

# The Letter of James

*James 1:1*

## Commentary to Recommend

*The Letter of James* by Douglas Moo, part of the Pillar New Testament Commentary series, published by Eerdmans, 2000, 271 pages, clothbound. This book is available at Amazon for \$23.19.

## James

*The Lord's Half-Brother*

- James the son of Alphaeus was one of the 12 apostles but there is no other mention of him by name. *Mark 3:18*
- James the brother of John was killed by Herod before the council at Jerusalem and therefore does not seem to be a suitable candidate to author the letter. *Acts 12:1-2*
- James, the Lord's half-brother was prominent at the council at Jerusalem. *Acts 15:13*
- Jude identifies James as his brother at the beginning of his letter that would seem to acknowledge the prominence of James. *Jude 1*
- James is noted as one of the pillars of the church in Jerusalem. *Galatians 1:19, 2:9*

## Understanding James' Letter

All would agree that James is a very practical letter that does not engage in theological discussion. But, it would be wrong to describe James' letter as "primitive Christianity." James uses his own vocabulary to discuss the application of biblical truths while assuming that his readers already are aware of the doctrinal foundation that Paul was to be its primary spokesman.

## Slave to Christ

### Slave vs Servant

- In the language of the Mosaic Law there was a provision for an Israelite servant to become a servant for life by becoming a bondservant. *Exodus 21:5-6*
- There is not such thing as salvation without being yoked to Jesus Christ. *Matthew 11:28-30*
- In the teaching passages of the New Covenant era believers can be described as slaves to Jesus Christ. *Romans 6:15-23*
- As believers we are unquestioned slaves to Jesus Christ since we must do everything for the glory of God. *1 Corinthians 10:31*

### OT Illustration

*Ezekiel 24:15-24*

- God required that Ezekiel not mourn after God causes his wife to die.
- Ezekiel's obedience illustrates that slave-like devotion that all believers owe to their Lord.

## God and Christ

*Acts 2:36*

- Jesus is fully God. *John 1:1,14*

- As the Messiah Jesus accomplished the plan of God, which was to save his people from their sins. *Matthew 1:21, Hebrews 10:14*

### **12 Tribes Scattered**

*Galatians 6:16*

- James is referring to believers who were Jewish.
- The church is made up of mostly Gentiles and some Jews and it is the spiritual Israel of God. *Galatians 3:29, Romans 2:28-29, Romans 9:6-8*

## **The Letter of James**

*James 1:2-8*

### **The Purpose of Trials in the life of the Believer**

*James 1:2-4*

#### **Definition of Trial**

A trial in the life of a believer is a difficulty that must be overcome.

#### **Purpose of Trial**

- Trials in the life of the believer function as a means of growth.
- Trials confirm to us that our faith is real. A trial is a testing of the faith of the believer in order to see if the believer really has a new heart. *1 Peter 1:6-7*
- Trials are part of the normal Christian life. *Acts 14:22*
- Trials are a sign of God's love for the believer. *Hebrews 12:7-11*

#### **A Believer's Response to Trials**

- Believers are commanded to say "thank you" for any trial that they might find themselves in.
- There is no difficult circumstance that is exempt from the command to give thanks. *1 Thessalonians 5:18*
- Since we are to give thanks for all things our lives must be characterized by giving thanks. *Ephesians 5:20*
- Thinking that one is a victim or that our specific trial is something unique is not a biblical response to trials, it is unbelief.

#### **The Necessity of Perseverance**

- Perseverance (NIV) or steadfastness (ESV) means that the believer keeps on living for his Lord no matter what he or she encounters along the way.
- Maturity comes from walking by faith and not by feelings.
- Maturity is the result of the process of persevering.
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## Wisdom of God

*James 1:5-8*

### Definition of Wisdom

- In the Old Testament biblical wisdom is equated with biblical truth. *Proverbs 2:2*
- James seems to be using wisdom as an application of biblical truth. *Romans 12:2*

### The Promise of Wisdom

- The idea in this passage seems to be that when we are in the midst of trials we need the wisdom of God to know what to do in any given situation.
- God promises to give us the wisdom that we will need to cope with any trial so that we will be able to glorify Him with our response. *1 Corinthians 10:31*

### Doubting = Unstable and Double-Minded

- Doubt is unbelief and is sin. Doubt is a refusal to take God at his word. *1 John 3:4*
- Believers are to admit their doubt and address it. *Mark 9:24*

### The Penalty for Doubting

To embrace unbelief means that the believer is not sure what he can expect from his God.

