

**THE
GENERAL EPISTLE
OF
JAMES**

**A Verse By Verse Study
Of The Whole Book**

By Rodney W. Francis



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This study of the Book of James is dedicated to all who sincerely desire to learn more from the Word of God in order to live a God-glorifying lifestyle, and to those who will use to teach others the positives of "Kingdom Living" in the here and now.

The Scriptural basis of these studies are taken from The King James Version (KJV) of the Bible.

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INTRODUCTION

The following pages represent many many hours of time spent in searching the Book of James. I have recently benefited from such a venture and I really do sincerely trust that you who take the time to study through with me, and seek to pick up my heart on this Book, will see that it is a genuine attempt to help others to be blessed, as well as to grow much in their walk with God.

Because this Manual will travel to various nations, and because it will be studied by people who only have English as a second language, and because it is good to try and get the original meaning of a word used, and because a lot of our English words now have a different meaning to when they were used in the Bible translations, I have taken time to include a break-down of the word meanings in a lot of places. To me, to get as clear a picture as possible of the original meanings is important. I do not want to be believing something that does not mean what I think it does! So I pray that you will find this Manual to be very helpful, as well as informative. May it inspire you to know the Word of God is still applicable to us all today. Right now! The truth does not, has not and will not change! God gave it to us to help us know that truth which sets us free!

A Manual such as this is not a story book. It is necessary to take time to study it through bit by bit, more like a devotional so you can meditate and take in more of what it is saying. It is broken up into Parts so that it can be studied privately, with a friend or friends, or in more official church-type meetings or groups.

Whatever way you choose to work through this Manual, may it prove to be stimulating, challenging and a real means of growth in your walk with the Lord.

God Bless You!

- Rodney W. Francis.

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CHAPTER ONE

Part One:

After spending time over three years studying as a church the “Kingdom Living” or “Sermon on the Mount” series (Matthew Chapters 5 to 7 – the Manual is available through P.O. Box 5601, Frankton, Hamilton, New Zealand), it seemed right for us to take a closer Verse by Verse look at a very practical book of the Bible – James. As we go through this together my prayer is that you shall be greatly blessed and challenged by the truth of God’s Word to live a life of obedience to Christ.

INTRODUCTION:

Verse 1: *“James, a servant* (‘slave, one bound to serve; one whose will and capacities are wholly at the service of another. In Christian service it expresses the highest devotion of one who is bound by love’ – Bullinger’s) *of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are scattered* (‘in the scattering as of seed’) *abroad, greetings* (‘to wish joy, to rejoice, to be glad, to salute’).”

There are three men by the name of James mentioned in the New Testament, but it is more than likely that the writer of this epistle (‘letter’) was James, the Lord’s brother (Galatians 1:19), who was also an apostle and leader in the early Church. He was therefore in a position to write this book with authority.

The name “James” is the Greek form of “Jacob” which means “following after: supplanter,” or “he will take by the heel.”

James wrote *“to the twelve tribes who are scattered abroad.”* According to “The New Bible Commentary” (Inter-Varsity Press) this statement refers “not to the Jews as a race but to Christian Jews who, having been brought face to face with the great principle of faith, were in need of practical instruction in the art of Christian living. By the use of the word *“twelve”* James is not necessarily distinguishing each tribe separately. It is a collective term to denote all those of Jewish descent. *“Scattered abroad,”* literally “in the dispersion.” The letter is directed specially to those living among Gentiles outside the borders of Palestine.”

CHRISTIANITY HAS MANY TRIALS:

James keeps his introduction very short and gets right onto relevant matters that confront the Christian believer - trials and temptations.

Verse 2: *“My brethren (“brothers”) count it all joy when you fall into divers (“various, different”) temptations (“a putting to the test, provings, trials” – Bullinger’s).”*

The word **“count”** here means “to lead, i.e. to lead the way, go before, hence, to be a leader or chief; then, to lead out before the mind, i.e. to view, regard as being so and so, to esteem, count, reckon” – Bullinger’s. It is exhorting us to recognize that trials and testings are very much a part of the Christian life, therefore we need to adopt a very positive attitude towards them. **“Count it all JOY!”**

The Amplified Bible states Verse 2 like this:– **“Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, when ever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort, or fall into various temptations.”**

It is not natural to be joyful in the midst of trials; but we are not natural people any more – we are supernaturally endowed with all the graces of God to overcome all obstacles that come against us. **With JOY!**

JOY:

What is joy to you?

