

**James**  
**Another Commentary for Laymen**  
**Chapter One**

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**Introduction**

My mission and commission is to help God's children live the Christian life, which I understand is working under the direction of our Lord Jesus Christ when he stated:

*Matt 28:18 "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

*Matt 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

*Matt 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. ""*

Jesus tells us to go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe His commandments. The teaching of God's people to observe the commandments of Jesus Christ is what I try to do in the power of Jesus Who promised to be with me to the end of this Gentile age.

Some people don't think that the book of James should be in the Bible because they think that it teaches salvation by works. However that certainly is not true. James shows us how to prove that our faith is real by our works. So James indeed does teach that faith comes first and if it is real faith then proper works will indeed follow. A healthy fig tree must produce figs. A healthy Christian must produce works.

The writer wastes no time in telling us his name. However there are a number of people named James in the Bible and in this time period. It is certain that this James is a Christian. Many studies have been done on who he is and when he wrote the book<sup>4</sup>. I will leave you to read my reference 4 and other references for a thorough study of which James wrote the book. There are really only two people named James that scholars take seriously as possible authors. One of those was James, the son of Secede, who was one of the twelve scholars. However most scholars agree that he was martyred too soon to have authored this book (Acts 12:1-2). Most scholars have agreed since about the third century that the writer is the half-brother of Jesus and head of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13; 21:18). According to Josephus James was martyred in A.D. 62.

This man James is mentioned twice by name in the Gospels: Matt 13:55 and Mark 6:3. The brothers of Jesus are named by the people of Nazareth as "James and Joseph and Simon and Judas". The half-brothers of Jesus are also mentioned in 1Cor 9:5 and again in Gal 1:19 as James the Lord's brother. A further reference to Jesus' half-brothers is in John 7:3-5, where they are said to be nonbelievers in the deity of Jesus. One of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus is recorded in the following:

*1Cor 15:6 “After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;*

*1Cor 15:7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;*

*1Cor 15:8 and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.”*

Since He appeared to James and then to all the apostles this statement also seems to leave out James the apostle as the writer of this book. Can you imagine what went on in the mind of James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ when He appeared to him? God certainly worked a miracle in the life of James and he, like any of us later converts, was never the same. He lived alongside Jesus for several decades and did not recognize Jesus as the Son of God. To me, this episode illustrates even clearer how nobody can see Jesus as to who he really is unless God works a miracle of rebirth in their lives. I went to church all of my life – thanks to my parents and grandparents – but I did not really know that Jesus was the Son of God until I was 32 years old and God worked a miracle in my life.

The book was probably written sometime between A.D. 44 and A.D. 49, which would make it the earliest New Testament book written. If this date is correct this time period would be about the time that Paul began preaching at Antioch. James may have then written it to clarify Paul’s teaching on faith and works. I certainly agree with most scholars that the book was written to help the readers examine their faith and Paul also told us to examine our faith:

*2Cor 13:5 “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?”*

Accordingly I will take the outline of James to be that given by John MacArthur<sup>2</sup>:

1. The Test of Perseverance in Suffering (1:2-12)
2. The Test of Blame in Temptation (1:13-18)
3. The Test of Response to the Word (1:19-27)
4. The Test of Impartial Love (2:1-13)
5. The Test of Righteous Works (2:14-26)
6. The Test of the Tongue (3:1-12)
7. The Test of Humble Wisdom (3:13-18)
8. the test of Worldly Indulgence (4:1-12)
9. The Test of Dependence (4:13-17)
10. The Test of Patient Endurance (5:1-11)
11. The Test of Truthfulness (5:12)
12. The Test of Prayerfulness (5:13-18)
13. The Test of True Faith (5:19-20)

I “finished” my commentary on Romans just recently and Romans is the foremost book on theology. Now the time seems appropriate to begin a commentary on the book that emphasizes how to apply that theology. Now “the rubber meets the road”. If you are

ready to apply what we have studied in Romans, then buckle your seat belts and let us head straight into it.