# The Letter of James

*James 1:9-11*

## Word to the Rich

### Old Covenant Era Standard

- Before the Old Covenant era the examples of believers seem to be wealthy believers such as Job. *Job 1:1-3*
- In the Old Covenant era blessings from God are viewed in terms of physical blessings. *Deuteronomy 28*

### New Covenant Era Standard

- In the New Covenant era blessings from God are tied to being “in Christ.” *Ephesians 1:3*
- The examples of Jesus and believers in the New Covenant era are mostly poor. See both Jesus and Paul. *Matthew 8:20, Philippians 4:10-13, 2 Corinthians 6:10*

### **Riches are Fleeting**

Financial security can evaporate overnight. We have very little control over our financial situation. *1 Timothy 6:17*

### **Riches can Entrap**

*1 Timothy 6:6-10*

- Money is not evil, but the “love of money” will bring about all sorts of evil.
- Contentedness is something that must be learned.
- Believers are warned about the possible pitfalls of wealth.  
*Matthew 13:22, Luke 18:18-25, Revelation 3:14-22*
- In the New Covenant era God does not seem to be saving many wealthy individuals. *1 Corinthians 1:26*

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### **Word to the Poor**

#### **Believers are Rich in Christ**

*Ephesians 1:3*

- To be a believer in Jesus Christ is to be part of God’s family.
- The entire life of the believer is controlled by a loving Father who would never allow anything to happen to his child that was not motivated by his love for them and for their good. *Romans 8:28*

#### **The Father will care for His Children**

- The Father will take care of the physical needs of his children.  
*2 Corinthians 9:6-11*
- No matter what the believer encounters he will be able to say “it is well with my soul.”  
*Romans 8:31-39*

## **The Letter of James**

*James 1:12*

### **Perseverance**

#### **Definition**

*Philippians 1:6*

Everyone who is a true believer in Jesus Christ will continue to love his Lord and to live for him until he dies.

## **Overcoming Sin**

*Galatians 5:16-18*

- The Holy Spirit is transforming every believer. *8:12-14, Romans 7:4-6*
- Perfect behavior is not possible for the believer this side of heaven.
- Conflict with sin is the normal Christian life.
- Growth through conflict with sin is what every believer experiences.

## **Necessity of Perseverance**

### **Salvation is All of God**

*Romans 8:30*

- Every believer is guaranteed to have eternal life, which means that every believer will experience glorification.
- Every believer must persevere in order to gain eternal life. *Hebrews 3:14*
- Perseverance is therefore guaranteed to the believer by the saving work of Jesus on the cross. *Hebrews 10:14*

### **No Salvation without Perseverance**

*Romans 11:22*

- Professing believers are not necessarily real believers.
- All real believers must persevere to be saved from the wrath to come.
- Believers are responsible to do whatever it takes to persevere in the faith. *Philippians 2:12-13*

## **Understanding the Crowns**

### **Definition**

Crowns are symbolic for eternal life that all believers gain through their perseverance.

*James 1:12, 2 Timothy 4:8, Revelation 2:10, 1 Peter 5:4*

### **What Crowns are Not**

- Crowns are not rewards that some believers get and others miss out on.
- The fullness of our salvation is described as our inheritance, which is exactly what the crowns symbolize. *Ephesians 1:14*

## **Understanding Rewards**

### **An Accounting for Believers**

*2 Corinthians 5:10*

All believers must give an account of their lives as believers.

### **The Content of Rewards**

*1 Corinthians 4:5*

The only clear statement of rewards for believers is praise from God.

### **Thoughts to Ponder**

- Our God causes all good works. *Ephesians 2:10*
- None of our good works earn anything for they are not perfectly good. *Galatians 5:17*

# The Letter of James

*James 1:13-18*

## Test versus Temptation

*James 1:13*

### Definition of a Test

A test is a trial that our God brings into our lives that has as its purpose to build us up on the faith. *James 1:2-4*

### Old Testament Examples

- When Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mount Moriah. This trial was brought into Abraham's life to test his heart. *Genesis 22*
- In the book of Judges God did not drive out all the Canaanites at once since he wanted to test the Israelites to see whether they would follow the LORD. *Judges 2:22*

### Definition of a Temptation

A temptation is trial that is motivated by an evil intent for the purpose of causing the person receiving the temptation to give in to the temptation and sin.

