

THE TWO WISDOMS

The Epistle of James

Version 1.2

Dr. Brian J. Bailey

“The Two Wisdoms—The Epistle of James”

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THE FIVE PRINCIPAL THEMES OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

- 1 *The necessity of wisdom*
- 2 *The control of the tongue*
- 3 *Faith without works is dead*
- 4 *Impartiality*
- 5 *Prayer*

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PART ONE

The Introduction

1:1

1:1 - *“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.”* James, the author of this epistle, was the oldest of Christ’s brothers, whom Mary and Joseph had after the birth of Jesus. According to New Testament history, James was martyred in A.D. 62. He was recognised as the leader of the Jewish Church in Jerusalem.

James begins by introducing himself as the servant of God. The Greek word *doulos* translated “servant” literally means “a slave.” There is much lost in this translation.

Our understanding today of a servant is much different than a servant (or slave) in New Testament times. We think of a servant as a person who is employed. In our times, a servant has certain rights. However, in Roman times, a slave had no rights whatsoever. A slave was completely dependent upon his master for everything, including his life, because the master had the right of life and death over his slave. Therefore, when James says he is “the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,” he is saying that he has surrendered all his rights to the Lord. He submitted his life to Him, and lived only to serve his Master—the Lord Jesus Christ.

“To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” James addressed his letter to the 12 tribes of Israel that were dispersed

throughout the world. We know from scriptural and secular accounts that there were many times in the history of Israel when the Lord's people were dispersed, having been taken captive by surrounding heathen nations. They were taken to Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, and Persia initially. This is evident in Acts chapter 2, when Jews from all over the world had gathered at Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. Acts 2:5 says, "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." (See Acts 2:5-13.)

The historian Philo recorded the words of King Agrippa, who said to Emperor Caligula, "Jerusalem is the capital of most countries." The reason for this incredible statement is that Jews had taken residence in virtually every colony and nation of the Roman Empire, and they regularly sent their temple tithes to Jerusalem.

Today, Jerusalem preoccupies the thoughts of the world leaders, and will continue to do so until Jesus comes. When He does, Jerusalem will become His holy capital and residence. All nations then will come to worship Him in the temple that will be built according to the vision of the prophet Ezekiel (cf. Ezek. 40-48).

As believers, we are the spiritual seed of Christ, and have been grafted into Israel. Therefore, although it is addressed to the 12 tribes of Israel that were scattered throughout the world, the epistle of James is also very pertinent to us.

PART TWO

The Purpose of Trials

1:2-12

The purpose of trials, as seen in James 1:2-12, is to work out patience (or endurance) in our lives, which will make us complete and perfect in Christ.

1:2 - *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers [or various] temptations.”* The Greek word *peirasmos* translated *temptation* in the KJV means “a putting to proof.” The *New King James Version* reads: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various **trials**.”

In this verse, James is not speaking of moral temptations, but of trials and testings. *Divers* means “various” or “many-faceted.” **God tests us in every area of our lives so that we will be vessels fit for the Master’s use.** One faulty area of our lives can ruin us.

*Trials work
patience in our
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We need to determine the source of trials. Many trials are God-originated. He tests us to purify us and to make us more like Him. However, when we ignore the Lord’s warnings or we do things that are unwise, often we can bring upon ourselves an unnecessary trial and undue pressure. Even these man-made trials, however, can work together for good for those who love the Lord (Rom. 8:28).

Peter, for example, set himself up for an unnecessary test by proudly declaring that he would never forsake the Lord. Because of this, Peter failed and almost gave up, but the Lord worked through this trial to turn it into a blessing.

Christ said in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:10-12: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice! We need to see trials from the Lord’s perspective. Trials are actually stepping-stones to a higher plain of glory in the Lord.

When we face trials, we will either be overcomers who rejoice in the Lord, or we will become bitter (cf. Heb. 12:15). A rejoicing spirit will safeguard our hearts from bitterness. Solomon said in Proverbs 17:22, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.” Joyfulness actually has been proven to be a healing tonic to the soul and body. On the other hand, a person who is plagued by melancholy, complaining, and sadness is more likely to become physically ill. Yes, the joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh. 8:10)!

The Lord tests His people to purify them and make them more like Him. Malachi 3:3 speaks of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, “And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an

offering in righteousness.” The Lord is like a Refiner of gold. He passes us through fiery trials to purify us of impurities and less valuable metals so that we may be totally pure.

1:3-4 - *“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”* **The trying or testing of our faith develops patience within us.**

Paul says in Romans 5:3, “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience.” The Greek word *hupomone* translated *patience* actually means “cheerful endurance” and “constancy and perseverance.” In other words, as Christ said, those “who endure to the end will be saved” (Mt. 10:22). Unless we experience pressures and trials, this precious divine fruit of the Spirit will never be developed within our hearts.

The Apostle Paul said to the Thessalonians, “So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure” (2 Th. 1:4). Furthermore, he said to his spiritual son, Timothy, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3). As Christians, we are called upon to endure much hardship as soldiers in the Lord’s Army.

John Wesley married late in life, and unfortunately he married a woman who had very little of the nature of Christ. His wife was very mean to him, locking him in his room at times, and literally beating him up on other occasions. This continued for about six years until she left him. This bad experience

could have ruined John Wesley's life; instead, it propelled him forward in the ways of God and in the ministry.

John Wesley said, "My marriage was the turning point of my life, because it was during that six year period that I really learned how to pray." He turned an adverse situation into something very fruitful. This is the fruit of patience and cheerful endurance.

It is interesting that a right response to trials develops patience in us, which in turn enables us to endure trials. Without patience, we will give up somewhere along life's way. Patience will lead us to Christian perfection; it will make us complete in Christ so that we lack nothing.

1:5 - *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."* To whom does God give wisdom? Well, Daniel 2:21 tells us that He gives "wisdom to the wise." In other words, the Lord gives wisdom to those whose hearts are inclined toward wisdom and appreciate it. Here in this verse, we are given another key to receiving wisdom. If we want wisdom, we must ask for it. It is that simple. The cry for wisdom should continually be upon our hearts. Wisdom is the most important thing in life (Prov. 4:7).

1:6-7 - *"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering [or doubting]. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."* When we petition the Lord for something, such as wisdom (v. 5), we must believe that He is going to give it to us. We must not

doubt or waver. Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” This *attitude* of believing that He is going to answer our prayers pleases the Lord.

Doubt is one of the greatest weapons of the enemy. It was doubt that caused Peter to begin to sink when he was walking on the water. Matthew 14:29-31 says, “And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”

Peter had focused on outward circumstances, looking at the terrible storm and the raging winds. This caused him to lose the faith that had, at first, enabled him to walk upon the water. **May we always remember not to consider outward circumstances; we must have faith in the Lord.** If we ask the Lord for something with doubt in our hearts, we will not receive anything. Let us believe in the Lord who is able to do more abundantly than we could ever ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

1:8 - “*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*” Many people are double-minded. They are not *totally* committed to the Lord; part of them wants to do what is right, but another part of them does not.

Elijah said to the nation of Israel, which was divided between true worship of Jehovah and worship of Baal, “How long halt

ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Ki. 18:21). The Israelites were trying to worship the Lord and Baal at the same time. May we cry out to the Lord, as King David did, “Unite my heart to fear thy name” (Ps. 86:11). We want to be totally committed to walking in the ways of God.

1:9-11 - *“Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted. But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.”* James encourages the brother of humble circumstances to rejoice in the fact that he is exalted, and the rich man to rejoice in his abasement.

Paul says in Colossians 3:11 that in the kingdom of God “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.”

In Christ, it is not our social class or race that matters, but how much of the nature of Christ has been wrought in our hearts. Christ in us is the hope of glory! Moreover, we are to bear in mind that riches are, at best, transitory. They have no lasting substance. The rich man should not place his trust in his riches, but in Christ.

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

a blessing not upon those who are tested and experience temptation, but upon those who *endure* temptations and triumph over them. During times of testing, we need to cry out for grace to remain faithful.

Joseph had to endure the daily enticing of Potiphar's wife. By the grace of God, he remained faithful and we read of his testimony in Genesis 41:38-40, "And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find *such a one* as this *is*, a man in whom the Spirit of God *is*? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, *there is* none so discreet and wise as thou *art*: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt." Verse 12 goes on to say that when we have passed the test, the Lord will give us a crown of life. Paul says in Romans 5:17, "...They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." This crown of life can also be given to us *in this life*, so that we can reign as kings with Christ. The Lord Jesus said in John 10:10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

PART THREE

The Source of Temptations

1:13-18

The source of temptations is our own inward lust. God is the author of trials, as in the case of Job's trial, but He is not the author of temptations in the normal usage of the word. God does not tempt us to do evil. It is our own carnal nature and lust that cause us to be tempted. Trials, however, which serve to purify us of our carnal nature and desires and make us holy, come from the Lord.

1:13-14: *“Let no man say when he is tempted [to do evil], I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”* The Lord tests us and tries us, but He does not tempt us to *do evil*. The Greek word here for *temptation* means “to tempt to do evil.” This does not come from God, but from man's own lustful and evil desires.

Sin came into the human race through Adam and Eve. As children of Adam and Eve, we have all been born with a sin nature. When we are born again, the Lord puts within us the divine nature, the nature of Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Temptations to do evil come from the devil, but if there was nothing *inside of us* that desired to do evil, we would not respond to those temptations. It is from within that we choose to respond to temptation or to say “no” to temptation.

Therefore, the root of the problem is not the devil or the temptations, but our own sinful nature which needs to be subdued and transformed. We cannot blame God when we are tempted and we yield to sin. We must choose not to yield to sin, by the grace of God, and choose to yield the members of our bodies to righteousness (Rom. 6:19). Christ said in John 14:30, “Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” Satan had no power over Christ. He had no hold on Him whatsoever because there was nothing in Christ that would respond to Satan’s temptations, as Christ proved when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1-11). We should ask the Lord to purify us so that there will be nothing in us that desires evil or that will respond to temptation.