### **Begin the Study**

**James 1:1 “James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings.”**

James wastes no time in telling us what is the most important characteristic about himself – that he is a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ – and he immediately tells us to whom he is writing: the Jewish nation. James wrote to these people who had been scattered abroad without the benefit of the presence of one of the apostles or of himself. They needed help in understanding the reality of their faith and the authenticity of their faith. James wrote to talk with them about how true faith produces works worthy of being called Christian works. These people, and many others, were faced with many false teachers and they needed to know how to recognize the works of true faith. Read chapter 11 of 2 Corinthians to learn of “another Jesus”, “a different spirit”, “a different gospel”, “false apostles”, “deceitful workers”, and “false brethren”. We read in that chapter also that “even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” and so also do his servants. James wrote to help those Jewish people and all other children of God to understand the works produced by true faith to help us make sure that we are not self-deluded and to help us recognize the false prophets.

### **The Test of Perseverance in Suffering**

**James 1:2 “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, James 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”**

Well, he does not waste any time jumping right into one of the most difficult areas of our lives as Disciples of Jesus Christ. My wife, Carol, mentioned to our Sunday School class how a dear friend brought a hand-crocheted plaque to her in the hospital when Carol was going through a very tough mental and physical time in her life. The plaque was the above Scripture that she had started long before as an intended Christmas present for Carol. Her friend said that she could not give it to her under the current situations, but Carol insisted and through tears she read the above as a gift from her friend and from God that have her hope in such a hard time. Many times in the book of James we will find verbs in the imperative tense. This is an order from God that we are to consider these trials with all joy because we know the following:

*Rom 8:28 “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*

If we really believe Rom 8:28, then James 1:2-3 is easy to believe also. God never gives bad gifts to His children:

*Matt 7:9 "Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone?"*

*Matt 7:10 "Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?"*

*Matt 7:11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"*

Over the years Carol and I have developed a conversation that often speaks much with only a few words. Sometimes we will just say "God causes" and each of us know that we are referring to Rom 8:28 and we mean these words as a great encouragement from God about whatever situation we find ourselves. Then on other occasions we will just say "it is a fish" and that means that even though the situation looks like a snake it really is a fish. The more we get used to saying such to each other the easier it becomes to really know that God our Father is working in our lives to produce a better disciple and one who can endure the circumstances.

These trials that we encounter are sometimes just the events that everyone faces in a fallen world and sometimes they are events that occur to us because we are Disciples of Jesus Christ. The trials can occur in any arena in which we find ourselves. Sometimes we also will be in trials because of our trust in Jesus as our Lord. We must always remember that the invisible church is shrinking in size as the visible church is growing in favor in the world because there is not much difference between the visible church and the world. We now see "Christian" denominations ordaining homosexual priests and permitting abortion. The visible church wants to be like the world and to receive the approval of the world. Paul warned Timothy of the coming of the day of the merging of the world and the visible church:

*2Tim 4:3 "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires;*

*2Tim 4:4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths."*

This warning is also given to us by Hosea:

*Hosea 4:9 "And it will be, like people, like priest; So I will punish them for their ways, And repay them for their deeds."*

In the church the saying should be "like priests, like people", but we see the reversal that means that the priests will copy the people rather than the people copying the priests. Today we see this so much that it makes me truly ill. We see that the United Methodist Church has let stand the ordination of homosexual pastors and the same in the Episcopal Church. We see many members of the Catholic Church lamenting because their new Pope is not a liberal and they are afraid that the strict interpretations that Pope Paul kept will continue to be kept, like no women priests, no homosexual priests, no marrying by the priests, etc. We are living in a time of apostasy of the organized church and a time when the number of true Christians is becoming smaller and smaller. It seems to me that if Rapture occurs, the number of people going up will be so small that we will not be

missed by most people! The Scripture does tell us that the end will be like the time of Noah

*Luke 17:26 "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man:"*

How many righteous people were present in those days? The answer is one! God did take six other family members of Noah, but he was the only one that was stated as being righteous. Would the disappearance of Noah make headline news? Would the disappearance of Enoch made headline news? Would the disappearance of Elijah have made headline news? The answer to all of those questions is "no".