### Old Testament Example

*1 Kings 22:19-22*

An evil spirit was going to cause the false prophets to lie to King Ahab so that he would listen to them and attack Ramoth Gilead and go to his death.

## Our God is not like us

*1 Samuel 15:29*

- In the account it clearly looks like God is changing his mind.
- God reminds us that it is not possible for him to change his mind since he is not a man.
- To change your mind you need new information and God knows all things since he has determined all things in eternity past. *Ephesians 1:11*

*Numbers 23:19*

- In the account Balaam is seeking to prophesy against Israel so that Balak, the king of the Moabites, will reward him.
- God will not allow Balaam to prophesy against Israel. God cannot lie or change his mind since he is not a man.

*1 Kings 22:23*

- The evil spirit is the one blamed for tempting the false prophets to give a false prophesy.
- God is the first cause and this account and he cannot be blamed for the evil that is done.

*1 John 1:5*

## **Evolution of Sin**

*James 1:14-15*

The origin of sin begins with a thought in the mind. The thought is not sin but it can become sin. Sin takes place when one of God's laws is broken. *1 John 3:4*

## **Nothing but GOOD comes from our God**

*James 1:16-18*

- God's motives can never be questioned.
- God can never be blamed for any evil, even though the evil is a part of his predetermined plan. *Acts 4:27-28*
- For the believer everything that happens to them is for their good. *Romans 8:28*

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# **Beware of Favoritism**

*James 2:1-13*

## **Befriending the Wealthy**

*James 2:1-7*

### **Beware of Motives for Friendship**

*Philippians 2:3-4*

- We must resist the temptation to use others.
- We must understand that our goal is to care for the other person.



### **Pitfalls of the Wealthy**

- It is the wealthy who tend to use their wealth to exercise control and influence.
- It is usually the wealthy that take advantage of you.
- It is usually the wealthy that do not see their need for the Lord.

### **Applying the “Royal Law”**

*Romans 2:8-9*

- The law “love your neighbor as yourself” is first found in *Leviticus 1:18*.
- Under the law of Christ we as believers are not to show favoritism. We are to treat everyone equally. *1 Corinthians 9:19-21*
- Every person that we encounter must be thought of as a divine encounter. We must therefore treat everyone person in a manner that honors the God of Scripture. *1 Corinthians 10:31*

### **The Standard of a Holy God**

*James 2:10*

- God’s standard for acceptance is absolute perfection. *Romans 6:23*
- One cannot be accepted by the Father without sharing his righteousness. *Romans 3:21-24*
- One violation of the law brings eternal punishment. *Romans 6:23*

### **The Content of the Law of Christ**

*James 2:11*

- Mosaic as a whole has been abolished. *Ephesians 2:11-18, 1 Corinthians 9:19-21*
- The Ten Commandments are a summary of the requirements of the Old Covenant and therefore as the Ten they cannot be separated from that works covenant. *2 Corinthians 3, Exodus 34:27-28*
- If some of the Ten Commandments are apply in the New Covenant era, then they apply to us not because they were part of the Ten Commandments but because they are part of the law of Christ. *Ephesians 6:1-3*

### **Living out the “Royal Law”**

*James 2:12-13*

### **Law that gives Freedom**

- The context is talking about a true believer who has a new heart. *1 Peter 1:8*
- The way a believer shows his love for his Lord is to keep his commandments. *1 John 5:3*

### **Evidence of a New Heart**

- A believer will show mercy and forgive. *Matthew 6:12, 1 John 4:19-21*
- The new heart is the evidence that the believer has all his sins forgiven and has therefore escaped the judgment of God. *Romans 8:1*

# Faith Without Works is Dead

*James 2:14-26*

## **Perspective of James**

James is examining the claim of someone who professes to believe the gospel. His point of view is the evidence of a true saving faith.

## **What James assumes that you know**

*The Work of the Cross*

### **Cause of our Acceptance**

*Forgiveness of Sins*

When Jesus paid for our sins on the cross he satisfied the demands of God's justice against us.

*Romans 5:1*

### **Cause of our Changed Life**

*Holy Spirit*

Jesus also purchased on the cross a work of the Holy Spirit that guarantees that every believer will be a fruit-bearing God-lover. *Romans 8:1-9*

## **Definition of Justified**

*Romans 3:28, James 2:24*

### **Paul's Definition**

*Cause of our Acceptance*

- The works that we do can never be the cause of our acceptance since they are never perfect works. *Galatians 5:17*
- The work of Jesus on the cross was a perfect work of paying for all of our sins and therefore satisfying everything that the Father has against us.