Just think for a moment about the terrible bondage of smoking. The power of smoking does not lie in the cigarettes, but in the desire of the person to smoke. This is the same with every temptation. Temptations just reveal what is inside of us. **The power of temptations lies within us. Our desires need to be purified so that we do not respond to temptations.** We must choose not to yield to sin, but by the grace of God, choose to yield the members of our bodies to righteousness (Rom. 6:19).

1:15 - *“Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”* Here, we see the progression of sin. First of all, sin is conceived through lust. Then lust gives birth to sin. When sin comes to maturity and is full-grown, it completes the third step, and brings forth death!

God told Adam and Eve that if they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil they would “surely die” (Gen. 2:17). Satan sowed seeds of doubt in Eve’s mind about whether they *really* would die. He said to Eve, “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). This was a lie from the pit of hell. Adam and Eve did die when they sinned—they died spiritually. Darkness came into their souls, and they were cut off from the presence of the Lord. This is the fruit of sin. Every time we sin, we are cutting ourselves off from the life-flow of the Spirit of God. **Apart from the Lord, we can have no life.**

Let me recount a story to you. Many years ago, I was an assistant pastor in a church in France. There was a lady in the church who appeared to the natural eye to be very spiritual. Her son was a pastor, and she arose early every morning at four o’clock to pray. She seemed to all to be the epitome of spirituality. When I first joined the church, I was very impressed by her.

What I did not know, however, was that she was leading a group of people in the church who were criticising the senior pastor. The pastor warned her over and over again, but she continued to speak out against him. The last message I preached at that church before I left was her funeral message. She was still alive, but that message signalled her ultimate doom. I said in my message, “God is going to put His foot on the serpent, and crush its head.” After that service, this lady told her friends, “I have to put my house in order because this is the end.”

I left France, and two weeks later I was informed of what happened. She was on her way to a communion service at

church, when suddenly her car was swept off the road and crashed into a tree, killing her instantly. Some people who attended the same church were following behind her. They testified that the road conditions were perfect, but it was as though a huge hand swept her car off the road and wrapped it around a tree!

When sin matures, it brings forth death; and in drastic cases like this, it brings forth physical death. God is longsuffering, but there comes a time when He says, “That is enough!” and He judges sin.

We cannot be hypocrites and pretend to be one thing in church and live a totally different life outside of church. We must be upright, and put things right before the Lord. **If we do not allow the Lord to deal with sin in our lives, that sin will mature and eventually destroy us.**

We know that because King Saul did not obey the Lord and slay all of the Amalekites, it was an Amalekite who eventually killed him (see 2 Sam. 1:6-10). The very sin that we allow to continue in our lives will be the very same sin that ultimately will destroy us.

Let us pray as Christ instructed us, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Mt. 6:13). Peter tells us that we “are kept by the power of God” (1 Pet. 1:5). The Lord is able to keep us from falling into temptation (Jude 1:24), just as He kept Joseph. **It is God who gives us the grace not to yield to sin, but we must utilise this grace.** The Lord is not going to overpower us and force us to do what is right. The choice is ours. The Apostle Peter learned that he could

not resist temptation in his own strength. He argued with the Lord, saying he would *never* (under any circumstance) forsake Him. These arrogant, brash statements made Peter vulnerable to the enemy's attack.

Both Peter and John were in the courtyard at Jesus' trial, but only Peter was tested. If Peter had not contested what the Lord had said, he would not have denied the Lord three times as he did. John, on the other hand, was protected from this temptation of being induced to deny the Lord. May we realise, as John did, that we are mortal humans who can easily fall. Our reliance is solely upon the power and grace of God to keep us from falling into temptation.

1:16-17 - *“Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”* Every good thing that we receive comes from the Lord. Psalm 34:10 says, “The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.” There is nothing which comes from God that is not good.

The Lord Jesus said in Luke 11:10-13: “For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Even a natural father delights to give good

gifts to his children. How much more shall our Heavenly Father surely care for us!

God is called the *Father of lights*. God is the source of all light. He is the One who created light (Gen. 1:14). He created the sun, the moon, and all the stars. James uses two terms of astronomy to *contrast* the variableness of the fluctuating stars, the sun and the moon, and the unchanging, unvarying nature of the Lord. In Him, there is “*no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*” He is not as the heavenly bodies of light, which constantly change and vary. **The Lord is the same yesterday, today, and forever; He never changes; we can place our trust in Him.**

1:18 - “*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*” We have been *born again* into the family of God by the Word of truth. God has chosen us and adopted us so that we might be His first fruits. In Israel, all the first fruits of the harvest had to be offered unto the Lord and dedicated unto Him (Ex. 23:19; 34:26).

There were three parts of the harvest: the first fruits (the best of the harvest), the general harvest, and then the gleanings (which the reapers left in the fields as sustenance for the poor). The first fruits of the harvest were the best and choicest part of the harvest. Israel was called the Lord’s first fruits (Jer. 2:3). May we also be “choice” unto Him. God has ordained us to be the firstfruits of His creation.

Paul says in Hebrews 12:22-23: “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly

Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.” The Church of God that comes to perfection and is joined to the Lord in marriage as His bride is called “the Church of the Firstborn.”

PART FOUR

Faith and Good Works

1:19-27

1:19-20 - “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” There are three helpful exhortations here in verse 19—be quick to listen (swift to hear), slow to speak, and slow to wrath (or to become angry).

Be Quick to Listen

The art of listening has been lost today. Very few people are actually good listeners. We should listen to what others have to say and glean wisdom from others. **It is far better to listen than it is to speak.** The Lord said in Matthew 13:9, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (NKJV). The Lord repeats this exhortation to listen after each of His messages to the seven churches in Revelation: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (cf. Rev. 2:17).

Unless we listen well to what people are saying, we can really misunderstand them. I saw this happen firsthand in a half-humorous situation. In French, there is one word that means both “vacation” and “retirement.” This once led to a confusing situation. There was a missionary who misunderstood the senior pastor to say that he was *retiring*, when in actuality he was trying to say that he was going

on *vacation*. This missionary invited another missionary to come and replace this pastor. Let me tell you, it was quite the ordeal—and all because of a simple misunderstanding.

Remember, one of the gauges of a wise man is *how well he listens*. Proverbs 1:5 says, “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.” You can tell how wise a person is by how well he listens. Therefore, let us be quick to listen, and slow to speak.

Be Slow to Speak

The second exhortation James gives us is to be slow to speak. **We should always think before we speak.** Proverbs 10:19 says, “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise” (NKJV). If our tongue is moving all the time, we can be sure that we are going to sin with our mouths. May we carefully consider what we are going to say before we say it.

We should only speak when we have something to say that is of worth. Proverbs 13:3 warns about those who speak too much: “He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.” Proverbs 17:28 says, “Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.” We are going to be judged by our words. Christ said in Matthew 12:37, “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” Therefore, we should be very careful about what we say, especially to the Lord.

We are given a very solemn warning by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 5:1-6, “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool’s voice is known by multitude of words. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?”

We are told to be more ready to listen than to speak when we go into the presence of the Lord, taking special caution not to be rash with our mouths. We often make hasty vows to the Lord, without considering beforehand if God is requiring us to make that vow and if we are able to keep that vow. If we vow something to the Lord, He will never forget it.

A missionary friend of mine was complaining to the Lord, “Lord, you have sent me to the hardest place on the face of the earth.” The Lord replied, “I have only answered your prayer.” The Lord then reminded him of a service 15 years before when he went to the altar in response to a missionary call. He asked the Lord to send him to the hardest place on earth, and that is exactly what the Lord did. We must be careful what we say to the Lord, because we must keep our word.

One area in particular in which we should be slow to speak is in the area of criticism. The Jewish rabbis had a saying concerning “the third tongue.” The third tongue is a tongue of criticism that slays the speaker, the one to whom it is spoken, and the one of whom it is spoken. This Jewish rabbinical saying, although not in Scripture, is very true. Criticism does three things:

- 1) *It slays the speaker.* If we speak against someone, it will actually destroy us and pierce our own heart. The joy of the Lord will leave and we will actually become a conduit for an evil spirit.
- 2) *It slays the one to whom it is spoken.* After a person listens to these comments they will become “slain” in countenance and heart.
- 3) *It slays the one of whom it is spoken.* Criticism defames and destroys the person who is being criticised. Criticism actually releases evil spirits to attack us.

Be Slow to Become Angry

One of the wonderful qualities of the Lord is that He is slow to wrath and anger. Psalm 103:8 says, “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.” (cf. Neh. 9:17; Ps. 145:8; Joel 2:13). Wrath is one of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20) which we must put off (Col. 3:8). Paul says in Ephesians 4:31, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”

Proverbs 14:29 says, “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.” We must control our temper and not become angry quickly. The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. We should let God fight for us and not seek our own vengeance.

1:21 - *“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”* **God requires of us to lay aside all filthiness, wickedness, and uncleanness (Eph. 5:3-4).** The blood of Jesus is able to cleanse us from every one of these. We are to receive with a meek spirit the engrafted Word of God which is able to save us.

1:22 - *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”* There is a terrible deception that overtakes those who hear the Word of God preached, but do not obey it. They think they are fine as they are, because they go to church and they read their Bibles, even though they are not walking in the ways of God. Paul said in Romans 2:13, “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” We are not righteous just because we are hearers of the Word; it is only those who are doers of the Word that are righteous in the sight of God.

Christ said in Matthew 7:21, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Only those who *do* the will of God make it to heaven. Performing miracles, doing Christian service, and giving large offerings

are not an acceptable substitute for obedience (Mt. 7:22-23). We must *obey* the Word of God!

1:23-24 - *“For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”* James is making reference here to the brazen laver in the Tabernacle of Moses (Ex. 30:17-21; 40:7).

We read in Exodus 38:8 concerning the laver, *“And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the lookingglasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.”*

The laver, which was located in the Outer Court between the altar of burnt offerings and the Holy Place, was made from the bronze mirrors of the Jewish women. The purpose of this laver of water was for the washing and cleansing of the priests. The laver spiritually speaks of being washed by the water of the Word of God.