Unless God radically changes what is happening in so-called Christian churches soon, it seems that the percentage of members in the invisible church compared to the visible church will be very small. We cannot judge another person's heart, but by studying James and other Scripture we will see that there is a huge difference between a confessing Christian and a practicing Christian. Also always remember the frightening Scripture:

*Matt 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.*

*Matt 7:22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'*

*Matt 7:23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"*

Certainly the world has been in these times and is now very much like Paul warned Timothy. We orthodox Christians certainly already are enduring persecution by so-called Christian churches today. These trials involving other churches cause us to search the Word of God to be sure that we are standing on solid ground. And when we come out of these trials our reliability on the Word of God is even surer than when the trials started.

Peter also told us about the trials that we children of God would encounter:

*1Peter 1:6 "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,"*

I want to put the above verse in context so that we will know what he means by "in this":

*1Peter 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

*1Peter 1:4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,*

*1 Peter 1:5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

Now we see that “in this” refers to the great inheritance that God has given us that will never fade and that we are protected by God for the finished salvation that will be revealed to us in the last time. So with this great inheritance always in our mind we can say with Paul:

*Rom 8:18 “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”*

I implore every reader of this commentary to keep foremost in his/her mind the great inheritance that we are guaranteed by the One who created the universe and holds it together. When we go through the various trials in our daily life if we will keep the promise of God foremost in our mind then we can rejoice in the trials because we know that “God causes”, “it is a fish”, and God is protecting us with His power for the final salvation to appear. Certainly every time we go through such trials with these entire thoughts primary in our mind, we will achieve higher and higher levels of endurance and our faith is proven to us over and over again.

**James 1:4 “And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”**

Here is another imperative tense word: “let”. As we go through the various trials in this fallen world, the words of God that I have shown above will become more and more etched in our minds and we can relax and let the endurance have its perfect result. The endurance will produce a character that is becoming more and more perfect and complete and we will realize more and more that we indeed are children of God with everything of His as our inheritance for ever and ever. As we realize that we really do lack nothing then we become more and more satisfied and God is glorified more and more.

We all need to meditate on the following verses and make sure that they also describe us:

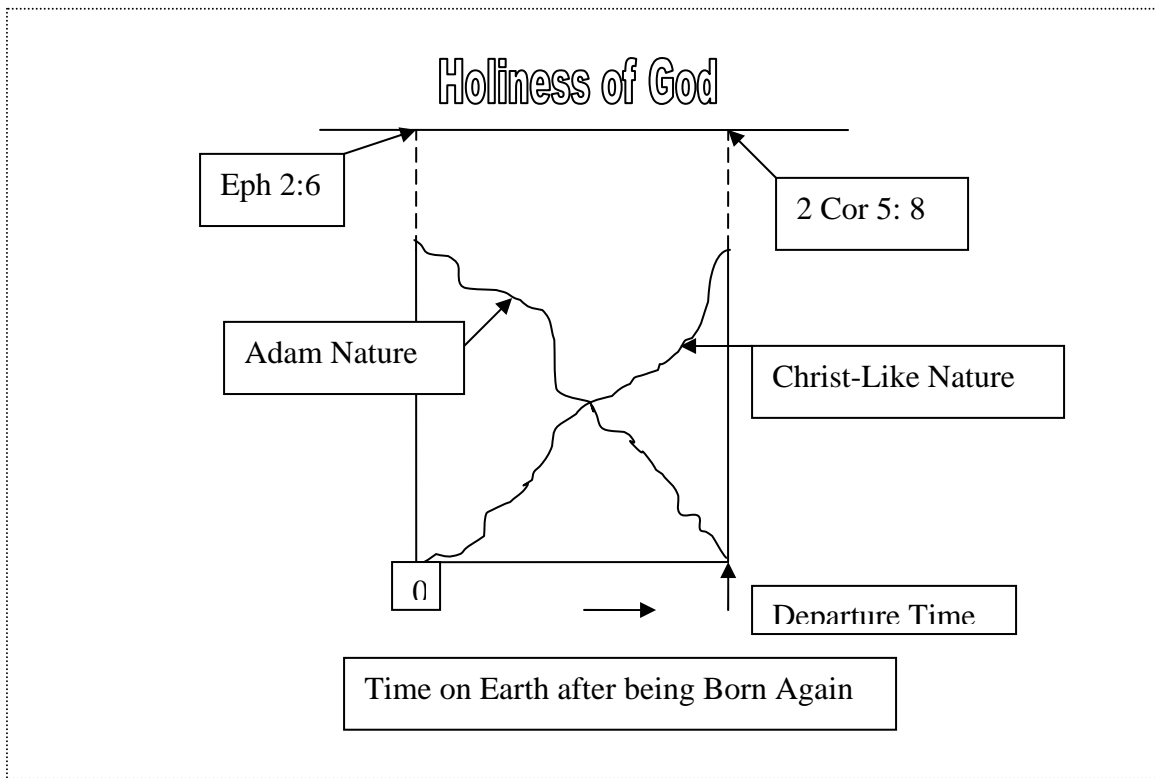
*Phil 4:11 “Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.”*

*1 Tim 6:8 “And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.”*

*Hem 13:5 “Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,””*

Satisfaction leads to contentment, which has the great result of glorifying God for He is the One Who has put us in the situation in which we now exist and has given us the “things” that we have as well as the people whom we love and cherish. Praise God!

The process of becoming satisfied and content is learned as Paul said and it fits the previous diagram that we have studied about our holiness and sanctification as seen below:



**James 1:5** “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

**James 1:6** But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

**James 1:7** For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, **James 1:8** being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

This promise is only for the person who has true faith for not all men have true faith.

*2Thes 3:1 “Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you;*

*2Thes 3:2 and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.”*

But what a wonderful and clear promise for the true child of God! There is no way for us to make progress in our trek toward sanctification, satisfaction and contentment without God’s wisdom working in our life. All of God’s children have need for more wisdom to succeed spiritually in this world. It does take some humility to realize that we need God’s wisdom and when we are in the proper mood of knowing that we must have the wisdom of God to deal with our situations then God freely gives us the needed wisdom. God has given us our faith as we know from our many studies of faith, so asking for wisdom in faith means that we ask in line with our understanding of His nature and His desire for our life here. If there is any doubt in our minds that we are asking according to

the will of God then we need to spend more time in prayer and meditation upon the Word of God. If our mind is “double” that means that we have not committed our lives totally to God. We are people who have one foot in the world and one foot attempting to be in God’s world. I say “attempting” because if we keep one foot in the world we have not given up all that we have here. We are attempting to serve two masters and that is impossible.

*Matt 6:24 “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”*

*Matt 10:38 “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”*

*Matt 16:24 “Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”*

*Mark 8:34 “And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”*

One cannot act as a Christian without being one. One cannot be a Christian without being a disciple. One cannot “play church”. Always remember Matt 7:21-23 and tremble. Being a Christian is very serious business and not something that one can be only for a short time one day a week. Being a Christian requires first the work of God to cause us to be born again and for Him to give us faith so that we can really hear Him and obey Him. This study should help us in better understanding ourselves and help us to make changes in our lives if we really are children of God:

*John 1:12 “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,”*

**James 1:9 “But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; James 1:10 and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.**