### **James' Definition**

*Evidence of our Acceptance*

The works that we do can never be the cause of our acceptance yet they can function as the evidence that our sins are forgiven. *Romans 8:1*

## **The Example of Abraham**

*Genesis 22*

### **Paul's Use of Abraham**

*Genesis 17, Romans 4:9-25*

Paul viewed Abraham's life to understand the cause of his acceptance, which was saving faith.

### **James' Use of Abraham**

*Genesis 22, James 2:21-24*

James viewed Abraham's life to understand the proof that Abraham had a real saving faith.

## **The Example of Rahab**

*Joshua 2*

- The life of Rahab was clear evidence that she had faith.
- The sin of Rahab is not condoned, only her faith is mentioned as that which is praiseworthy.

## **The Conclusion of the Matter**

*1 John 3:9-10*

It is not possible to be a real believer and not experience the radical work of the Holy Spirit, which results in a changed life.

# **Taming the Tongue**

*James 3:1-12*

## **Warning Regarding Teachers**

*James 3:1-2*

### **Role of the Teacher**

- Since we no longer live in the era of the “sign gifts” such as prophecy and tongues the role of the teacher tends to be the position of prominence.
- One must be gifted as a teacher to pursue this role in the family of believers.  
*1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9*
- The Holy Spirit determines the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit. *1 Corinthians 12:11*

### **Warning to Teachers**

- The teacher of God’s word necessarily affects many others beside himself.
- Mishandling of Scripture can hurt other believers.
- Teachers must give account for their teaching.

### **Controlling the Tongue**

- Since the teacher communicates his teaching through his tongue he must control his tongue.
- When one controls his tongue he is able to exercise much control over his life.

## **Illustrations of the Tongue**

*James 3:3-6*

### **The horse with the bit**

A small bit in his mouth provides the control of a horse.

### **The rudder of a ship**

The small rudder of a ship will allow the pilot to steer a very large vessel.

### **The Tongue can bring about Destruction**

- Even though the tongue is small if it is not controlled it will bring about the destruction of the individual.
- The mouth reflects what is in the heart. *Matthew 15:17-19*

## **The Tongue and Evil**

*James 3:7-8*

### **Unbeliever**

The unbeliever is a slave to sin with an evil heart. He will be unable to control his tongue.

*Romans 6:17*

### **Believer**

The believer has a new heart and is no longer a slave to sin and therefore can exercise control over his tongue, but not complete control. *Romans 6:18, Galatians 5:17*

## **Proper Use of the Tongue**

*Ephesians 4:29*

For the believer to use the tongue properly he must be other-person centered.

## **Evidence of a New Heart**

*James 3:9-12*

The believer will desire to seek to control his tongue because he is a God-lover. *1 Peter 1:8*

# **Two Kinds of Wisdom**

*James 3:13-18*

## **Wisdom**

*Definition*

### **Homespun Wisdom**

An understanding of how to live that is picked up from our life situation.

### **Biblical Wisdom**

Biblical wisdom is the application of biblical truth to life. *Proverbs 2:6, Proverbs 1:1-6*

## **Sinful Wisdom**

*Examples*

### **Envy**

You want what others have. (envy is the same word in NT as covet) compare *James 4:2*

### **Selfish Ambition**

Your concern is only for yourself.

## **Biblical Wisdom**

### *Examples*

#### **Glory of God Motivation**

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

- Pure: pure motives
- Sincere: really caring

#### **Other-Person Centered**

*Philippians 2:3-4*

- Considerate: thinking of others
- Submissive: willing to consider another point of view
- Full of mercy: seeking to understand another person's struggle
- Impartial: not prejudiced in your judgments
- Peace-loving: a bridge builder

#### **Peacemakers**

*Matthew 5:9*

#### **To Unbelievers**

*Romans 5:1*

The giving of the gospel to the unbeliever is the only means by which they can find peace with a holy God.

#### **To Believers**

*Galatians 5:22*

Pursuing peace with other believers is a necessary result of a new heart. *1 John 4:19-21*

#### **Fruit of Righteousness**

*Encouragement for Right Living*

When we as believers pursue biblical peace with other believers we encourage them to also live for their Lord. *Philippians 4:8-9*

## **Why do you do what you do?**

*James 4:1-3*

#### **Unbiblical Conflict**

*James 4:1-2*

#### **Desire to Win**

*Philippians 4:8-9*

My concern is not to glorify my Lord, but rather to win the argument.