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Paul says in Ephesians 5:25-27, “...as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” As the Israelites approached the laver of water, they saw their reflection in it, and thus recognised their need for cleansing.

The Word of God is like a mirror. It reveals our needs to us and shows us who we really are, exposing our need for cleansing. However, the Word of God not only reveals our needs, but it also cleanses us.

James likens the man who hears the Word, but does not obey it unto a man who beholds his face in a mirror and then forgets what he saw. If we just hear the Word of God but we do not obey it, we are like someone who looks into a mirror and sees his need, but does not wash himself.

1:25 - *“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”* Those who know the ways of God and continue to walk in them without going astray will be blessed.

1:26 - *“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.”* The word “religious” is a Latin word that means “to bind together that which was once loosed.” *True religion* is uniting God and man together again after their separation, which came because of sin. Anyone who appears to be religious (bound to God) and does not control his tongue deceives his own heart, and his religion is vain. We must be very careful to control our tongues.

1:27 - *“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”* True religion involves good works and also a holy, separated life; one without the other does not constitute *pure religion*

in the sight of God. We must maintain this balance between good works and a holy life.

Caring for the Fatherless and Widows

Orphans are often mentioned together with widows in the Scriptures. Orphans and widows were helpless, needing someone to care for them. One of the titles of the Lord is “A Father of the fatherless.” Psalm 68:5 says, “A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.” **God cares for those who do not have a natural father to look after their welfare.**

Deuteronomy 10:17-18 says, “For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.” Hosea 14:3 says of the Lord, “In thee the fatherless findeth mercy.”

In the Old Testament, God commanded that the Israelites should care for the fatherless and widows. They were to be fed from the tithe of every third year (Deut. 14:28-29; 26:12-13). The sheaves that were left in the fields at harvest time were reserved for orphans and widows to glean (Deut. 24:19).

The Lord warned the Israelites to care for orphans and widows, and not to take advantage of them, for He is their Protector. God declared in Exodus 22:22-23, “Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry.”

God's plan of provision for the poor of the land is through His people. He says expressly in Deuteronomy 15:7-8,10-11, "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth... Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." The blessing of God comes upon men and women who give to those in need. This responsibility of the people of God to care for the orphans and widows in the Church is held up in the New Testament. It is something that we, as individuals, and our local churches, should take very seriously. God says in His Word that He will fight against those who do not care for them.

There are several *stipulations* given in Holy Scripture concerning the care of the Church for widows. We read in 1 Timothy 5:3-16 where the Apostle Paul gives very clear instructions: The Church is obliged to care for widows who do not have any living children who can care for them, but those who do have children should be cared for primarily by their children (v. 3-5,16). It is the responsibility of children to care for their parents when they are old. Younger widows under the age of 60 are encouraged to remarry, if possible, so they will have a husband to care for them (v. 14).

It is one of the responsibilities of the Church and of Christians to care for the poor and needy. The Church, however, must never become a place of welfare. Those who are able to work should work instead of living off the Church. I have seen so many churches ruined by going to an extreme in the care of the poor, not abiding by the stipulations given in Holy Scripture.

On the other hand, I have known other churches who have cut themselves off from the blessing of God because they refused to care at all for the poor. *We must be balanced in the realm of caring for the poor; and we must use much wisdom.* We want to take this message to heart, and be patterns of “good works” (Tit. 2:7).

A Pure, Holy Life

In order to have the approval of God upon our lives and walk in true religion, we must keep ourselves pure and *unspotted from the world*. The best Biblical definition of holiness is “being separate from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and being joined unto God who alone is holy.” We must not allow ourselves to become corrupted by the world. Jude 1:23 says we should hate “the garment spotted (or defiled) by the flesh.”

The prophet Zechariah was shown a vision of Joshua the high priest clothed with filthy garments. Zechariah was not seeing Joshua’s physical garments, but his spiritual garments, which had been defiled and spotted by the world.

Zechariah 3:4 says, “And [the Lord] answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy

garments from [Joshua]. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.” Joshua’s filthy garments represented sin in his life, which the Lord promised to cleanse him from and then clothe him with new spiritual garments.

Jude 1:24 is one of the most encouraging verses in the whole of the Word of God: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” **The Lord Jesus triumphed over sin as a man, and He is able to keep us from falling and present us faultless before His throne!**

PART FIVE

The Impartiality of Faith

2:1-13

The problem of *partiality*, preferring one person above another because of social or economic status or other reasons, has plagued mankind from his inception. Partiality, in one form or another, was one of the biggest problems of the New Testament Church, and it is one of the biggest problems of the Church in our days. The Lord and the writers of Holy Scripture condemn partiality. James makes it very clear in verse 9 that partiality is a sin.

We especially must not show partiality in a matter of judging between right and wrong. Proverbs 24:23 says, “It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment.” And Proverbs 28:21 says, “To have respect of persons is not good: for a piece of bread that man will transgress.” Men will pervert justice for the smallest bribe, even a piece of bread. **What is right is right and what is wrong is wrong, irrespective of the social or economic status of the person who is wrong** (cf. Col. 3:25).

The Lord commanded in Leviticus 19:15, “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.”

Another common problem is siding with one’s family members, even when they are wrong. Eli, the high priest,

lost the priesthood because of this very sin. His children were blatantly walking in sin and defiling the temple of God, and yet Eli still permitted them to function as priests and did not discipline them (1 Sam. 2:12-17, 22-36). This is being partial because of *family ties*.

Over the years (having been in the ministry for over 40 years in many parts of the world), I have seen so many ministers who upheld God's standards until their children broke these standards. Then they compromised what they knew in their heart to be true so they would not hurt their children.

I knew a minister who recognised that divorce and remarriage is scripturally wrong, and he even preached against it. But when his son divorced and then wanted to remarry, he changed his beliefs to accommodate his son. We must always uphold God's standards, even if it means standing against our own family members and breaking fellowship with them.

God chooses the most unlikely candidates to accomplish His will. That is why we cannot judge people by their outward appearance (1 Sam. 16:7). He uses the uneducated, the poor, and others who are not highly esteemed by man.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:25-29, "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are

despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.”

Christ chose men who were loyal and faithful to be His disciples—not graduates of the theological schools of Jerusalem, but uneducated men of Galilee (Acts 4:13). God chose Saul of Tarsus, a man who was a murderer and persecutor of the saints, to be the primary interpreter of the Old Testament and the Apostle to the Gentiles. He knew that once Saul was converted he would wholeheartedly follow Him. God saw a faithful spirit in Paul (1 Tim. 1:12).

The prophet Amos was a herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit, a very lowly occupation (Amos 7:14-15). Amos was not a man of great stature or wealth; he was a very poor man. However, the Lord called him to the prophetic office and the Spirit of the Lord was upon him.

The Lord mightily used Smith Wigglesworth. He had a tremendous healing ministry and raised the dead on around 25 occasions (although only about a dozen are documented). Wigglesworth was not very educated and had difficulty speaking. Yet none of those limitations *limited* what the power of God could do through him. William Carey, the famous missionary to India who translated the Bible into several Indian languages, was only a shoe repairman before the Lord called him to the ministry.

God can use anyone He chooses—poor or rich, educated or uneducated. This is why we must not reject someone because he is not fashioned according to our expectations and ideas

of a man of God. One thing that is common among those whom God uses is godly character. **Character is the most important thing to the Lord.** Let us now consider what James says about partiality.

2:1 - *“My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.”* The faith of Jesus Christ must be pure, not mixed with partiality. **The Lord is completely impartial in His treatment of people, and we must be the same.** He has one standard by which He judges all men. First Peter 1:17 says that the Father does not respect persons, but judges every man according to his works (see Deut. 10:17; 2 Chr. 19:7; Mt. 22:16; Lk. 20:21; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9).

In the vision the Lord gave to Peter in Acts 10, He made it very clear that both Jew and Gentile were accepted in His sight. Peter said in Acts 10:34, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.” There is no favouritism with the Lord. The Lord treats Jew and Gentile, and poor and rich equally.

2:2-4 - *“For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?”*

James is addressing a major problem in the Church of his time and ours. Partiality is shown so often to the rich,

discriminating against the poor. This is what James is developing in James 2:2-6. James says that if a rich person comes into the church, dressed in very expensive clothes, it is likely that he will be shown great favour and seated in the best place in the church. However, if a very poor person comes in, he will not be treated equally. He will be seated in a very lowly place (footstool). This is showing partiality based upon economic status, and many times Christians are guilty of it.

It is a great temptation to take the side of the person who is wealthy, but **we must stand for what is right**. For fear of losing their financial support, many ministers side with the wealthier person in a disagreement between people in their church. Proverbs speaks a great deal about the rich receiving better treatment than the poor.

Proverbs 14:20 says, “The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.” Everyone wants to be a friend of the rich, hoping to be a recipient of their wealth. Proverbs 22:2 makes it very clear that the poor and rich are the same in the Lord’s eyes: “The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.” Proverbs 17:5 warns against unfair treatment of the poor: “Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker.”

2:5-6 - *“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?”* We must never forget that in the times of Jesus it was the poor who heard Him gladly

(Mk. 12:37). The rich and powerful Pharisees opposed Him and were responsible for His crucifixion.

2:7-8 - *“Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.”* The rich tend to be self-sufficient, as the Laodicean church, becoming arrogant and despising spiritual things.

2:9-12 - *“But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.”*

The law of liberty is the inner law of love (cf. Rom. 8:4). That is the law of liberty. If we fulfil the second commandment, to love our neighbour as ourselves, we have fulfilled the whole of the Law. Paul says in Galatians 5:14, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (cf. Rom. 13:8-10).

2:13 - *“For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”* David said to the Lord in Psalm 18:25, “With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright.” What we are, indeed, determines how God deals with us. If we are merciful to others, God will be merciful to us.