We need to understand something more of the experience of joy. The Bible declares: **“The joy of the Lord is your strength”** (Nehemiah 8:10). Joy comes through keeping our eyes upon Jesus and following Him in obedience. We lose our joy when we look at the circumstances that threaten to destroy us. In all situations we can be joyful, even if it is only on the inside.

Let us look at a great Old Testament portion of Scripture that surely has a tremendous challenge to us in our times of trials:–

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail (“to fail, lie, deceive” – Young’s), and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; Yet I will rejoice (“exult: to be joyful or jubilant, especially because of triumph or success over circumstances. To take delight in the defeat or discomfiture of something”) in the Lord, I will joy (“to leap, rejoice, be joyful”) in the God of my salvation” (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

How would you re-act in these circumstances?

In Psalm 43:4 we discover David praying to God because his life was being hassled by ungodly, deceitful and unjust men. He was feeling the pressures of opposition and persecution. This is how he prayed in the time of testing:–

“O send out Your light and Your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto Your holy hill, and to Your tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto GOD MY EXCEEDING JOY. . .”

God’s light and truth motivated David away from getting his eyes on the depressions of the enemy and on to Himself who was his exceeding joy! Our God is still the God of

exceeding joy! Beloved, we must see that God allows us to be tested in order that He might reproduce His character within our lives. By this means He instils into us true strength and joy. Space does not permit more to be said here, but it is a good Bible study to discover how testings and joy go together in the will of God.

Verse 3: “Knowing (“to perceive, observe, obtain a knowledge of or insight into. It denotes a personal and true relation between the person knowing and the object known” – Bullinger’s) **this, that the trying** (“proving, testing” – Young’s) **of your faith** (“firm persuasion; a firmly relying confidence in what we hear from God in His Word” – Bullinger’s) **works** (“effects, achieves”) **patience.”**

The very things that we so often think are a hindrance to our walk with God are those that God Himself allows to come our way in order to refine us, our faith, and to develop patience within us (we will look at patience in our next Lesson).

Let us make sure our attitudes to trials and testings are joyful ones, so we can continue at all times to give praise, honour and glory to God. Hallelujah!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How much joy do you have in your life?
2. How can you increase joy in your life?
3. Name some things that rob us of joy in the time of temptation?
4. What do trials and testings work into our lives?
5. Why does our faith have to be tried?

Part Two:

Trials and testings are a part of the Christian life. Instead of running away from them we should recognize God’s purposes in them so that we can develop two very important areas of Christian character – FAITH and PATIENCE.

Verse 3: “Knowing this, that the trying (“proving, testing” – Young’s) **of your faith works patience.”**

Those who have a strong faith are usually people who have been through testing times and come out the other side victorious. It has been said that testing times do one of two things to us - they make us bitter or better. Faith has to be tested and built into our lives in such a way as to make us better. God’s purpose is that through the trying of our faith we learn patience.

PATIENCE:

Patience is that quality of life we all need more of. We find in so many areas we are so impatient. Our tolerance level of other people - especially Christian people - can be so low at times. God wants to change this. To do that He has to work in us in order to change us.

Verse 4: *“But let patience* (‘‘a remaining under; hence, a bearing-up under, patient endurance’’ – Bullinger’s) *have her perfect* (‘‘what has reached its end, term or limit; hence, complete perfect, full, wanting nothing, with special reference to the end for which it was intended’’ – Bullinger’s) *work* (‘‘effect, achievement’’) *that you may be perfect and entire* (‘‘whole in every part’’ – Young’s) *wanting nothing.*”

This Verse shows us the end result of trials and testings that God allows us to go through. Patience has a perfect work! Collins Dictionary gives us the meaning of patience as being: ‘‘(1) tolerant and even-tempered perseverance. (2) the capacity for calmly enduring pain, trying situations.’’