**James 1:11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.”**

**James 1:12 “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**

The richest any person can be is the one who has membership in the Kingdom of Heaven. If someone on this earth has no earthly possessions, but he/she is a child of God then he/she has the Father’s riches and he can glory in such a high position. If someone has much earthly wealth but he also is a child of God then he can glory in the fact that God has humiliated him by showing him that his earthly possessions are nothing:



*Mark 8:36 "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?"*

Jesus also related to us some valuable information in regard to having and not having in the following verses (I went further than needed to make my point, but it was almost impossible to find a stopping point!):

*Matt 13:11 "And He answered and said to them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.*

*Matt 13:12 "For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.*

*Matt 13:13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.*

*Matt 13:14 "And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;*

*Matt 13:15 For the heart of this people has become dull, And with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes Lest they should see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I should heal them.'*

*Matt 13:16 "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.*

*Matt 13:17 "For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*

I am really emphasizing Matt 13:12, but I had to put it into context. Jesus is saying that whoever has spiritual truth in his heart, that person will even be given more to the extent that the spiritual possessions will even be in abundance. When God says that we will have something in abundance and He is infinite then what we will have is beyond human calculation! He also says that the person who has no spiritual discernment will have whatever he does have taken away from him.

He then goes on to explain why He talks in parables. We who have spiritual discernment are truly blessed because God has caused us to be born again and has given us the faith that we need to proclaim that Jesus is indeed the Son of God and we then have eyes to see and ears to hear. No matter how hard someone who has not been born again tries to understand the truth of the universe, he will not ever understand because such truth is only discernable by those who have been born again.

Then in verse 17 Jesus says that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the coming of the Messiah, but the time was not right for them to see it even though they were real believers. There were only a few believers who were blessed to be living when the true Messiah was revealed. Many true believers before this time prophesized about the coming event but they did not live at the time of the revealing. Many people lived at the time of Jesus but were not true believers so they could not see Jesus as the Messiah.

Then there are us who live after the coming of the Messiah and we are so blessed with the complete Bible and the writings of many true believers who have helped us to apply the Word of God to our lives. We are truly blessed to live in this time, but we also have to use discernment wisely since there are so many people trying to deceive us with the world's wisdom. We are blessed to live after the giving of the Holy Spirit to all believers so that we can understand God's word and apply it to our lives. What we have been given is of immeasurable value because everything material will eventually fade away, but the things of God last forever. We see this in the following:

*2Cor 4:18 "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

So we need to keep our vision on Jesus and put God's words in our heart so that in times of testing we will be able to use those words and grow in endurance.

### **The Test of Blame in Temptation**

Even though we are God's children now we continue to be tempted because we still have the Adam nature within ourselves. Remember our famous drawing above and clearly understand that we are somewhere on that time chart growing in faith but still having a sinful nature that needs to be pruned. So James now tells us: who tempts us, why we are tempted, and what to do about the tempting.

**James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.**

**James 1:14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.**

**James 1:15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.**

**James 1:16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.**

**James 1:17 Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.**

**James 1:18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures."**

James makes it very clear immediately that our tempting does not come from God. God certainly cannot be tempted because He has no sinful nature. God also does not tempt anyone. So our tempting comes from within. The tempting comes because our sinful nature is still alive and we are not totally sanctified. Each of us still has lusts within ourselves and God allows that lust to be seen by us so that we can deal with it and grow in sanctification. Whenever I read verse 15 I am reminded of Psalm 1:

*Psalm 1:1 "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!"*

*Psalm 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.*

*Psalm 1:3 And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.”*

Sin does not just occur but it begins when we are carried away and tempted by our own lust. When our lust is aroused by ourselves, we begin to listen to the words of the wicked. As we then become more enticed by our lust we stop just walking in the council of the wicked but we then stand and begin to pay more attention to the words of the wicked. Unless we intervene, we will then completely stop and sit in the seat of scoffers. Lust gives rise to sin and the accomplishment of the sin will lead to death.