## **The Sin of Pride**

*Matthew 6:33*

Pride is the sin of self-justification. My concerns come before any other concerns.

## **Learning to be Content**

*Philippians 4:10-13*

A believer must learn to be content with whatever our Father in heaven gives to us or withholds from us.

## **What it means to be in the Family of God**

*Benefits of Sonship*

### **Unconditional Acceptance**

*Romans 5:1*

Everything that a holy, just God has against has been satisfied by the death of Jesus on the cross for you. Therefore, you are unconditionally accepted.

### **Fatherly Care**

*Romans 8:28*

When you believe the gospel message and trust in Jesus alone to save you by his death on the cross you are placed in God's family. As a member of God's family you are completely cared for by the Father.

## **Unbiblical Prayer**

*James 4:2-3*

### **Failure to Pray**

- Failure to pray reveals a belief in self-sufficiency.
- Failure to pray does not acknowledge our dependence on our Lord.
- Failure to pray denies our responsibility to pray.

### **Failure to Pray in the Spirit**

*Ephesians 6:18, Jude 20*

- I am not referring to some mystical prayer in the Spirit.
- The role of the Holy Spirit is to make us Christ-like. *1 Peter 1:11, Romans 8:9*
- To pray in the Spirit is to pray in a manner that honors God. This means that we are to pray in a manner that agrees with Scripture.

# Evidence of a New Heart

*James 4:4-10*

## Context

- James is writing to those who profess to believe in the saving work of Jesus Christ.
- How his hearers respond to his letter will reveal whether they are real believers.

## Friendship with the World

*James 4:4*

- In this context the term world refers to the world of unbelievers that do not seek to live for our Lord
- If we as believers seek after acceptance by the world then we will not live for the glory of God. *Matthew 6:33*

## Problem Passage

*James 4:5-6*

### NIV 1984

*Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?*

### NIV 2011

*Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?*

### ESV

*Or do you suppose it is no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”?*

### What we know to be true

- Believers do struggle with remaining evil in their lives. *Galatians 5:17*
- We know that our Father causes the believer by the Holy Spirit to live for Jesus. *Romans 8:14*

### Thought to Ponder

*If v.5 refers to the sinful longings of the human spirit, then the more or “greater” (**meizona**) **grace** will suggest the ability and willingness of God to overcome sinfulness: “he gives us grace potent enough to meet this and every other evil spirit” (Phillips). If, however, as we have argued, v.5 depicts God’s jealousy for his people, then James here is reminding us that God’s grace is completely adequate to meet the requirements imposed on us by that jealousy. (Moo, page 191)*

## Our Responsibilities

*James 4:7-10*

### Submit to God

Submission is another way of describing our willingness to be yoked to Jesus. *Matthew 11:28-30*

### Resist the Devil

We resist the devil by responding to temptations from a biblical point of view.

*Romans 12:2, Ephesians 6:10-18*

### **Come Near to God**

To come near is to submit to the authority of Scripture. *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

### **Repent of Sin**

The mark of a believer is that you live a life of repentance. *2 Corinthians 7:10-11*

### **Humble Yourselves before God**

Humility is looking at yourself from God's perspective. *1 Peter 5:5-6, Matthew 23:1-12*

## **Speaking Against the Law**

*James 4:11-12*

### **Understanding the Sin of Slander**

*Speaking Against Someone*

#### **Dictionary Definition of Slander**

*False Statements*

“to make a false spoken statement that causes people to have a bad opinion of someone”

(Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

#### **Biblical Definition of Slander**

*Speaking Evil*

The basic idea of the biblical term used for slander is to speak evil against someone.

*Romans 1:30, 1 Peter 2:1*

“In the usage of the NT and the early Church the only emphasis and content of the group is that of speaking evil against one's neighbour. Other words are now used for opposing and blaspheming God... . Whether the main stress, as in a word like “slander,” is on the act of spreading a false report is not apparent in the NT passages, though this is naturally included in *katalalein*. (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, volume 4, page 4.)

### **Understanding the sin of judging others**

*Do not judge or you too will be judged*

#### **When Judging is a Sin**

*Matthew 7:1-5*

The sin of judging is when we make an evaluation of someone else that we are not willing to submit to ourselves. This is a hypocritical judgment.