PART SIX

Faith Without Works Is Dead

2:14-26

The Apostle James now addresses in great detail the relationship between faith and good works. This is the theme of his epistle. Although we are saved by faith, unless good works accompany our faith, our faith is dead! Good works are the *outward sign* that the faith of God is within our hearts.

2:14-17 - *“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”*

Of what use is it to say that we have the faith of God in our lives if we do not manifest it through good works? If we say we have faith, and yet then we see one of our Christian brothers or sisters in need, and we do nothing to help them, our faith is dead.

2:18-20 - *“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”*

God's faith and good works are inseparable. To say you have one without the other is ridiculous. Believing in the Lord is not enough, because even the demons believe in God, but that does not change them. Our belief in the Lord should impact and change our lifestyle, and produce good works in us.

King David experienced forgiveness of sins, not because of works but through believing in the Lord (Ps. 32:1-2). *None of us can be saved by works*. No one can earn his salvation through acts of charity or good works (see Rom. 4:10-16). Romans 3:23 clearly says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Because of the fact that we are all sinners, we need a Saviour.

There is salvation *only* through faith in the shed blood of the Lamb of God—our Lord Jesus Christ. If salvation and redemption were obtained through works, we would no longer be dependent upon God's grace. **Salvation and forgiveness of sins are appropriated by faith.**

The Lord pardons us of all our transgressions and counts us righteous in His sight. This is imputed righteousness. Romans 4:6-8 states, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

Salvation is like the act of a judge pardoning a criminal. The Lord, the Righteous Judge of all the earth, forgives our sins and counts us righteous. But in actuality, inside we still are

just like criminals. Then the changing process begins, and the Lord seeks to make us righteous in our character. This requires a life of good works and responding to the Lord, which is the process James develops in his epistle.

Revelation 19:7-8 is a clear picture of the Bride of Christ who is full of good works and righteous deeds: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” Therefore, with all authority from the Scriptures, we can say that although we are saved by faith, good works must accompany our salvation. **We are perfected by the good works that flow out of the faith that is within us.**

2:21 - *“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?”* To understand the balance between justification by faith and good works we must compare Romans chapter 4 with James chapter 2.

In Romans chapter 4, the Apostle Paul’s theme is justification by faith without works. In other words, we are saved by faith, not by our works. To authenticate his message, Paul uses the life of Abraham—the father of our faith. Abraham was counted righteous because he believed what God spoke to him. Paul says in Romans 4:1-8, “What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not

reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

Abraham was not counted righteous because of good works, but because he believed the Lord—in other words, he was justified by faith. And here James says that Abraham was justified by works. How do we reconcile these two *seemingly* contradictory statements? It is very simple. Paul and James are presenting two *different* aspects of faith. Paul is saying that we are *initially* justified by faith without works. This is very true. James does not deny this. No one can earn salvation through good works.

However, the life of Abraham did not end in Genesis 15 when he believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. Abraham believed what the Lord spoke to him about his seed. Yet many years later after Isaac was born and the promise was fulfilled, the Lord asked Abraham to give Isaac back to him (Gen. 22). Abraham obeyed the Lord and offered his son to the Lord. Therefore, he was justified, or made righteous, by works.

2:22 - “*Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*” Initially, Abraham had faith to believe God that he would have a son. This faith was perfected through his obedience to the Lord in offering his son Isaac to the Lord.

2:23 - *“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.”* Abraham not only believed the Lord, but his belief produced acts of righteousness in him. God told Abraham that He would give him a country. What did Abraham do? He not only believed the Lord, but he left Ur of the Chaldees and went to the land of Canaan. Faith is perfected by works.

2:24-26 - *“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”*

Rahab, a prostitute and Gentile woman, believed that the Lord had given the land of Canaan to the Israelites. She put her faith into action when she *hid* the spies that Joshua had sent into the land and then sent them out another way (Josh. 2:1-21). Her faith was completed by her works. If she had only said, “I know the Lord has given you the land,” and had not hid the spies, she would not have been saved when the city of Jericho fell. Paul says in Ephesians 2:8-10, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

We are saved by grace through faith, but then God has pre-ordained good works that we should walk in. Every day God has good works that He desires us to perform; therefore, we

should pray every single day, “Lord, what good works do You want me to do today?” **We need to be sensitive to the needs of others and help them in their time of need.**

Second Timothy 3:17 says, “That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” We are saved by faith, but it is good works performed by faith *that perfect us*.

Paul said in Titus 2:7, “In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works...” We should be diligent, hard workers for the Lord. In the Word of God, those who succeeded were those who were hard workers. Ruth, the one who succeeded and was included in the Messianic line, was a very hard worker.

In conclusion to this section of faith and good works, I would like to share the story of a lady I knew who was raised from the dead. She physically died and went to heaven before she was brought back to life several hours later. In heaven she was shown that there is a reward for every good work that we do on earth. Every handshake, smile, and kind word is rewarded in heaven. Therefore, we want to be like Dorcas, who was full of good works (see Acts 9:36).

PART SEVEN

The Perfect Man

3:1-12

In this section, James develops what constitutes a perfect man—the one who can control his tongue. This subject pervades the writings of the wise throughout Holy Scripture. The books of Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, contain many references to the tongue and our words. Christ, as well as James, spoke extensively on the importance of our words.

The Lord said in Matthew 12:33-35, “Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” The words that proceed out of our mouths come directly from our hearts. It is out of the abundance of our heart that our mouth speaks. Our heart condition is the source of our words.

Continuing in Matthew 12:36-37, Christ said, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” All of our words are recorded in heaven, and one day we will have to give account for them. **Our words will determine whether we are rewarded in heaven**

or punished; and they determine *where* we will be on judgment day.

In Matthew 15:17-20 Jesus said, *“Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.”*

The Pharisees taught that a person defiled himself if he did not wash his hands before he ate a meal. Christ’s message, on the other hand, was inward holiness. It is not what goes into a man that defiles him, but the words that proceed out of his mouth (cf. Jas. 3:6). It is our tongue that defiles us. Our words determine whether we are holy and acceptable in the Lord’s sight or condemned by Him.

The tongue *releases* and *stimulates* all the works of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21, *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”* Virtually all of these sins can be manifested by our words.

Seeing the terrible damage that can be done by a tongue that is not controlled, we should pray as David did in Psalm 141:3,

“Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” As the Apostle James teaches in chapter 3, our tongue is the key to Christian perfection. Therefore, let us ask the Lord to purify our lips so that we may manifest the nature of Christ.

3:1 - *“My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”* The NIV says, “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” The word “masters” is an Old English word for “schoolmasters.” It actually means a *teacher*.

There is a warning here to teachers. Because teachers are the ones who instruct people in the ways of God and exegete the Word of God, they will be judged more severely if they do not practice what they preach. This reminds us of the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 2:21-22, “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?”

Christ said in Matthew 5:19, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Those who do not keep the Lord’s commandments in their own personal lives and teach others not to obey the

commandments, will be called the *least* in the kingdom of heaven; whereas those who do will be called *great* in the kingdom of heaven. This is one of the determining factors of our position in heaven—what we have done with our life and what we have taught others.

It is a very awesome thing to be a teacher, because a teacher moulds the thinking and behaviour of his student. A teacher must not only teach the truth of God's Word, but he must also practice what he preaches. The instrument of preaching and teaching is the tongue. It is so easy to say the wrong thing when you teach or preach. Speaking before students and congregations requires great discipline.

3:2 - *“For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.”* Here is the summation of a perfect man or perfect woman. He is able to control his tongue and not sin with his tongue. Because the tongue is the most difficult member of our body to control and bring into subjection, if a person is able to control his tongue, he is able to control every other aspect of his life. **The tongue is the gauge of spiritual maturity and perfection.** Our tongue reveals how much of the nature of Christ we have.

The Lord desires us to bring every member of our body into subjection to the obedience of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 10:5). Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:4, “That each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable” (NIV), making reference to sexual purity. Even more difficult than this, however, is controlling our tongues.

3:3-4 - *“Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.”*

To control the movement of the body of a horse, we must put a bit in his mouth. It is the same with humans. If we can control our tongue, we will be able to control the other members of our body.

James also likens the tongue to the rudder of a ship. The rudder is the small instrument that directs the course of a ship. In a similar way, the tongue is one of the smallest members of our body, but it is the most powerful. Our tongue determines the course of our life and our eternal judgment. By our tongue we will either be justified or condemned.

3:5-6 - *“Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.”* Just as a little spark can burn down a whole forest, so one little word can do a world of damage. Many forests in America have been destroyed over the last several years by small campfires that were left burning. If our tongues are not surrendered to the Lord and purified by Him, they can be as destructive as hell itself.

3:7-8 - *“For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been*

tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” Some of the most ferocious animals can be tamed, like the lion, but the tongue cannot be tamed without the grace and help of God.

The reason why a person has an evil tongue is because he has an evil heart, for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Only God can change a person’s heart, which in turn will change his speech.

3:9-12 - *“Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.”*

In nature, a fountain either gives bitter or sweet water, but it cannot produce both. A tree either brings forth good fruit or bad fruit, but not both. Man, however, is full of inconsistencies. With his mouth he blesses the Lord and curses man at the same time. The Lord will not accept this.

PART EIGHT

The Two Wisdoms

3:13-18

It is from this chapter that we have taken the title of this book—*The Two Wisdoms*. James portrays in this section the difference between God’s wisdom and the wisdom of man. Let us first of all consider briefly what the Word of God says about true wisdom before we examine verses 13-18.

Wisdom is one of the primary themes of the book of James and the whole of Scripture as well. The purpose of the Scriptures is to make us “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15). There are over 500 references in Scripture on the subject of wisdom and being wise. The first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs are the teachings of King David to his son Solomon, which Solomon preserved in his collection of proverbs.

David, the man who knew the heart of God like few others ever have, continually impressed upon Solomon the importance of wisdom. He said in Proverbs 4:7, “*Wisdom is the principal thing*; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” Wisdom is the paramount issue of life. If we do everything else in life except obtain wisdom, in actuality we have failed and have accomplished nothing. David emphasised the value of wisdom in Proverbs 8:11, saying, “Wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.” The patriarch Job said, “No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for

the price of wisdom is above rubies” (Job 28:18). Wisdom is priceless. It is so important to truly appreciate the value of wisdom. If we really desire wisdom and our priorities are right, we will continually be asking the Lord to give us more wisdom.