It is simply not God’s will to deliver us out of all painful experiences. But He will be with us as we go through them so that we can learn to know patience. Patience fully develops us, takes away our defects and causes us to lack nothing, according to the Amplified Bible:

“But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed (with no defects), lacking in nothing.”

That is a tremendous promise! It should make us want to ask the Lord for every trial possible so we can get to the fulfilment of that verse as quickly as possible!

It is through faith and patience that we inherit the promises of God. The example of Abraham is given to us as one who *“after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise”* (See Hebrews 6:12-15).

One reason why faith is weak in many lives today is because patience is missing in our character. Our world is so used to ‘‘instant everything’’ that we find it hard to wait for God to develop the important things within us.

James 5:7-11 gives us a very real challenge of the need for patience:

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish (‘‘confirm, fix firmly’’) your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws near ...”

“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction (‘‘a suffering of evil, a bearing of great distress, pain or suffering’’) and of patience.”

“Behold, we count them happy who endure (‘‘a brave bearing up against sufferings’’). You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful (‘‘very tender-hearted and compassionate’’), and of tender mercy (‘‘compassionate for the ills of others’’).

These verses show us that there is a great need for patience in our lives as we draw closer to the coming of the Lord. World conditions are failing on every hand which, in turn, places extra pressures upon all people. We Christians, knowing what is happening, should be developing faith and patience to enable us to endure every situation.

In Romans 5:3-4 the Apostle Paul said: *“. . . we glory in tribulations* (‘‘pressures,

afflictions, distresses”) **also; knowing that tribulation works patience; and patience, experience . . .**”

The word “glory” here means “to speak loud, be loud-tongued, boast or vaunt one’s self” (Bullinger’s). It is an opportunity to prove you have got the victory over your circumstances! Do you glory in your tribulations? What do you think needs to be changed in your life to enable you to glory more in your times of trials and testings? Jesus said: **“In your patience possess (“to have mastery of”) your souls”** (Luke 21:19).

Patience helps us to get to grips with our own soul – to gain the rule over our own spirit (Proverbs 16:32; Proverbs 25:28; Ecclesiastes 7:8). Jesus also told in the Parable of the Sower –

“But that on the good ground are they, who in an honest (“beautiful, comely, noble, harmonious perfection, acceptable, agreeable”) and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it (“hold it firmly”), and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15. See also Romans 15:1-6. Notice God is called **“the God of patience”** in Verse 5). The Thessalonian Church was commended for its patience and faith in all her persecutions and tribulations (2 Thessalonians 1:3-5).

For a few minutes, stop and discuss the following:–

1. Name some of the experiences in the lives of Abraham, Job, Paul and Jesus, that taught them patience.
2. Were these men better or worse off for their experiences?
3. Do you think God has a different way for you to learn patience?
4. In the light of what Paul said to the Thessalonian Church, how does your church stand in comparison?
5. How much persecution and affliction do we really go through?
6. How much patience do we need to live in daily victory?

PATIENCE IS NECESSARY IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY:

Many ministries are rendered ineffective through the lack of patience on the part of those who minister. Ministry is to God first, and to people second. It requires patience to get to know and to minister to both God and people.

Paul said: **“Giving no offence (“cause of stumbling”) in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed (“criticized in a bad sense” – Bullinger’s): But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities (“necessity arising from constraint”) in distresses (“a crowding into a narrow place, straightness of place, want of room, anguish” – Bullinger’s); In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults (“tossings to and fro, disorder”) in labours, in fastings (“denial of food”) . . .”** (2 Corinthians 6:3-5).

Other Scriptures on patience: Colossians 1:10-11; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 3:10-12; Titus 2:2; Hebrews 10:35-36; Hebrews 12:1-3; 2 Peter 1:4-8; Revelation 1:9; Revelation 2:2-3,19; and Revelation 3:10.

May the God of patience be with you continually.

Part Three:

The Scriptures we are studying are instruction on why things happen to us. They also show something of what God wants to put into us, in order to equip us for effective and mature service. A very important requirement in Christian development is that of wisdom and this Lesson will look at how we can get more of it.

LACKING WISDOM?