#### **When Judging is not a Sin**

*1 Corinthians 5:12-13*

When our judgment of others is in agreement with Scripture and we are also willing to submit to it. *Galatians 6:1*



## What does it mean to speak against the law?

### *Law of Love*

#### **The Royal Law**

*James 2:8*

The law that is being mentioned in this passage is the law to love your neighbor as yourself. This is called the “Royal Law.” *Matthew 22:34-40*

#### **1st Mention of Law of Love**

The first mention of the law to love your neighbor as yourself is found in the Mosaic Law.

*Leviticus 19:18*

#### **Love of Love in the Law of Christ**

Jesus takes this command and adds to it his own personal example of how to love.

*John 13:34-35, 1 Corinthians 9:21*

## What does it mean to judge the law?

### *Above the Law*

- To judge the law is to put yourself above the law. That is, you are unwilling to apply the law of love to yourself.
- We are not allowed to act independently of the law of Christ. *Romans 12:2*

## If it is the Lord's will

### *James 4:13-17*

#### **Planning to the Glory of God**

#### **Planning is Good**

*Paul's Planning*

Paul planned to come to Rome to visit the believers there but was unable to fulfill his plan until a much later time and under much different circumstance. *Romans 1:8-13, 15:23-29*

#### **The Future is Uncertain**

*Passing Mist*

The only way that we can know the future is through prophecy, and even prophecy can fool us since it is not always fulfilled literally. *Malachi 4:5-6, John 1:19-23, Matthew 17:10-13*

#### **Our Father has the Last Word**

*Sovereign Will*

The sovereign will is what is going to happen to us regardless of our plans.

## Sorting Out the Wills of God

### Sovereign Will

#### *Always Happens*

- God has determined everything that is going to happen in eternity past. *Ephesians 1:11*
- God's eternal plan includes evil, yet we are not allowed to blame God for the evil.  
*Acts 4:27-28, Romans 9:19*

### Moral Will

#### *What Ought to Happen*

Scripture, in context, tells us what God wants us to do in any and every situation. It is the revealed will of God. *1 Thessalonians 5:18, 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

### The Sin of Arrogance

#### *Denial of Dependence*

Presuming to know what will happen in the future is an indication that we are not depending on our Father in heaven. *Matthew 6:25-34*

### Biblical Dependence

#### *if it is the Lord's will*

- Biblical dependence is using making plans for the future and yet submitting in advance to the unfolding of the sovereign will for my life.
- The phrase "if it be your will" is not a copout but an honest response to biblical reality.

### What we must do

#### *Lordship*

- Lordship is part of the Christian life. *Matthew 11:28-30*
- We are to obey our Lord for the right reasons. *1 Corinthians 10:31*
- Obedience is not optional for the believer. We must obey the law of God. *1 John 3:9-10*

## Pitfalls of Stuff

### *James 5:1-6*

### Understanding the Context

#### *Unbelieving Rich*

- The wealthy in this passage are unbelieving individuals who are making the lives of the believers difficult. These wealthy unbelievers are being called to repentance.
- *The "rich" whom James attacks in the paragraph are wealthy landowners, as v. 4 reveals. (Moo, page 210.)*

- *What can be said about the “rich” in this passage, however, is that they are condemned not simply for their wealth; they are condemned for their sinful use of their wealth.* (Moo, page 210.)
- *Why does James preach this message of denunciation of non-Christians in a letter addressed to the church? Calvin appropriately isolates two main purposes: James “has regard to the faithful, that they, hearing of the miserable end of the rich, might not envy their fortune, and also that knowing that God would be the avenger of the wrongs they suffered, they might with a calm and resigned mind bear them.”* (Moo, pages 210-211.)

### **The Gospel and the Wealthy**

*Matthew 19:16-26*

- In the parable of the rich young ruler Jesus states that results of wealth will keep someone from believing the gospel message.
- This parable is viewing salvation from a human perspective for it is impossible for anyone to become a believer apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, who causes belief.  
*John 6:44, Ephesians 2:8-9, Acts 11:18*
- It would seem that God does not choose many for salvation whom the world would recognize as significant individuals. *1 Corinthians 1:26-29*

### **Believers and Stuff**

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

#### **Thoughts to Consider**

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

- Wealth is a relative term.
- Whatever we have we must use it for the glory of God.

#### **Storing Up**

*Matthew 6:19-21*

- Physical wealth comes and goes and stuff wears out.
- Believers are wealthy in Christ. *Ephesians 1:3*
- The parable of the rich fool reminds us of the truth that this life is only for a brief time in comparison to eternity, and therefore we must use our stuff with eternity in mind.