The reason Solomon asked for wisdom when the Lord told him He would give him anything he wanted is that David had continually impressed upon Solomon from a very young age the value of wisdom (see 1 Ki. 3:5-13; 2 Chr. 1:7-12). May the incessant desire for wisdom be continually in our hearts, and the constant prayer for wisdom in our lips.

The best definition of wisdom is “the God-given ability to make right decisions and to govern our lives properly.” *Chokmah*, the Hebrew word translated “wisdom,” means “to act or behave wisely.” Wisdom should govern every area of our lives. Without wisdom we will not know how to conduct ourselves in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. Scripture speaks of many aspects of life that are governed by wisdom. To mention just a few, we include the following:

1. Farming (Isa. 28:23-29)
2. Weaving (Ex. 35:25-26)
3. Making garments (Ex. 28:3)
4. The affairs of the house (Prov. 14:1; 31:10-31)
5. Government (Prov. 8:15)
6. The ministry (Ezra 7:25)
7. Moral purity (Prov. 7:4-5)

From these varied examples, you can see that wisdom is the governing factor of life. People from all walks of life

are dependent upon wisdom. No matter what occupation we have, how young or old we are, whether we are rich or poor—we all need wisdom to be successful in our individual pursuit in life.

Truly, wisdom is the principal thing. I am convinced that there is nothing in life that is insurmountable if we have God's wisdom. When we have to do something that we do not know how to do, we should cry out to God for His wisdom.

I would also like to say that wisdom is vital in our relationship with others. It should be manifested in our day-to-day contact with others, as exemplified by Christ's dealing with each one of us (Eph. 1:8).

Wisdom, in actuality, is more than just the ability to make right choices—it *is a way of life!* The Apostle says in James 3:13, "Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." The Greek word *anastrophe* translated "conversation" in the King James Version refers to more than our words alone; it refers to our behaviour and way of life. Therefore, it is clear that **wisdom must govern all of our actions, words, and thoughts.** How sad, indeed, it is that many people have much learning and knowledge, and wisdom in many areas, and yet they themselves are not *wise* people. Consider Solomon, for example. The Lord gave Solomon great wisdom, greater than any other man who ever lived except the Lord Jesus Christ. He understood many of the secrets and mysteries of life, and he gave wise counsel to others (1 Ki. 3:16-28). Yet at the end of his life Solomon

became “a foolish king who would no longer be admonished” (Eccl. 4:13). All of his learning and wisdom did not profit his own life because he did not apply the wisdom God had given him to his personal life.

William Pitt, the Prime Minister of England from 1783-1801, wrote a famous budget that is still being used today as the pattern for current budgets in England. He was a financial genius. However, William Pitt incurred well over 100,000 pounds of debt in his lifetime. The Parliament was so grateful for what he had done for the country that after his death they voted to pay off all his debts. So many people excel in a certain area for the benefit of others, but they do not benefit from it because they do not apply it to their own lives.

This area is a grave danger especially for ministers of the Gospel. Many preachers excel in oratorical skills. They are able to move the multitudes with stirring and passionate sermons, yet they do not practice what they preach. Thus their sermons and large crusades do not profit them at all. The Apostle Paul warns ministers of this same pitfall, “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?” (Rom. 2:21). Paul also said in 1 Corinthians 9:27, “But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” Therefore, we want to walk in wisdom all the days of our lives—not just possessing wisdom, but applying that wisdom to our own lives.

Wisdom will preserve us and keep us in the ways of God. Proverbs 2:10-12 says, “When wisdom enters your heart, and

knowledge is pleasant to your soul, Discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, To deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things” (NKJV). Wisdom will preserve us from falling into sin (Prov. 3:21-23), especially the sin of adultery (Prov. 2:16-19).

The Word of God emphasises again and again that the fear of the Lord is intrinsically linked with wisdom. Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (See Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10; 15:33)

The principal part and essence of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, which is a holy fear of disobeying or displeasing the Lord. The fear of the Lord is clearly defined in Proverbs 8:13, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.” **The whole duty of man, as expressed in Ecclesiastes 12:13, is to fear God and keep His commandments.** This can only be done through wisdom.

In Deuteronomy 4:5-6, Moses said to the people of God, “Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.”

Wisdom has nothing to do with psychology or understanding principles or anything else of that nature. That is the wisdom

of man. God's wisdom is the ability to do what is right in His sight, to keep His commandments, and to walk in the fear of the Lord all the days of our lives.

This leads us to ask ourselves the question: Where does wisdom come from? This is the same question Job asked: "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" (Job 28:12). Proverbs 2:6 makes the answer to this age-old question very clear, "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

Wisdom is God-given; from Him alone proceeds wisdom. However, this leads us to another important question: Who receives wisdom? To whom does the Lord give wisdom? Ecclesiastes 2:26 tells us explicitly who receives wisdom, "For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail..." God gives wisdom to those who are pleasing in His sight.

Wisdom is not given to everyone—it is only given to *certain* people. Since God is not a respecter of persons, there must be a reason why He gives wisdom to some and not to others. The key to understanding this is found in Daniel 2:21, which says that the Lord "*giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.*" At first glance, this verse seems like a contradiction of terms. The Lord gives wisdom to the wise. What does this mean? **The Lord is simply saying that He gives wisdom to those who appreciate wisdom—to those whose hearts are inclined toward wisdom.**

There is a truism in life that the Lord Jesus speaks of in Matthew 25:29: “To everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away” (NASB). This is an unchanging principle of God’s Word and of life in general. The one who has begets more; the one who does not have, loses even the little that he does have.

In America there is a very popular maxim which says, “You have to have money to make money;” and there is a lot of truth to it. Well, in God’s economy the one who has an appreciation of wisdom and sets his feet in the pathway of wisdom will receive wisdom. God confirms us in whichever path we choose to walk. Psalm 37:4 states very plainly that the Lord gives us the desires of our heart.

In the negative sense, if we set our hearts in a way and lifestyle that is not pleasing to the Lord, He will confirm us in that way. Because Pharaoh continually hardened his heart, God also hardened his heart and strengthened him in this way. The positive side of this is that if we set our hearts in the way of wisdom and cry out to the Lord for wisdom, He will make us wise people. Remember, God establishes us in the way that we choose—whether good or evil. Let us seek for wisdom because it will promote us and bring us honour (Prov. 4:8).

One of the primary purposes of the Church (as was the original intention of God for the nation of Israel) is to manifest the wisdom of God. Paul says in Ephesians 3:10, “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.”

The calling upon the Church of Jesus Christ, and upon us as individual members of the Body of Christ, is to manifest the wisdom of God. How do we receive wisdom? It is actually quite simple. All we must do is ask in faith, and be willing to change and walk in the ways of wisdom.

The Apostle declared in James 1:5-7, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord” (NKJV). To accomplish all that we are called to do in these last days, we absolutely need more wisdom. Therefore, let us seek the Lord and ask Him for wisdom.

3:13 - “*Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.*” James sets forth the question: Who is a wise man? The answer is: the one whose conduct shows that he has wisdom. The NKJV reads: “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.” As we have said, it is possible to possess great learning, knowledge, and wisdom, and yet not be a *wise* person.

Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:24-25, “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves...” Those who have true wisdom also have the meekness that comes with it. They feel compelled to share the truth with others, without being argumentative. So often

you can tell whether a doctrine is true or false by the *attitude* of its proponents. I have noticed that those who have false doctrine are constantly arguing with others and trying to force them to agree with them.

3:14-16 - *“But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”* Envy and jealousy are as cruel as the grave (Song 8:6). They torture the one who has them, and they torture others. The spirit of envy is the enemy that plagued Saul, and it eventually destroyed him (cf. 1 Sam. 16:14).

James contrasts the wisdom of this world with the wisdom of God. Basically, the difference between the two wisdoms may be understood as one of *desire*. The wisdom of this world seeks to achieve *for self* through devious means. Heavenly wisdom seeks to achieve *for God* through purity of heart.

The Seven Pillars of Wisdom

3:17 - *“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”* In Proverbs 9:1 we are introduced to the seven pillars of wisdom: “Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars.” At first, this seems a bit nebulous, but by the Spirit of Truth we are enabled to see the spiritual truths hidden in this statement. Remember, Scripture is its own best interpreter. I want to look at the seven aspects of the nature of wisdom found in this verse.

1. Pure - This word speaks of being pure and clean. Sexual purity, obviously, is one of the attributes of wisdom. Sexual purity is absolutely essential. Please read the admonitions of David to Solomon with regard to this in Proverbs 2:16-20; 5:3-23; 6:32-35; 7:6-23,24-27; 9:13-18.

Purity, however, deals with more than the desires of the body—penetrating into the innermost parts of our being. Purity is best illustrated by an animal that is used for a sacrifice. The animal is laid upon the altar, dissected, and all its body parts are washed and made clean. This speaks of the thoughts and motives of our hearts being washed and made pure.

Thus purity deals with our actions, which must be beyond reproach, but more so with our motives—the reason why we do things. Time and again in marriage counselling, I am asked by frustrated wives why their spouses do not respond to their acts of kindness. I, in turn, ask them why they do those acts of kindness for their husbands. Unfortunately, so many women respond that they are kind to their husbands so that they will give them what they want. Their motive is not altruistic; they have ulterior, selfish motives. Invariably, when a person's motives are not pure, the fruit of what they have sown is not either.

Many people treat the Lord in the same way, but He sees the reasons why we do things. I remember a certain missionary who wanted a larger house. So he gave his smaller house to the work of the Lord with only one motive in mind—to receive a larger house. Yet the Lord saw that his motives were not pure, and it was many years later before he received

another house, for which he had to work very hard to pay the mortgage every month. Our motives must be pure in every aspect of our life. The importance of purity cannot be over emphasised. As Christ said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mt. 5:8). God’s wisdom can only operate in the lives of those who are pure.