Verse 5: *“If any of you lack* (“an insufficiency, shortage or absence of something required or desired” – Collins) *wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally* (“in simplicity, with a readiness of heart, answering to the need without a second thought; to give freely” – Bullinger’s), *and upbraids not* (“he does not reproach, revile or find fault with”); *and it shall be given him.”*

What is wisdom?

“Wisdom” is “cleverness, skill; a right application of knowledge” (Bullinger’s).

It is “1. the ability or result of an ability to think and act utilizing knowledge, experience, understanding, common sense and insight..... 4. Soundness of mind” (Collins).

God’s desire to give us wisdom comes through strongly in this verse! He wants to freely give us more of it. So much so that there will be no “knock-backs” from God when we seek Him for more wisdom.

God is saying to us: “My wisdom is available to you - this is how you can get it”:-

1. **Recognize your own need of it.** (Sometimes we find it difficult to admit we have a need for something).
2. **Ask God for more wisdom.** (He is the Source of all wisdom and His wisdom is far superior to man’s).
3. **Know that God gives wisdom to those who ask Him.** A prayer of supplication to God is a prayer of need. Friend, in this day and age of godlessness, we need the wisdom of God in our lives to know what and how to do things!

Verse 6: *“But let him ask in faith,* (“firm persuasion, the conviction which is based upon hearing, not upon sight or knowledge; a firmly relying confidence in what we hear from God in His Word; faithfulness, steadfastness” – Bullinger’s) *nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed”* (“moving to and fro, agitated”).

This Verse teaches us there is a right way to ask of God.

4. **We must ask in faith.** Faith is being firmly persuaded that whatever God says – spoken or written – we can trust it completely. Therefore, our asking of God must be with complete confidence that He has asked us to ask, so we ask Him because He has given us His Word that He will supply us.
5. **We must ask in faith, nothing wavering.** Not only does our asking need to be

in faith, but our consequent actions after we have asked must **show or demonstrate our faith.**

To “waver” means:

- “1. to be irresolute; hesitate between two possibilities. 2. to become unsteady. 3. to fluctuate or vary. 4. to move back and forth or one way and another” (Collins);
- “to withdraw from, or (by implication) oppose; to hesitate, doubt, judge, stagger”: from the Greek word “diakrino” (Strong’s);
- “to separate throughout; to separate one’s self entirely; also, to be in separation within one’s self, be in strife with one’s self, hesitate, waver” (Bullinger’s);
- “to judge diversely, hesitatingly” (Young’s).

When we ask in faith, we give ourselves completely to seeing the answer. We watch ourselves that nothing creeps in to separate us from our petition and action of faith. Otherwise we will become like a wave in the ocean - we will crash against the shore and dissipate. Doubts and hesitations have nothing to do with faith. They are enemies and can never work together! Faith is firm and secure, whereas doubts and hesitations are up and down like the waves of the sea. Doubts and hesitations stop the answers from coming to us as the next verse shows very clearly.

Verse 7: “For let not that man think (“to suppose, but always with a doubt” – Bullinger’s) **that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.”**

6. **Where there are doubts and hesitations there will never be any thing received from the Lord.**

Doubts destroy faith. And where faith has been destroyed God is unable to work. Here is a verse to memorize for our own good:

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder (“a payer in full of wages” – Bullinger’s) **of them that diligently seek** (“to seek and search out with careful perseverance, investigate, crave, demand”) **Him”** (Hebrews 11:6).

We must believe! The word “believe” as it is used in Hebrews 11:6 means to “be persuaded, to rely upon, to trust. The New Testament conception of faith is (1) a fully convinced acknowledgement (2) a self-surrendering fellowship (3) a fully assured and unswerving confidence” (Bullinger’s). Believing and faith go together, just as doubt and unbelief go together.

Verse 8: “A double minded (“two-souled” – Young’s) **man is unstable** (“not settled, not standing fixed, not steady”) **in all his ways”** (“goings, actions”).

7. **Double mindedness destroys our actions.**

According to James 4:8 double mindedness gives us an unclean heart (notice the Scripture is speaking to Christians): **“Cleanse** (“to make clean, clear”) **your hands, you sinners** (“those erring from the divine law” – Bullinger’s): **and purify**

your hearts, you double minded.”