Can this process leading to physical death occur for a Christian? Well, let's let the Bible answer all of our spiritual questions:

*1Cor 11:27 “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.*

*1Cor 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.*

*1Cor 11:29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly.*

*1Cor 11:30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.”*

In the above, Paul is referring to Christians who partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. The word “sleep” here means physical death. So it is very important that we examine ourselves before partaking of the Lord's Supper.

*1John 5:16 “If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.*

*1John 5:17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.”*

These are very controversial verses, but nevertheless the Bible does tell us that there is a time when God will bring a child home because he is not being the child of God before the world. Some people have said that this sin leading to death is suicide and it is thus the unforgivable sin. However the Bible does not tell us that suicide is such a sin and you will find a paper dealing with this topic on <http://livingtheology.com> so I will not comment further here on this topic. For the purpose of this particular study let us just say that sin is serious and we need to pay close attention to temptations involving our lusts and we need to react in a way that leads us to repentance and a fresh start in our Christian walk.

So we need to be wise to the fact that we are still sinners in practice even though we have all of that sin forgiven because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We need to know about all of the lusts that are still alive in us so God allows us to be tempted. But we need to also have God's wisdom to react to the arousal of our lust so that we will not

even turn in our walk to listen to practitioners of that lust, much less stand with them. As God allows us to see our lusts for what they are, we need to immediately stop the arousal and make note to ourselves of our vulnerability to that particular lust. Once we recognize it for what it is, we should then be more alert to avoid placing ourselves in situations where it is readily available. The best way to cure ourselves of lusts is to dwell on the Word of God and make It part of our very being.

James then tells us to not be deceived for God is perfect and in Him there is no imperfection. A weak analogy here is the perfect crystal that has no growth defects and contains no contaminant. There probably is no such thing as an absolute perfect crystal but this is still a weak analogy. The Bible clearly tells us that God is pure, perfect and never changes.

*Mal 3:6 "For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."*

*1John 1:5 "And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."*

*Heb 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever."*

God is perfect and He has caused us to be born again by the truth of His Word. The first born again children of God after the ascension of Jesus and Pentecost were indeed the first fruits of God's new creation on earth. But even after two thousand years the people that are still being born again as God's new children are still part of the first fruits of the new workings of God in the world. Regeneration is totally an act of God. In James 1:18, "brought forth" is from the same verb that is translated "gives birth" in verse 15 so God brings to life what was spiritually dead as we studied in our study of the book of Ephesians. A miracle occurs every time there is a physical birth and when there is a spiritual birth. The spiritual birth is not observable but the results are definitely observable as James is telling us very clearly.

### **The Test of Response to the Word**

**James 1:19 "This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;**

**James 1:20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.**

**James 1:21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls."**

A hunger for the Word of God is one of the truest marks of a true child of God. Immediately after my salvation I began to read the Bible and order reference books. My son commented once that it looked like we were becoming a library because of all the books coming by mail. I still have that hunger for the Word. But I certainly do not consider myself mature in my listening and applying the Word. If I could only always be quick to listen to the Words from Scripture that are in my mind and being brought to the front of my mind by the Holy Spirit in particular situations! Unfortunately even at 66

years old I have still not learned to always be quick to hear. God has given us Scripture for purposes in our lives after salvation:

*2Tim 3:16 "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;*

*2Tim 3:17 that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."*

Certainly the Word is for "training in righteousness" so that we can react in every situation as a child of God as I stated above. When we study the Word, the words are there for application in situations in which the Sovereign God places us. When I go ahead and speak without waiting to listen for a Word, I always get in trouble.

In the context of James' writing, it could be that his warning against anger is an anger that reacts against the Word because a verse convicts us. I have often seen non-Christians react angrily to a Scripture verse, particularly one that speaks to a personal behavior such as: homosexual behavior, role of women in the church, etc. You should go ahead and name some verses to which you have observed people react angrily. The word for anger here does not mean an explosive anger but one that smelters and simmers, but if we are observant we can see it in the eyes, facial expressions, body language, and a quick changing of the subject. When the Word of God convicts a child of God, he will react with pain, repentance, and a change in behavior to match the behavior that God expects of His children.