2. Peaceable - The root meaning of peace in both the Hebrew and Greek languages is “unity” or “oneness.” To be at peace with a person, therefore, signifies to be in agreement with one another and of the same mind. This was Paul’s exhortation to Euodias and Syntyche, two ladies in the Philippian church who had a conflict between themselves (Phil. 4:2). We must endeavour “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3), or we will grieve and quench the Spirit of the Lord.

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 12:18, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” Paul exhorts us again in Hebrews 12:14, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” As much as we possibly can, we should seek to live in peace with others. Christ said in Matthew 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” We want to seek peace and try to bring an end to strife everywhere we go.

3. Gentle - The Greek word *epieikes* translated “gentle” in the King James Bible can also be translated “sweet reasonableness.” It means gentleness of touch. Paul uses another derivative of this word in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 to describe the relationship between a nurse and her children:

“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.”

I have a nephew who is a doctor and a niece who is a resident nurse. One day while the three of us were talking, a lady walked into the room with a bandage on her leg. They immediately noticed this woman’s need and did everything they could to make her comfortable and to treat her leg properly. Gentleness is the attitude that a doctor and a nurse have toward a patient. It is reflected in their touch. This is what Paul is referring to. Gentleness is an essential quality for being in the ministry because people are wounded so easily, and we are called to bind up the broken-hearted.

This word can also be translated *mild*, and in one sense *being of an understanding nature*. Although people do things that are wrong at times, and merit discipline, we should be very gentle with them when we correct them, and understand why they did what they did. Many times an encouraging word is what people need more than a reprimand to overcome their weaknesses in certain areas.

Gentleness is manifested through our actions and our words. Proverbs 25:15 says, “By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.” A soft answer turns away wrath (Prov. 15:1). The tone of voice we use to say something makes all the difference. **May we allow the gentleness of Christ to permeate every part of our being so that in everything we do, we manifest His gentleness.**

4. Easy to be entreated - This can also mean *compliant*. This virtue may best be defined as knowing when to yield

and when not to yield. Most things in life are a matter of personal preference, not right or wrong. **We should yield to others' wishes unless it would mean to do something contrary to God's Word.**

For example, in the matter of what we wear we should yield to others, especially to the wishes of our spouses, within reason, that is. This virtue is essential for a lasting marriage.

My housekeeper insists that my ties match my suits. I personally do not care one bit about colour coordinating my clothes, but to her it is very important. I could never see the reason for this, but then one day I felt the Holy Spirit prompt me, saying: "What does it matter? It will only take two minutes to change your tie." So I changed my tie, and my housekeeper was pleased. However, when it comes to other things that I feel very strongly about, I will not yield.

5. Full of mercy and good works (or fruits) - Mercy is the highest revelation of God. In the Tabernacle of Moses, the Mercy Seat covered the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the two tables of stone upon which were engraved the Ten Commandments. God's mercy is above His Law, because even when a person breaks His Law, as did King David, He still can choose to show mercy and forgive him.

Mercy is rooted in forgiveness and forgetfulness. In order to forgive someone, we have to forget what he has done against us. Mercy means to show compassion to someone who has fallen into a pit. Yet mercy is not only showing compassion to them, but also lending them a helping hand.

Mercy manifests itself through good works. Therefore, it is not enough to forgive a person, but a truly merciful person will try to help him out of the pit he has fallen into. So often mercy is manifested toward a person who has ignored our warnings. We should never say to someone in this situation, “I told you so.” That never helps them; it only makes them feel worse.

Early in our ministry and marriage together, my wife and I determined that if we were ever going to err, we would always choose to err on the side of mercy. Christ said, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt. 5:7). If we do not show mercy to others, God will not show mercy to us (see Ps. 18:25-26).

6. Without partiality - This means to treat everyone with equal respect and concern. The Lord Jesus stated in Matthew 5:43-48 that perfection involves showing love not only to our friends, but also to our enemies. We should be sweet and kind to everyone, not just to those who are kind to us. Obviously, we are closer to certain people than we are to others, but we should not be partial in our treatment of them, especially if we are leaders in the Body of Christ or in the secular world. We cannot be biased in our treatment of people.

This was obviously a besetting sin of the Jerusalem congregations (see commentary on chapter 2). The great Apostle Peter was guilty of this sin. In Galatians 2:11-14, Paul records how Peter stopped eating with the Gentiles after some Jewish brethren came from Jerusalem, for fear that the Jews would disapprove of this. Paul said in 1 Timothy 5:21, “I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the

elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favouritism” (NIV).

7. Without hypocrisy - *Hypocrisy* in the Greek literally means “an actor”—one who pretends or deceives. We must be genuine. We must not act one way at church and another way in our homes. Christ said in Matthew 23:28, “Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

These are the seven pillars of wisdom upon which a house is built (Prov. 9:1). Our life, marriage, and ministry must be built upon these seven pillars or our house will fall. Rebecca did not build her house with wisdom; instead she plucked it down with her hands (Prov. 14:1). She was partial, and favoured Jacob. She showed hypocrisy by manipulating him to pretend to be Esau. By her actions, she destroyed her own home. **May we be wise people who build up our spiritual and natural homes.**

3:18 - “*And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.*” Righteousness and peace are always linked together. There is no peace to the wicked, but those who walk uprightly will have the fruit of righteousness, which is peace.

PART NINE

Humility – the Key to Receiving God’s Grace

4:1-12

4:1 - *“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?”* It is a fact that as you study, not only the Bible but history itself, you will find that wars come from lust and a desire to possess. Just think for a moment of all the world rulers who have brought the world into war. This lust was the motivating force behind Hitler. After Alexander the Great had conquered the known world, he wept because there were no more countries to conquer. He was given over to sodomy, immorality, debauchery, and all kinds of vile sins. Why? Because lust was the dominant force in his life.

*We need to
build the
foundation of
our lives upon
Christ, for
nothing else
will last.*

In the ministry, you must be careful that the lust to be successful and to possess does not drive you into building programs. Make sure it is the Spirit of God who is leading you when you begin a building project, and in reality, in everything you do.

4:2-3 - *“Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss,*

that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” Lust, if it is not dealt with, will lead to murder. Just think of King David. Because of his lust to have Bathsheba, he had her husband, Uriah, murdered.

Ask God, “Lord what do you want me to have? What do You want me to ask for? What do I need?” If we ask God, He will give us His best. If we ask God for something just to satisfy our own lusts, we will not receive it. If we persist, however, and insist upon having that which God has not purposed for our lives, we eventually will receive it, but it will be to our ruin.

Psalm 106:14-15 says the children of Israel “lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And [the Lord] gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.” The children of Israel lusted for quail meat in the desert. They were not happy with God’s provision of manna. They complained and murmured against the Lord.

Numbers 11:4-6 records Israel’s rejection of God’s provision: “And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.”

To satisfy their complaints, the Lord gave them what they asked for, but He also sent leanness into their soul (Num. 11:31-34). May we ask the Lord to purify our hearts of every form of lust and to give us pure hearts.

4:4 - *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”* Ask the Lord to help you keep your desires and needs very simple.

Adultery is linked with the lust to fight and kill (v. 1-2). Those who have lust in a certain area of their lives many times end up committing adultery unless that lust in their lives is dealt with.

We cannot be a friend of the world and a friend of God as well. Christ said in Matthew 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...” First John 2:15 says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

4:5 - *“Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?”* We were all born with an Adamic nature, and we were all born with a spirit of covetousness. By virtue of our human nature, which must be redeemed and changed by grace, we desire and long for what others have.

If we see someone with a new coat, we want a coat just like it. The whole advertising industry is based on lust and envy, seeking to stir up the spirit of covetousness within people so that it consumes them until they buy what is being advertised.

4:6 - *“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”* We

all have struggles in our hearts, but God gives more grace. Paul makes this very clear in Romans 5:20, “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” It does not matter how great a particular sin is in a person’s life, because where sin abounds, the grace of God can much more abound. We should take comfort in this.

We have seen briefly in this study of James that we can do nothing without grace. We are totally dependent upon the grace of God for everything. The question, then, is: *Who receives God’s grace?* God makes it very clear that He resists the proud in heart, but He gives grace to the humble.

Psalm 138:6 says, “Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.” The Lord shows respect to the lowly in heart, but the proud He knows afar off. The Apostle Peter said, “...Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5). **Let us major in humility.**

4:7 - “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*” First of all, we must submit ourselves to the Lord and allow Him to rule over us. We also must never yield to temptation. Then we must resist the devil! If we do these things, Satan will flee from us.

4:8 - “*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*” The question here is this: Who takes the first step, God or man? James tells us that if we draw

near to the Lord (in word and in action) and seek Him, He will respond to us and draw near to us. **We cannot wait all of our lives for the Lord to suddenly meet with us. We must actively seek after Him, and if we do, He will meet with us.**

For us to draw near to the Lord, however, we must first be drawn by the Lord. It is He who puts that desire in us. Christ said in John 6:44, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...” No one can come to Christ unless the Father first draws Him. It is popular in Christian circles to say, “I found Christ,” but in actuality, we did not find Him, He found us.

Then there is a strong admonition to sinners to cleanse their hands of any wicked works, and an admonition to the double-minded to purify their hearts. This can apply to people in the Church, as well as those outside the Church.

4:9 - *“Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.”* Ecclesiastes 7:4 says, “The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning.” It can actually be quite beneficial to walk through a cemetery and consider the end of all the dead there. Once a person’s life is over, what will they be remembered for and what have they done with their life?

I often think of a very brilliant man who was a former prime minister of England and then chancellor of Oxford University. After he resigned as prime minister because of his illness, he said, “The play is over.” That is all it was to him. He wanted to become prime minister in order to satisfy

something in his heart, but it did not satisfy. Then he thought that being the chancellor of Oxford University would give him more satisfaction than being prime minister of England, but in his latter years he went in to business.