*Luke 12:13-21*

#### **Other-Person Centered**

*Philippians 2:3-4*

- The needs of others must be taken into account when we are seeking to use our stuff.
- We are only stewards of our stuff for it really belongs to our Lord.
- The way we care for others reveals whether or not we are a God-lover. *James 2:15-17*

# Gaining a Biblical Perspective

*James 5:7-11*

## Understanding the Context

*Suffering of Believers*

In *James 5:1-6* the wealthy, who oppress the believers, are vividly described. This then is the backdrop for what James has to say in *James 5:7-11*. Believers are to exercise patience in light of their present difficulties.

## Defining Patience

*Embracing God's Timetable*

### Dictionary Definition of Patience

*the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset:*  
(*New Oxford American Dictionary*)

### Biblical Definition

Submitting to God's timing for whatever we are facing in this life.

### Scriptural Proof

*Ephesians 1:11*

Everything that happens is according to God's predetermined plan.

*Romans 8:28*

Everything that happens to the believer is motivated by the love of the Father for the believer.

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

The believer is limited in what he/she may do in any circumstance.

### Patience is Submission

*Matthew 11:28-30*

Belief is embracing Jesus as our Savior and Lord. Embracing Lordship is willingly submitting to what God is doing in our lives. To submit is to be patient.

## The Dark Side of Impatience

*Grumbling*

### Questioning the Plan of God

Describing the predetermined plan of God as "fate" usually means that the plan of God is not for our good.

### Questioning the Timing of God's Plan

Questioning the timing of God's plan in our lives is questioning the wisdom of God.

### Impatience is Rebellion

Impatience is saying that we know better than the God of heaven and earth.

### **Example of the OT Prophets**

*Jeremiah*

Jeremiah remained faithful to his Lord even though he suffered greatly as a result of his prophecies regarding the southern kingdom. *Jeremiah 38:1-13*

### **Example of Job**

*Persevered*

In spite of Job's sin he persevered with his Lord and was ultimately vindicated. *Job 42:7-9*

## **Let Your Yes be Yes**

*James 5:12*

### **Context**

*How does it fit with the previous paragraph?*

- Upon first glance, the paragraph on patience does not seem to naturally fit with verse 12. But if you look at the passage from the perspective of how a believer is to live then the teaching on being a person of your word does seem to fit.
- When James says in the NIV, "Above all..." he wants us to take special notice of the truth that the believer must be a person of their word. *Ephesians 4:25*

### **Oath Taking**

*Definition*

*solemn promise, often invoking a divine witness, regarding one's future action or behavior (New Oxford American Dictionary)*

### **Sermon on the Mount**

*Matthew 5:34-37*

#### **Mosaic Law**

*Leviticus 19:12*

- There is no command against the taking of an oath.
- There is a command that says when you take an oath or swear do not dishonor the Lord God

#### **Using an Oath in a Sinful Way**

*Matthew 23:16-22*

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and the teachers of the law for using oaths to avoid keeping their word.

## **God and Oath Taking**

*Hebrews 7:20-22*

- In *Psalms 110:4* God says that the Messiah, who is Jesus, will be a priest forever. This refers to his role as the savior of all those chosen by the Father.
- As a priest Jesus offered up his own life for all those for whom he came to save. The Father accepted his death and eternal life was purchased.
- In *Genesis 15* God called a curse upon himself if he would not create for himself a people and then take them into his land.

## **Paul and Oath Taking**

*Romans 1:9, 2 Corinthians 1:23*

Paul's use of the oath shows us that the teaching in the Sermon on the Mount was not meant to be an absolute forbidding of the taking of oaths.

## **Application**

### **Freedom Regarding Oaths**

The believer who lives in the New Covenant era and under the Law of Christ is free to take an oath.

### **Oaths are Not Necessary**

The word of the believer ought to be all that is necessary to know that the believer is telling the truth.

### **The Integrity of Your Word**

Telling the truth and keeping one's word are evidence of a new heart.