God indeed has high expectations of us as we work in this world to help show forth what God has done to us internally. Much of what we must do is not logical from a human perspective as Jesus taught in the verses below that amplifies what James said when he wrote "for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God".

*Matt 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'*

*Matt 5:39 "But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

*Matt 5:40 "And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.*

*Matt 5:41 "And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two.*

*Matt 5:42 "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.*

*Matt 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.'*

*Matt 5:44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you*

*Matt 5:45 in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

*Matt 5:46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same?*

*Matt 5:47 "And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?"*

*Matt 5:48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*

Our human goal is indeed perfection even though we know that such will not be totally achieved while we are here. Always keep the figure concerning sanctification above clear in your mind as you walk in the world. Indeed all of our sins have been totally paid for by our Lord, but we are to work out that righteousness in our lives here to demonstrate to the world that God indeed has done a miraculous work within us.

*Eph 4:22 "that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,  
Eph 4:23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,  
Eph 4:24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."*

Verse 21 is indeed one of the keys to our goal of sanctification as we digest the Word of God. We are commanded to put aside all of the evil that was in our lives and all of the filthiness that still remains after our rebirth. The Bible is very clear that the old Adam nature is still there and that we are to deal with putting it to death. Then we are commanded to receive the word implanted. Note that James said that we are to receive the implanted word in humility for regardless of our situation before our born again experience we are humbled by what God has done for us. The word that is implanted is indeed able to save our souls. Our dependence upon the word of God is total and we learn the completeness of that dependence as we go through trials and temptations in the world. Praise God!

**James 1:22 "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.**

**James 1:23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;**

**James 1:24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.**

**James 1:25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.**

**James 1:26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.**

**James 1:27 This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world."**

James now commands us to prove that we are people who really live by the word of God. Anyone can hear the word of God but not really understand it and its applications. But those who have been truly born again have the Holy Spirit living inside us to convict us and to teach us as we read. People who only hear the word of God and think that they are children of God are self-deluded and that is indeed a very pitiful state for a person. A

true child of God receives the Word of God in soil that has already been prepared by God as Jesus taught:

*Matt 13:8 “And others fell on the good soil, and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”*

*Matt 13:23 “And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”*

The Word of God is implanted in the Christian and it yields fruit. As a university professor for 38 years, a “hearer” is remindful to me of someone who is taking a course as an audit. A person auditing courses does not have to do the homework or take and tests and most people who take a course as an audit do not do much toward really learning the material. It seems to me that James is saying that nobody can audit the life of a Christian. We have to take the Christian life for credit and then do the homework, learn through the trials and temptations, and absorb God’s Word into our heart and minds.

(When we look at ourselves in a mirror we don’t really see ourselves as others see us for we are looking at a mirror image – a reversal of ourselves. I remember when my son was very young and he wanted to look like me. He thought that he was parting his hair on the same side that I did because when he looked at me he saw my hair parted on the right side. So when he looked in the mirror at himself he parted his hair on what was actually the left side. He became very upset when he finally learned that he was parting his hair on the opposite side than the side I was parting. This episode is very interesting to me because in his mind he knew that my part was on my right side and when he looked in the mirror at himself he saw his right arm in the left side of the mirror. It was only when he saw a picture of us together that he realized that he was parting his hair on the “wrong” side. He had made himself the mirror image of me, but he wanted to look exactly like me. My son is very intelligent and is able to see things clearly that others have a hard time understanding and perhaps this mirror incident was an illustration of his abilities. He is now a successful industrial engineer who uses his abilities to help people do their jobs even better than they could possibly imagine doing them. He has a clear vision of how they can work together, which was demonstrated early in his life with the mirror. My son fixed his image to change himself into a mirror image of me and not of me. My son fixed his image to change himself into a mirror image of me and not of me.