When he was about 88 years old, he came to America to sell books. He did not need the money, but he was still searching for satisfaction. Unfortunately, he never found it. True satisfaction is found only in the Lord. King David could have had anything he wanted, but at the end of his life the only thing he was seeking after was the beauty of Jesus (Ps. 27:4). Is the Lord your satisfaction and your joy?

4:10 - *“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”* As we humble ourselves, it may be very painful and humiliating at the time, but it is part of the process of making us candidates to be exalted by the Lord. First Peter 5:6 says, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” Christ said in Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Every promotion in life comes by humility. Proverbs 22:4 says, “By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life.”

4:11-12 - *“Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?”*

*If we speak evil,
we are breaking
the second
commandment
to love others as
ourselves.*

If we speak evil we are actually speaking evil against the law. What law are we breaking? The second commandment—love thy neighbour as thyself. Would we like it if we knew people were speaking evil about us? No, of course not. Therefore, let us apply the golden rule in Matthew 7:12: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”

PART TEN

Holy Dependence Upon God

4:13-17

We must depend upon the Lord and not place our trust in riches or in any other form of false security. No one knows the future or how long our lives will last. This life is like a vapour that quickly vanishes away. We need to build the foundation of our lives upon Jesus Christ—for nothing else will last (cf. 1 Jn. 2:17).

4:13-14 - *“Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”*

So often man plans his affairs. He makes goals for his life as though he controlled his destiny.

The prophet Jeremiah clearly states that it is not in man to direct his ways (Jer. 10:23). How then can we determine if we shall be able to go tomorrow to another city or not? It is only if the Lord wills. Likewise, it is not we who can determine if we shall make a profit or loss on any venture. Even if we have done well, how will it benefit us if our time upon this earth has come to a close, as the following parable declares?

Christ said in Luke 12:15-20, “And he said unto them, ‘Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

There is a terrible desire within the human heart to possess things, as in the case of this man in Christ's parable. *I must have this, I must have that.* What is the prime driving force of a person at work? He wants a good pension when he retires. However, a person's trust must never be in his riches or pension.

Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 2:18, "Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me."

Solomon was a very wealthy man. At the end of his life he had a sudden realisation that he was going to leave behind all the wealth he had accumulated in this life, and it would be given to someone else. Solomon's heart was too attached to the things of this life, and to lose them caused him great anguish.

4:15-17 - "*For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*" Our life should

be conditioned by two letters: D.V., which in French stands for *Dieu Voulant*, meaning God willing. We should seek to determine that everything we do is indeed according to His will before we start a project. Having ascertained His will, in all humility, we should delight to do His will, even as King David did (Ps. 40:6-8). May we seek to emulate David's beautiful, humble attitude, as seen in Psalm 131.

PART ELEVEN

The Miseries of the Rich

5:1-6

The Word of God has much to say about miseries that await the rich who are controlled by their love of money. However, the Word of God does not condemn possessing riches or being wealthy. In fact, some of the greatest men in the Scriptures were very wealthy, including Abraham, Job, and King David.

Wealth is not the problem, but as Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:10, “*The love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*” A person does not have to be rich to love riches. In fact, people who are poor are often bound by the desire to have riches. The question is: Do you have riches or do riches have (and control) you? It is the heart condition that matters. What do riches mean to you? Riches should only be a means that we use to fulfil the will of God.

We must never set our heart on riches. Job, who was one of the wealthiest men of his time, lost everything he owned in one day. Yet he did not become bitter, but he said, “The Lord gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). Have we put our riches on the altar as Job had? Many of you may have come into the kingdom with a sizable bank account and a family that is wealthy. You may be accustomed to having money. You should not

feel bad about this, but use your money to glorify God. This includes paying your tithes and giving money to missions and building projects.

One of Satan's greatest snares for ministers is money. Many ministers start out very poor with a small congregation. When God blesses them and their church begins to grow and their finances increase, many of them are tempted to use that money for themselves.

A pastor should not live above the average income of his congregation. It is a bad testimony for ministers to live a life of luxury. In a very real way, it is more difficult to handle the blessing and prosperity of God than it is to be poor. We need "Teflon-coated hands" so that we do not use finances for ourselves but for the furtherance of the kingdom of God.

So many preachers have been destroyed through money and riches. I had a friend in Europe who wanted a new car. This led to huge monthly payments. He was not getting enough money to cover the payments so he started to preach every service on giving, trying to pressure his congregation to give more so he could make his car payments. When he did this, his lust for a new car turned into lust for women, and he eventually fell into adultery.

There were three men mightily used by God who could have changed the face of England in the 1930's. They performed mighty miracles. When they came into a city, the people would come out to them, stop their car, put ropes around their car, and literally pull their car in a procession to the church. At midnight, people would be lining up and camping

outside in tents in order to get into the morning meetings. They had two huge boxes at the back of the hall, and the ministers would say, “If you have been blessed by God, give to God.” A tremendous amount of money flowed into their ministries. Unfortunately, these ministers used all of this money for themselves. They were very poor when they started out in the ministry, and they could not handle all the money they received. Money and possessions never satisfy; so then they wanted prestigious positions. It destroyed them.

In England there was a certain conference where all the well-known ministers spoke. The problem with this conference, however, was that this conference opposed speaking in other tongues. One of these ministers who had been so used of God in revival but had used the money for himself, desired to be a speaker at this convention. Because this conference rejected the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he also rejected it to gain a position in the conference. His reward for all of this was that he was permitted to sit at this convention, but not to speak. Do you see the tragedy of this? **Live a simple and holy life—this is what James is saying—and desire the honour that comes from God and not man.**

Recently I have been pleased to learn about a very wealthy elder of a church who is using his wealth for the kingdom of God. This man said, “I have looked in the Scriptures to see how an elder should live, and my wife and I have decided to live modestly so that we can be a good example.” He has covenanted with God in his heart that, although he has a good salary and position, to live modestly. This rejoiced my

heart and gave me so much pleasure! God has blessed this man and given him revelation in His Word and given him a good name because He knows he can be trusted with it! God is just waiting to pour out more upon him.

Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:6, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” Think of Imelda Marcos, the wife of Ferdinand Marcos the former president of the Philippines. Her obsession for possessions, and shoes in particular, drove her to purchase thousands of pairs of shoes, many of which she probably never even wore. We need to be content with what we have. Contentment releases us from the bondage of the love of possessions and money. It is so wonderful to have a free heart!

5:1 - *“Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.”* Christ said in Luke 18:25, “For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Christ does not say that the rich cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, but He says it is very difficult because so many people who are rich do not have time for God. The more possessions we have, the more difficult it is for us to enter into the kingdom of God.

The sole concern in life of many people is their possessions. Several years ago there was a group of Pentecostals who believed that the Lord was going to return on a certain date, so they were all waiting for the rapture in the streets of Detroit with their suitcases. I would be very interested to know what they had packed in those suitcases! They wanted to take their possessions with them to heaven.

5:2-3 - *“Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.”* The riches of those who put their riches before Christ will testify against them, and preclude their entry into the kingdom of heaven.

We should invest in the kingdom of heaven, where our eternal riches cannot be corrupted. Christ said in Matthew 6:19-20, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”

5:4 - *“Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.”* This is speaking particularly of those who gained this wealth by defrauding others of their due wages. Proverbs 3:27 says, “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.”

We should invest in the kingdom of heaven, where our eternal riches cannot be corrupted.

5:5-6 - *“Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.”* This is an awesome indictment of what

riches can do in the heart of one who covets them. Especially is that true with dictators.

Riches can lead to murders, as was true during the time when Rome held sway. The Roman emperors and head rulers could at times be most unscrupulous. Regretfully, this will be the case in these last days when the Antichrist will surface. All the gold and silver will be at his disposal, but his lasting legacy will be that he “made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners” (Isa. 14:17).

PART TWELVE

The Patience of the Saints

5:7-12

5:7 - *“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.”* This is a very important spiritual truth. When God has made a promise, you often have to wait a long time for the fulfilment.

Some promises come quickly, but the greater promises that God has given you often take a lifetime to receive. Be patient and endure until the fulfilment of the promise comes.

This verse, however, has a very profound meaning for the Church. The harvest in Israel is dependent upon the early and latter rain. There were two rainy seasons in Israel—the early rain in October-November, and the latter rain in April-May. The latter rain brought the harvest to maturity.

Spiritually, the Lord has promised in Joel 2:23 that God will give a mighty outpouring of His Holy Spirit in the last days to bring His Church to perfection. Joel 2:23 says, “Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.” The Lord will not return until the Father has given the harvest rain.

5:8 - *“Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”* **Thus, looking to the Lord as our example, we too must be filled with that same holy perseverance, having our hearts settled upon His promises and that blessed hope of His coming.**

5:9 - *“Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.”* Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:7, “Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another...” The Christian way is for brethren to settle disputes among themselves, and if they cannot, they should go to their pastor or leader to settle the dispute. The only reason a person needs a lawyer is when the other person is not a Christian.

5:10 - *“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.”* Let us have, brothers and sisters, a rejoicing spirit that will be our strength in every trial we experience. Christ said in Matthew 5:12, “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

5:11 - *“Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful [or compassionate], and of tender mercy.”* The Lord says to His people in Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

We will be tried, and we will have to go through deep waters, but if we will remain constant, God will bring us forth. If God elevated a person immediately, he would lose his inheritance because he would not be able to control himself and would waste that inheritance. Many who are raised up very quickly into the ministry fail because they have not been tried and prepared for it.

Job is used by the Apostle James as an example of one who patiently endured. May we commend the prayerful reading of the book of Job to encourage us to endure until the Lord sees fit to turn our captivity.

5:12 - *“But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.”* We should be men and women of our word. Our words should be our bond. One of the qualities required to abide in spiritual Mount Zion in the presence of the Lord is that we must not change our word, “He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not” (Ps. 15:4).

Christ said in Matthew 5:33-37, “Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

PART THIRTEEN

The Prayer of Faith

5:13-18

In this section we will consider *The Prayer of Faith*. We need the spirit of prayer and intercession in the Church to bring to pass everything that God has promised to us. Prayer is powerful! It is essential for every Christian, and especially ministers.