In James 1:5-8 we are given clear reasons why we so often do not receive from God - double mindedness. We must deal with this by re-affirming our faith and disciplining our thoughts so that only faith is fed.

We cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). The foolish man of Matthew 7:24-27 (Luke 6:46-49) was double minded. He heard what Jesus said, but did not obey. He lacked wisdom and his house was destroyed because he did not have a true foundation in his life. ***“Fools despise wisdom”*** (Proverbs 1:7).

In a society like ours here in New Zealand, it is a very sad thing to say that so many within the Christian community are just like the foolish man. We hear what Jesus is saying – but we do not obey.

James has given us the reasons why we find ourselves in this situation. We lack wisdom. We go about asking for wisdom in the wrong way. We do not have a holy hatred for doubts and hesitations, which leave us with a very weak faith that even God cannot respond to. It has made us double minded.

PRAY FOR WISDOM:

In the light of this lesson, we should re-appraise our own faith to make sure we eliminate every hindrance. We must do battle against our own mind. God’s wisdom is required.

Solomon asked God for wisdom and God gave it to him (1 Kings 3:5-12). The people saw that the wisdom of God was in him (1 Kings 3:28).

“And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon’s wisdom excelled (“1. to be superior to another or others; surpass. 2. to be outstandingly good or proficient” – Collins) ***the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men . . .”*** (1 Kings 4:29-31).

“And all the earth sought to Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart” (1 Kings 10:23-24 and 2 Chronicles 9:22-23).

The Book of Proverbs has a lot to say about wisdom:

“Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not . . . Wisdom is the principal (“beginning”) ***thing; therefore get wisdom . . .”*** (Proverbs 4). See also Proverbs 2; 3:13-29; 5:1; 7:4; 8:1-12; 9:9-10; 10:13-32; 11:2; 13:10; 14:6-8; 15:33; 16:16; 18:4; 23:23; 24:3,14; and 29:3,15.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How would you tell if you lacked wisdom?
2. How great is God’s desire to give us wisdom?
3. What are some hindrances to answered prayers?

4. Who receives nothing from the Lord?
5. How serious are doubts and hesitations in our life?
6. How can we get rid of them?

Part Four:

In only a few short Verses, the Book of James has so far given us a tremendous challenge to being totally committed to the Christian life, no matter what trials and testings come against us. Our calling in Christ Jesus is to glorify God; to this end He works in us to make us equals in His sight.

CHRISTIANITY IS A GREAT LEVELLER:

Verse 9: *“Let the brother of low degree* (‘depressed, i.e. (figuratively) humiliated (in circumstances or disposition): base, cast down, humble, of low degree (estate), lowly’ – Strong’s) *rejoice in that he is exalted* (‘uplifted’)”:

Verse 10: *“But the rich* (‘having or abounding in riches’), *in that he is made low* (‘humbled’): *because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.*”

Verse 11: *“For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withers* (‘dries up’) *the grass; and the flower thereof falls, and the grace* (‘outward beauty’) *of the fashion* (‘the face, countenance’ – Young’s) *of it perishes* (‘is destroyed, brought to nothing, finally ruined’): *so also shall the rich man fade away* (‘to go out, expire, die away’) *in his ways* (‘journey of life’ – Bullinger’s).”

The Living Bible puts the above three Verses this way:

“A Christian who doesn’t amount to much in this world should be glad, for he is great in the Lord’s sight. But a rich man should be glad that his riches mean nothing to the Lord, for he will soon be gone, like a flower that has lost its beauty and fades away, withered – killed by the scorching summer sun. So it is with rich men. They will soon die and leave behind all their busy activities” (James 1:9-11, TLB).

The above Verses show us that God works within us to make us equal. In Christ the poor and lowly person is lifted up to a place of full acceptance in the family of God. Likewise the rich man is humbled to enable him to trust in Christ rather than his riches. God’s dealings would be different in these two types of people; in the first God works to lift up; in the second God works to bring down or humble – so both can enjoy the true meaning of what it means to be “in Christ.” Being in Christ does not depend on what we have or do not have of this world’s goods, but knowing the faith in Jesus that makes us new creations.

