amazing story of his church's return to the tradition of true intercessory prayer. During prayer time on Wednesday evening, they would share the typical "Who's- who-in-the-hospital" list. He really began to dread the service and he felt guilty for feeling that way.

-It dawned on him that all the Wednesday evening praying was for the sick and needy of the church. Instead of praying for the lost to get saved so they could go to heaven, they were praying that the sick would be healed to keep them out of heaven for a while.

-He remembered what large crowds they used to have on Wednesday night and the excitement they experienced during the

services. He decided to research the church's history for an answer. He discovered in the records that the midweek prayer meeting had been one of the most exciting times in the church's life. Its attendance rivaled the Sunday morning crowd. The central element of the prayer meeting was the prayers for the lost. Specific names of family members, friends, neighbors and co-workers were lifted up in intercessory prayer. The number of baptisms in the church was at a record high during that time.

-The deacon requested they reclaim the great old tradition of intercessory prayer for the lost on Wednesday evening. It wasn't long before the church once again began to experience the power of God and souls were saved.

I believe that God's people need some fresh insight into the awesome power of prayer. I don't know about you, but I'm ready to see God touch our church, our communities, our city, and our world by His power and the only way that's going to happen is when God's children get serious about praying.

Three things I want you to see as we examine the verses together:

I. The Challenge to Pray – 5:13-16a

Let me say in the very beginning: James is speaking primarily about prayer and healing of the SIN-SICK believer. The challenge set before Christians in these verses is to pray.

A. The Subjects For Prayer

One of the things that James teaches in these verses is that Christians do get sick.

-I point that out because today there's a false theology that teaches that if you are really right with God, you won't experience sickness. Wrong!

-James is pointing out that we have a God for all seasons. Life is filled with pressure and pleasure, mountain-tops and valleys, sunshine and rain, happiness and heartache.

-Our God is good in that, for most of us, we have far more bright days than dark days.

1. Affliction

The word "afflicted" means "to endure hard times, difficult times, times of trouble.

-Not just physical troubles, but mental, emotional, physical or a combination of all three. Maybe you have family troubles or financial troubles or spiritual troubles.

How do you handle dark days? How do you react to affliction? By complaining? Going to pieces? By getting bitter and blaming God? By wallowing in self-pity?

Somebody said that Christians are like tea bags. Their real strength comes out when they are in hot water.

-Troubles will drive you from God or draw you to God.

-Those who walk through the valleys and trials of life are to pray – Phil. 4:6-7

2. Merry, Cheerful, Joyful

"Sing psalms": Praising God in song is a form of prayer, and Paul links this with the fullness of the

Spirit – Eph. 5:18-20; I Thess. 5:18

3. Sickness

When we, or others are sick, we are to call out their names to God. He is the healer. Go to God in prayer on their behalf.

B. The Strength of Prayer – 5:15

"The prayer of faith". Faith is what gives prayer its strength and effectiveness. God answers prayer, but He does so in response to the faith of His people.

-James makes it clear that faith is an essential ingredient in effective praying – James 1:5-8

This is not a blank check. There are some conditions to answered prayer:

14. Prayer is to be made to the Lord in faith – Matt. 18:19-20

- 15. We must ask in Jesus' name; in His authority; make sure Jesus could sign His name to it – John 14:13-14
- 16. We must be right with God when we ask – I John 3:21-22; Ps. 66:18
- 17. We must ask according to His will – I John 5:14
- Prayer is not getting man's will done in heaven, but getting God's will done on earth. -Jer. 33:3

C. The Source of Prayer

Faith is always based on the word of God. We can only pray in faith if we can base our prayers on the revealed will of God.

- 14. If there is a need, God will meet it – Phil. 4:19
- 15. If there is a fear, God will replace it – Phil. 4:6-7; 2 Tim. 1:7
- 16. If there is a burden, God will lift it – I Peter 5:7
- 17. If there is a need for someone to be saved, God will deal with them – 2 Peter 3:9
- 18. If there is a sin, God will forgive it – I John 1:9

II. The Character of Prayer – 5:16-18

James has already used Abraham, Rahab, and Job as O.T. Personalities to illustrate certain spiritual truths. Now he will use Elijah to illustrate a spiritual truth about prayer. He couldn't have picked a better example of prevailing prayer.

-Believers are to be praying people. It is to be the habit and pattern of their lives.

It's easy to read our Bibles and put these great men of God on a high and lofty pedestal.

-Yet, James reminds us that Elijah was a regular, ordinary man with the same nature and passions as we have. He was subject to the same human emotion and liable to the same weaknesses that we all have. -In case you think that your praying could never be effective and prevailing as Elijah's, remember he was just a human being like you.