Because ministers have to make so many decisions, they must constantly be praying to receive wisdom and direction from the Lord and hear from Him. When I have to make decisions, I will often walk around the auditorium of our Bible School and pray in tongues until I hear from the Lord.

The Christians in Church history who have had the greatest impact upon the world were those who were men and women of prayer. I recently read a story about John Wesley. He was on board a ship which was drifting off the English coast—and there was no wind. Everyone on board was greatly concerned that they were going to crash into the rocks and drown.

When John Wesley, who had been reading a book, inquired, “What is the problem?” the reply was, “There is no wind.” Wesley went down below and prayed for about five minutes, and then returned to his chair and began reading again. A very strong wind came very soon and carried the ship to where it was going. Doctor Adam Clarke, who was with John Wesley at that time, said that John Wesley did not seem

at all surprised that the wind had come. He assumed that it would come because he had prayed, believing that the Lord would answer his prayer.

George Mueller was another great man of prayer. Through prayer, he received all the support and supplies he needed to care for the orphans in his Home of Faith. His prayers produced miracles.

On one occasion when he was travelling to the United States for a speaking engagement, the ship he was on was slowed by terrible fog. Mueller pleaded with the captain of the ship to press on forward because he did not want to be late for his meeting. The captain refused because the fog was too dangerous to go through. George Mueller took the captain with him down to his cabin and prayed for a few minutes. Then he returned upstairs with confidence that the fog cloud had disappeared. And, of course, when they got upstairs, it had disappeared, and they were able to continue on in their journey.

It is the *privilege* of the child of God to pray and ask his Heavenly Father for his needs to be met. Christ said in Matthew 7:7-8, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Christ said to His disciples while they were on their way to Gethsemane in John 16:24, “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” Our whole life is dependent upon asking the Lord for what we need, just as a child is dependent upon his father for everything.

There are, however, conditions to asking and receiving. **When we ask our Father in heaven for something, we must ask in faith and believe that we are going to receive.** James said in chapter 1:6-7, “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.”

Also, we must ask according to the will of God. We read in 1 John 5:14-15, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

God the Father many times does not give us what we ask for because we are asking for something that is contrary to His will for our lives, and something that would be harmful for us.

One time many years ago, my wife and I needed to buy a car that would run better than the one we had. We had been praying for a car, but nothing had materialised. One of the students at the Bible school where we were teaching who knew that we needed a new car told me he knew of a car that I would like. My wife and I went to see it, and we liked it. So we simply asked the Lord to provide that car for us. We got what we asked for, but it was a “lemon”—it was a bad car that was constantly breaking down. What we should have done when we saw the car was to ask the Lord if it was His choice for us. Therefore, always ask first if something is the Lord’s will; and if it is, then ask for Him to provide it for you.

In this section we are going to see how the prayer of faith can heal the sick. Also, Elijah is held up for us as an example of fervent, persistent praying. It is not enough to pray just once. Many times we have to pray seven times until we receive the answer to our prayer, as Elijah did. Seven is the number of completion. We have to completely pray through until we receive our request.

5:13 - *“Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.”* When we are afflicted, we must pray. Prayer is the only solution. We fight against spiritual forces. Spiritual attacks can make us depressed and can even affect us physically. Singing to the Lord and rejoicing in Him will break this oppression of the enemy. Paul said in Ephesians 5:19, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” This is a spiritual exercise we must practice.

5:14 - *“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”* Isaiah 53:5 says, “...He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Healing is in the atonement. By His stripes, we “were healed” (1 Pet. 2:24).

Oil is a symbol of the blessed Holy Spirit. In the Levitical era, the anointing oil was smeared upon the priests before they performed their duties (Lev. 7:36), and also upon the kings (1 Ki. 1:39). With the anointing came the appropriate spiritual manifestation and enablement to perform their

duties. Thus when elders anoint the sick, the spirit of healing comes upon the afflicted person, and with prayer comes healing for that person.

5:15 - *“And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”* There can be many reasons why a person is sick; it is not necessarily because that person has done wrong.

Job was severely criticised during his trial, and he was one of the three most righteous men who ever lived, along with Noah and Daniel (Ezek. 14:14). He was afflicted for a season with grievous sores. Let us not be like his friends who judged him with their natural minds instead of seeing his situation by the Spirit of the Lord.

5:16 - *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* We must be very careful about confession services. Public confession in a church can open up a person to attacks.

Only on a very rare occasion, when God specifically says so, should a person publicly acknowledge sin. If you have done something really wrong, be very careful who you confess it to because that person will then have a power over you, and he will often tell others.

We are told that the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Notice that James says it is the fervent prayers of *a righteous man* that avail much. Therefore, a person can pray

five hours a day and appear very spiritual outwardly, but if he is not righteous his prayers are not effective.

5:17-18 - “[Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.” Now we come to the life of the great prayer warrior—Elijah.

First of all, James tells us he was a man subject to like passions as we are. Elijah was human, and he had emotions just as we do, and he experienced the same trials we face. Elijah knew great heights of ministry, but also great personal lows and valleys.

God used Elijah to destroy the false prophets of Baal, and turned the hearts of the Israelites back to God (1 Ki. 18). However, then he was threatened by Queen Jezebel, and he fled from her into the wilderness. There he was so discouraged and despondent that he asked the Lord to take his life (1 Ki. 19:4). Elijah experienced a terrible valley of depression after a tremendous victory. As soon as we get a victory in our lives, the enemy immediately comes to try to bring us down.

The Lord spoke to the prophet Elijah to pray that it would not rain. He prayed earnestly, and it did not rain in Israel for three and a half years. We read of this in 1 Kings 17:1: “And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.”

Elijah was a man who had such an intimate relationship with the Lord that he had tremendous power in prayer. His prayers closed the heavens so that it did not rain for three and a half years. That is power from on high!

When it was God's time to send rain again, He spoke to Elijah, "Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth" (1 Ki. 18:1). Elijah appeared before Ahab, and then confronted the prophets of Baal. Then Elijah was ready to pray that it would rain.

We read in 1 Kings 18:41-46, "And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel."

The answer to Elijah's prayer did not come the first time he prayed, or the second, or the third. He had to pray seven times before anything happened. He had to persevere in prayer and not give up until he knew God had answered his prayer.

Do you see this? Just because God had spoken that He was going to send rain, the rain still did not come. The rain did not come *until* Elijah persevered in prayer and intercession.

This has a very relative application for our lives as Christians today and for our local churches. God has given each one of us individual promises. However, just because God has promised us something does not mean that we will receive it. We have to pray it into existence, as did Elijah.

I want to share with you another personal story involving a car. I learned a lesson through this experience that I will never forget. There was another time when my wife and I were in desperate need of a car, and we had been praying earnestly for one. Then a certain pastor we knew said to us, “There is someone who has a car he would like to donate, and I am sure he will donate it to you.” After we heard this and we felt this was the car God had chosen for us, we stopped praying. To our surprise, a few days later this pastor said to us, “I am so sorry, but that car was given to someone else.” God then spoke to me very clearly, “You must not stop praying *until* you see the answer.”

In closing this section on prayer, let us look together at what the Lord says in Isaiah 62:1, “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.”

God says He will not rest until all of His purposes for His Church and Zion are accomplished. Then the Lord tells us in verse 6 how this is going to be fulfilled, “I have set *watchmen*

upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence.”

Prayer is the chariot by which God and all of heaven moves. In order to bring to pass His purposes for His Church, God has anointed watchmen in the Body of Christ who are mighty in prayer. God gives promises, but those promises are only realised through prayer.

The Lord wants us to be watchmen who have the spirit of prayer and intercession, praying until God answers. **There must be groaning and travailing in the Spirit until everything that God wants to do in our own personal lives and in the Church comes to pass.** Give God no rest until His promises are fulfilled, and be a prayer warrior in the army of God!

PART FOURTEEN

Conversion of Those Who Err

5:19-20

5:19-20 - *“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”*

This is the final and yet very important part of the Epistle of James—restoration of those who err from the truth. This is speaking of Christians who once knew the truth and have backslidden. They have fallen into immorality or embraced false doctrines, which are taking them away from the pathway of righteousness. If they continue on these paths they will end up in a Christless eternity—in the blackness of darkness forever.

How wonderful is the ministry and message of restoration. Proverbs 11:30 says, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.” Some people we have to save by “pulling them out of the fire” of hell itself (Jude 1:23). God’s desire is restoration.

Hosea saw his unfaithful wife restored. King Manasseh was restored to the faith of his godly father Hezekiah. Mark, who had abandoned Paul and Barnabas on the shores of Asia on their first missionary journey, became a faithful disciple again and an expository writer of the teachings of Peter, penning the Gospel which bears his name. He was made fruitful once again.

God says that He is married to the backslider. Jeremiah 3:14 says, “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.” It delights His heart when He sees the backslider restored.

This is seen by the parables of Christ in Luke 15:4-7: “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”

He continued this same theme in Luke 15:8-10, “Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” The Lord delights in seeing the backslider restored. May we seek to have the ministry of restoration. Isaiah 58:12 says, “And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.”

We want to be used by God to lead those who have gone astray back into the ways of God. Paul said in Galatians 6:1, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” One of the greatest features of the last day revival—the spiritual celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles—will be the restoration of the backslider. And we want to be used in this coming revival to turn the hearts of many back to the Lord for His glory and honour! Amen.

EPILOGUE

We close our short commentary on this epistle of James by reminding ourselves of the title—*The Two Wisdoms*. Basically, all of our actions are governed either by the sensual, lustful, covetous, evil, and cunning wisdom of this world, which produces its fruit of sorrow, shame, and eternal damnation, or we are governed by the wisdom that comes from above.

God's wisdom enables us to make right choices in every situation we are faced with in life. It will cause us to prosper; and with its fruits of purity, peaceableness, meekness, and mercy, it ensures us of an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven. I pray this book has been a blessing to you, dear reader. God bless you!

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