The person who is always putting himself down by saying, “I’m a failure, I’m no good, etc.” is just as bad as the rich man who trusts in his possessions to make his way in life as a Christian. So God works within each of us to make us equal in His sight – rich in faith! He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34).

LIFE IS SO SHORT!

The message James is urging on us here is that life is so short and each of us before long will find ourselves ushered out into eternity. Therefore it is very important that we allow God to do His work in us and make of us what He desires. The Word of God in these verses likens us to grass, especially the flower of grass which withers away when the heat comes on it. When the heat comes, it is only what is of God within us that will stand the test! Those who are rich when they come to Christ should not be too concerned if they find themselves stripped of their riches! God is doing them a favour! He is working to stop them being led by their riches, so they can know the blessings of being led of the Lord. But what great joy there is when those riches are invested into the eternal things of the Kingdom of God! Riches can be used to bless, or . . .

RICHES CAN ENSNARE US:

The Scriptures are showing us that this world is not our final home. Our calling as Christians is not to be caught-up in the world's riches and ways, but rather to discover the will of God and joyfully do it. Being rich is not wrong. But being rich has its own special snares which must be guarded against. (See James 5:1-6).

Jesus warned us that it is hard for a rich man to enter into heaven (Matthew 19:23-26). Just prior to those Verses we read of the rich young ruler whose riches kept him from obeying Jesus. He went away sorrowful (Matthew 19:16-22).

Paul, in writing to Timothy, had this to say: ***“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare,*** (“a fastening, net, snare” – Young’s), ***and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction*** (“that which causes death, a ruin to others” – Bullinger’s) ***and perdition*** (“loss, destruction, ruin; the end pronounced upon all who, having heard the summons to repentance and faith in Christ, have persisted in impenitence. The loss of all that such ever had, or might have had for ever; the destruction of such, in body, soul and spirit; an utter and final ruin, which will not be reversed” – Bullinger’s). ***For the love of money*** (“covetousness,” which is being “jealously eager for the possession of something, especially property of another person” – Collins) ***is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred*** (“gone astray, been seduced”) ***“But you, O man of God, flee*** (“1. to run away from; fly; 2. to run or move quickly; rush; speed” – Collins) ***these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*** (“gentleness, by implication humility” – Strong’s). ***Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are also called, and have professed a good profession*** (“to speak or say the same with another, to assent, accord, agree with, confess” – Bullinger’s) ***before many witnesses*** (Greek word is “martus” meaning “martyr, witness” – Young’s; or “one who remembers i.e. one who has information or knowledge of a thing, and can therefore give information concerning, bring to light or confirm anything . . .” – Bullinger’s)” (1 Timothy 6:9-12).

Then we read in Verses 17-19 of the same Chapter of Timothy: ***“Charge*** (“command”) ***them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded*** (“arrogant, haughty” – Collins), ***nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, Who gives us richly*** (“abundantly”) ***all things to enjoy;***

That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute (“readily imparting or sharing” – Bullinger’s), ***willing to communicate*** (“be liberal” – Young’s);

Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come,

that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus warned us the seed that fell among thorns was that which ***“the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the Word and he becomes unfruitful”*** (Matthew 13:22). The warnings are clear. Christianity is not a means to financial prosperity. It is true most people find a better standard of living through applying the principles of God’s Word in their life. But riches are to be used for the glory of God and the extension of His Kingdom rather than for selfish, unnecessary gains. Our motivation is Christ – not riches!

Jesus gave us the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21) - the illustration of a man whose life was controlled by his desire to always have more. His riches blinded him to the shortness and uncertainty of life, so much so that he made no provision to become “rich in soul” towards God. Jesus called him a fool (“without mind, senseless, destitute of any sound principle” – Bullinger’s) because he lost all in the end.