# **Anointing with Oil?**

*James 5:13-18*

## **Essence of Prayer**

*Dependence*

Talking to our Father in heaven is the acknowledgement of our dependence on him. Prayer says that our own actions are never sufficient. *Philippians 4:6-7*

## **Sickness and Anointing with Oil**

### **Defining "Sickness"**

- One version of sickness is spiritual sickness. *Romans 6:19*
- The common view of sickness is physical sickness. *1 Timothy 5:23*

### **Anointing?**

- Anointing can refer to the use of oil as medicine. *Luke 10:34*
- Anointing refers to the Holy Spirit and it therefore a symbolic anointing. *Exodus 40:15*

### **Why call the Elders?**

- If the anointing referred to the use of medicine it would seem strange to call for the elders as though they would be the obvious choice to address physical illnesses.
- There is no example in the New Covenant era, other than in the book of James that we see the work of the elders involving the healing of sickness.

### **Gift of Healing**

- There is a spiritual gift of healing that was given to some believers. *1 Corinthians 12:9,28*
- The Holy Spirit determined the distribution of the gifts and there are no conditions that must be met in order for someone to receive these gifts. *1 Corinthians 12:11*

### **Paul's Response to Sickness**

- Paul healed others of physical illnesses in his ministry. *Acts 14:8-10*
- Paul use of healing seems to be limited. *1 Timothy 5:23, 2 Timothy 4:20*

### **Sickness and Sin**

- In some instances physical sickness is tied to sin committed by the ill individual. *1 Corinthians 11:27-30*
- In the instances where sickness is tied to sin it would seem to be obvious to the believer.

### **Prayer of Faith**

*Matthew 9:27-31i*

The prayer of faith is being convinced that God is able to do something, like healing someone from sickness.

### **Conclusion**

- The literal application does not seem to work and we have no biblical example or teaching to help us.
- Therefore, I would suggest that this is referring to a unique practice that took place during the opening phase of the New Covenant Era and that it is not for today. Both Luther and Calvin believed this to be the case.

### **The Example of Elijah**

*1 Kings 17,18*

Elijah the prophet prophesied that there would be no rain because of the sin of Ahab, the king of the northern kingdom of Israel. At the defeat of the prophets of Baal he also prayed and God caused it to rain.

### **The Power of Prayer**

- We are to view prayer as a powerful tool that brings things to pass. *Colossians 4:2-5*
- How prayer works is a matter of legitimate mystery. *1 Samuel 15:29*

# You are Your Brother's Keeper

*James 5:19-20*

## Context

James closes out his letter with a call for our caring for fellow believers who are caught in sin. This is an appropriate ending to a letter that is all about how a God-lover lives his life before a Holy God.

## An Evangelical Cultural Problem

*Unbiblical Concept of Grace*

- The concept of “being gracious” has come to mean that any confrontation of another believer over something in their life is to be viewed as an unloving act.
- It is quite biblical that the Father unconditionally accepts us because Jesus paid for all of our sins and satisfied the wrath of God on our behalf. *Romans 5:1*
- It is also quite biblical that the evidence that a believer has his sins forgiven is that he desires to obey the law of Christ. *1 John 2:3-6*

## Wandering from the Truth

*Failing to Stay in the Way*

- Wandering away from the truth of the gospel would have eternal consequences if the professed believer did not repent of his error. *Romans 3:31*
- Wandering away from the law of Christ will also have eternal consequences if the professed believer does not repent and return to following his Lord. *Romans 11:22, Romans 8:12-14*

## Confronting is a Command

*Galatians 6:1-2*

- The language of *James 5:20* does not seem to have the force of a command, but only mentioning something that is good to do.
- The language of *Galatians 6:1-2* seems to clearly state that the believer is obligated to being involved in the life of another believer who seems to be caught in sin.

## What Keeps Us from Confronting Others

*Fear of Man*

- The fear of rejection by the one whom we are trying to help may keep us from reaching out to him. Unconditional acceptance by the Father frees the believer from having to be accepted by the one he is helping. *8:31-39*
- The fear of consequences can keep us from reaching out to others who are caught in sin. Self-preservation must not be our prime concern as a believer. *Matthew 22:34-40*
- When we choose to love others we are taking a risk. Risk taking is part of being other-person centered. *Luke 10:25-37*

## Being Jealous for One Another

*Other Person Centered*

- If we are seeking to glorify our Lord then we will want to be other-person centered.



*1 Corinthians 10:24*

- To love someone is to risk all in caring for them. *1 John 5:2-3*

### **Benefits of Obedience**

#### *Restoration of Others*

- To glorify the Father, whom we love, is the goal of all believers. *1 Corinthians 10:31*
- To help restore a believer is to glorify the Lord in our actions. *John 10:34-35*