James 5:16 tells us he was a righteous man. He was a man wholly devoted to God; clean before God; no unconfessed sin in his heart.

"And he prayed" - 5:17 The word for prayer is the word for supplication. It describes the kind of praying where one brings specific petitions to God.

-First he prayed that it wouldn't rain; then he prayed that it would rain – no generalities, but specifically.

"He prayed earnestly" The words "effectual fervent" prayer comes from the word we get our word "energy" from.

-The word literally means "stretched out" and gives the picture of a runner stretching for the finish line with his last gasp of energy. He approached God with integrity and with intensity with all his heart. He got down to business with God and poured his heart out to God.

The words "Availeth much" means "to be strong; able to do much".

-What can God accomplish by prayer? When God answered Elijah's prayer, we don't see what Elijah did, but what God did.

-Prayer is the means of bringing God into what we do.

-Prayer is releasing the energies of God. For prayer is asking God to do what we cannot do.

III. The Confidence in Prayer – 5:17-18

Let me go back to 5:13-14 for a moment. This is not a passage about healing as much as it is a passage about prayer. "Is any afflicted" The point is prayer and comfort.

-Are you experiencing hard times? Are you burdened with heartache and cares?

-I Peter 5:7 "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." The God of all comfort will comfort you.

"Is any merry, cheerful, joyful?" Prayer and Praise and Fellowship

Is any of you sick?

-Here James is talking about prayer and restoration.

-Since the translators translated the Greek word “sick”, most folks assumes he is talking about those who are physically sick.

-There are two main Greek words translated “sick”. The one used here has its primary meaning as “to be weak, feeble, or impotent.” It is used of being weak in faith or spiritual weakness. -One of the consequences of sin is chastisement in the form of sickness.

-James 5:19-20 strongly suggest praying over one who is at the point of death because of chastisement because of sin.

He does not come to the church to be healed. He's too weak.

-He calls for the elders of the church. He admits his sin, confesses his sin and is forgiven his sin and in mercy the Lord may lift him up. 5:14-16

Here is our confidence in prayer: God promises to Hear us and Help us.

Eph. 3:20-21

D Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,
E Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

James 5:19-20 Operation Restoration

Before reading the scripture

As we come to the end of many of the New Testament books, we are given what might be called a “final appeal”... a kind of “summary statement that gives us the thrust of what has been said.”

Look at four New Testament writers and you can see an example of this:

- Paul: II Cor. 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? To a troubled church, Paul says, “Each of you, make sure that you really belong to Christ.”

- Peter: II Peter 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Peter says that we should never stop building the character and the characteristics of Christ in our life.

- John : I John 5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. John wants us to keep our fellowship with Christ strong.
- Jude: Jude 21 Keep yourselves in the love of God.. Keep yourself in the place where God can shower you with his blessings.
- James: James ends his book with an encouragement for us to keep on the Christian track...the Christian pathand to act and react in a loving, redemptive way to those who may stray from the path.

Read the Passage

In James 1:18 we received the instruction, “Do not err, my beloved brethren.” -The word “err” means “to stray”.

-Matt. 18:12 the word is used as a metaphor of a sheep wandering from the flock. As sheep in God's flock, we are warned not to wander away or stray from the Lord.

-The command reminds us that it is possible to wander or stray away. I think of Robert Robinson's great hymn, “Come Thou Fount.” The third stanza says:

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness like a fetter
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander—Lord I feel it--
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart – O take and seal it,
Seal it for thy courts above.

We are indeed great debtors to the grace of God and we are daily constrained to be faithful to God. Yet, how prone we are to wander. There is that tendency and always the possibility of erring. Therefore, in the early part of the book James says, "Do not err, my beloved brethren."

If our brothers and sisters do stray, we have a responsibility to try and restore them; to bring back the wandering sheep. Let's call this responsibility, "Operation Restoration." When someone gets out of church and away from the Lord, we are to take upon ourselves the responsibility of getting them back into church and helping to bring them back to the Lord.

-We have a ministry of restoration. We are not to forget them. We are to find them. We do not have the task of rebuking them, but of restoring them.

I. The Command That's Given

Some feel like the folks that James tells believers to go after are the unsaved and believers are to go after them in an evangelistic way.

-That is part of the Great Commission. We are to go after the lost.

-But in the context, I believe James is saying that believers should go after erring, straying, wandering brothers.

These have erred "from the truth."

-What is the truth? For one thing, the truth is the Lord Jesus Himself. John 14:6 They have wandered from the Lord.