So what am I trying to say from the above?)

I think that sometimes we are trying to make ourselves into the mirror image of Jesus rather than in the exact image of Jesus. Our wedding ring is on the left hand of the mirror image. Our heart is on the right side of the mirror image. When we apply Scripture to ourselves to mold ourselves into the image of Jesus are we applying it correctly or are we making a mirror image? I think James is also saying that we can walk away from a physical mirror but we should never walk away from the spiritual mirror. My appearance can certainly change after I walk away from the physical mirror and I probably am not

very away of how I look after walking away. But the spiritual mirror should always be with me in my mind as I want to reflect a life in the world that would please my Lord. I believe that such a conclusion about the affect of Scripture on our daily life is what James is talking about in verse 25. The same test of obedience and walk in the world is found in many other verses as seen below.

*Deut 30:20 "That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." (KJV)*

*1John 2:3 "And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.*

*1John 2:4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;*

*1John 2:5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:*

*1John 2:6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."*

*John 15:14 "You are My friends, if you do what I command you."*

*John 14:23 "Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.*

*John 14:24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.""*

We also see that even Paul struggled with the concept of walking in the world and always doing the will of the Father:

*Rom 7:14 "For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.*

*Rom 7:15 For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.*

*Rom 7:16 But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good.*

*Rom 7:17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.*

*Rom 7:18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.*

*Rom 7:19 For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.*

*Rom 7:20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*

*Rom 7:21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.*

*Rom 7:22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,*



*Rom 7:23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.  
Rom 7:24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?"*

I cannot leave you with only a question, so let's continue to read the answer:

*Rom 7:25 "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.*

*Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

What a wonderful answer God gives us!!!!

In verses 26 and 27 James gives us some very practical applications of our spiritual life. We must bridle our tongue. Maybe not everyone knows what a bridle is, but it is what is placed over a horse's mouth to control the movement of its mouth and its direction so that the rider can go where he really wants to go. We are to use Scripture as the bridle of our tongue and when we do not do so the Holy Spirit will remind us if we indeed are children of God. I have suffered the reminder by the Holy Spirit many times and I praise God for His presence. James also gives us some practical applications of walking as a Christian by taking care of orphans and widows and to keep ourselves unstained by the world.

We are not to be taken out of the world but we are not to be stained by the world. A stain occurs when some substance penetrates the protective covering of a garment and binds with the makeup of the garment. A stain is usually very difficult to remove as most people know. A spiritual stain can also cause much suffering by ourselves and others that we love. How do we avoid getting stained? We do not let the external substance penetrate our protection. There are so many sources of worldly stain in the world today that not getting stained is very difficult and really impossible by our power alone. However if we are really a Christian then getting stained by the world is very painful and we will work hard to apply the spiritual salve to remove the stain. Only God can totally remove the spiritual stain:

*Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool."*

I could spend a lot of time on this verse, but I will not do so here. In the first place how can we reason together with Almighty, Holy God? He does not need help in the reasoning process!!! To reason with God means that we totally put aside all of our being and listen totally to him. I do not believe that this verse is talking about our Sin, but our daily sin. Jesus warned the Pharisees against whitewashing their sins as did God in the Old Testament time period.

*Ezek 22:28 “And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord God,’ when the Lord has not spoken.”*

*Matt 23:27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.”*

Paul also understood the concept of whitewashing rather than removing Sin:

*Acts 23:1 “And Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, ‘Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.’”*

*Acts 23:2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth.*

*Acts 23:3 Then Paul said to him, ‘God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! And do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?’”*

The perfect payment of Jesus took away all of our Sin. Taking away our Sin is not the same at all as covering it. However as we walk in the world we will stumble and become stained. God promises us that such stains will be washed away by His continuing mercy that works in our lives.

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