Then in John 17:17 we read, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." -Not only have they wandered from the Lord, they have wandered from the Word.

The question is, why?

-Notice the "err" more closely. The tense of the verb indicates that James is not talking about a habitual wandering, but a one-time or an occasional slip.

-The Bible is very plain about the matter of habitual sin. When you have a case of someone living in habitual sin, it is a case of not being saved.

-But in this case James describes someone who has been living for God, but has strayed or wandered away.

The verb is also in the passive voice indicating that the one who is wandering has been led astray by some outside force – a person or a passion.

In 5:19 and 20 the word "convert" means "to turn back, to bring back."

-Faithful believers are to go after and seek to restore the unfaithful believer.

II. The Compassion That's Encouraged

I admit that what James tells us to do here is one of the most difficult things God asks us to do as Christians.

-This task is often about as pleasant as trying to help a wounded dog – you're probably going to get bit no matter how gentle you try to help.

Believers need to go after wandering sheep because it is seldom that such wandering, straying folks find their way back on their own, without someone to guide them.

-They are often ashamed of what they've done, so they need assurance of God's forgiveness if they will repent and confess their sins.

-They also need instruction on how not to stray again.

Restoration is a spiritual work. The same thought is found in Gal. 6:1.

-The word "restore" means "to mend the net; to restore to usefulness again."

-It also means "to set a bone." If you have ever had a broken bone, you know that you want the doctor who sets the bone to be as gentle as possible. It's already painful and he just adds to the pain if he is rough with you.

-Just so, we need to be tender and gentle and as kind as possible and at the same time, be firm in restoring someone to usefulness.

III. The Caution That's Necessary

You and I as believers are on God's search and rescue team. Here are our specific instructions:

- Who should go? If you have knowledge of the sin and you have a relationship with the person, you're it! Truth is most often received through loving relationships.

- Get the facts. Do not go on hearsay or gossip. If someone tells you of someone else in sin, you should ask, "Have you personally checked out the facts?" Then, direct the one telling you not to talk to anyone else, but to go to the sinning person. If you are the one to go, don't begin with accusations. First, ask questions to determine the truth. Does the issue involve a major doctrine or opinion on a minor issue? Is it a matter of immaturity or spiritual weakness, where you need to help him grow, or of defiantly walking away from God (1 Thess. 5:14)?

- Check Your own heart. There is no room for being judgmental. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Your motive should be to restore the straying one, not to put him in his place or to prove that you're right and he's wrong. Make sure that you are under the control of the Holy Spirit and displaying the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 22-23; 6:1). The word "restore" (Gal. 6:1) was used of mending torn nets and of setting broken bones so that they would heal. Think of how gently you would want a doctor to do that with you, and be that gentle in dealing with a person caught in some sin.

- Pray. Do not attempt to restore a straying person before you pray for him (James 5:16-18).

Prayer puts you in the right place before God, dependent on His grace. Only then are you able to minister to the straying. You can't properly talk to men about God until you've talked to God about men. Especially, pray for the right time and opening.

Make sure that love for God and love for your brother are your motives for going. You should desire to please God and you should show genuine concern for your erring brother. Generally, if a man is in sin, another man should go to him. If a woman is in sin, another woman should go. It is not wise for a man to go alone to a woman (other than his wife or a family member), or for a woman to go alone to talk to a man.

- Go directly to the person. Do not go behind his back and try to campaign for your point of view or to try to convince others to do what God is calling you to do. Go alone at first. If he listens, you've won your brother. If he refuses to listen, take two or three others. Eventually, it may need to be told to the church (Matt. 18:15-17).

- Think through in advance the proper approach and wording. Study how Nathan confronted David for starters (2 Sam. 12:1-14). Dr. Howard Hendricks tells of how the wife of a workaholic pastor, who was neglecting his family, asked him to speak with her husband. Hendricks waited until they were alone and casually asked, "Do you smoke?" The pastor was shocked by the question and replied, "Of course not!" Hendricks persisted, "Why not?" He got what he expected: "Because my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit." Then Hendricks sprang the trap: "Then why are you abusing the temple and neglecting your family by overworking?" Pow! Be prepared for the one in sin to accuse you of some shortcoming, and do not get into a verbal war. Just stick to the issue.

If you're sitting in your easy chair by the fire and you know of a brother or sister who is lost in the storm, God asks you to inconvenience yourself. Get up, put on your coat, and go out into the storm to try to rescue your brother. It may not be fun, but it is an expression of genuine love and faith in action. That's what James is all about!