Another Lesson on the deceitfulness of riches was given to us by Jesus in Luke 16:19-31. It is the account of the rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. When the rich man died he went to hell because he lived selfishly and despised the poor. Again, this is a story of a rich man whose riches blinded him from preparing himself for eternity. To the Christian, our eyes should be on the riches in glory by Christ Jesus that we have been promised God will supply our every need with (Philippians 4:19). Yes, God has promised to supply all we need when we will obey Him. “Let Your will, O Lord, be done in each one of us.” Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How can those with a low self-image be lifted up?
2. What are some ways that God can humble the rich?
3. Can you find other Scriptures that give warning to the rich?
4. What is the message we get from the grass that passes away?
5. What does ***“the deceitfulness of riches”*** do to a person?

Part Five:

Looking at . . . TEMPTATION:

Verse 12: ***“Blessed*** (“happy” – Young’s) ***is the man that endures temptation*** (“a putting to the test, proof, trial” – Bullinger’s): ***for when he is tried*** (“proved, approved”) ***he shall receive the crown of life*** (a victory crown), ***which the Lord has promised to them that love Him.”***

Notice the Scripture does not say, “Blessed is the man who is tempted,” but ***“Blessed is the man who endures temptation.”*** To endure something means “to undergo hardship, strain, privation, etc., without yielding” (Collins).

The world, the flesh and the devil are continually clamouring for our attention, seeking to tempt us away from a total commitment to God. How important it is that we know right from wrong in everything that comes against us. The results of our decisions take us either closer to God or further away from Him.

Temptation comes to us all, but it is what we do with it that counts.

Verse 13: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man.”

Here we have a clear statement telling us that temptation does not come from God. God does not tempt us to do wrong! So where does temptation originate?

Verse 14: “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust (‘a strong desire toward or upon its object’), and enticed (‘to entice or catch by a bait’ – Bullinger’s).”

This Verse teaches us temptation comes from within man, from the desires he carries in his heart. Those desires “cry out” to be satisfied! Therefore the Christian has the task to discipline himself sufficiently to know the source of those desires and so make the necessary decisions. For example, many of our desires are good and wholesome and need to be cultivated to the glory of God. Those desires are not temptations, but aspirations.

As mentioned earlier it is the world, the flesh and the devil that demand our attention (they do not want us living for God). If we are not committed to being a disciple of Jesus, then we are likely to have a lot more “problems” in the area of temptation. Our resistance level will be less because we will not have the same conviction in standing against the enticements of our enemies.

Temptation seeks to trigger off wrong lusts. Temptation wants us to “give in” to these wrong desires. When we do this we set in motion some downward principles in our lives. Temptation feeds lusts . . .

Verse 15: “Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin (‘transgression of God’s known will’ – Collins; ‘failure’) when it is finished, brings forth death.”

Set out simply, here are the destructive steps of yielding to temptation:–

1. Temptation conceives lust;
2. Lust conceives sin;
3. Sin conceives death.

When we deny temptation and its desires, we prevent lust, sin and death from working in us. Standing against temptation produces the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Let me share our key Verses from the Living Bible:–

“Happy is the man who doesn’t give in and do wrong when he is tempted, for afterwards he will get as his reward the crown of life that God has promised those who love Him. And remember, when someone wants to do wrong it is never God who is tempting him, for God never wants to do wrong and never tempts anyone

else to do it. Temptation is the pull of man's own evil thoughts and wishes. These evil thoughts lead to evil actions and afterwards to the death penalty from God" (James 1:12-15, TLB).

EVEN JESUS WAS TEMPTED:

The Scriptures are clear in showing us that even Jesus faced temptations:–

1. He was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13).
2. He was tempted by the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:1-3; Matthew 19:3; Matthew 22:15-22; John 8:3-11).
3. He was tempted by a lawyer (Luke 10:25).

THE WORD OF GOD WARNS US TO GUARD AGAINST TEMPTATION:

Jesus said: "Watch ("to keep awake" – Strong's) **and pray, that you enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"** (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 22:39-46).

Paul said: "There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that you may be able to bear ("to bear up under" –Young's) **it"** (1 Corinthians 10:13).

"For we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ("weaknesses, frailties, diseases, feebleness, sicknesses" – Strong's) **but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"** (Hebrews 4:15).

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault ("a falling aside, mishap" – Young's), **you who are spiritual, restore** ("to refit, repair, restore to full order again") **such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering** ("looking at") **yourself, lest you also be tempted"** (Galatians 6:1).

Peter said: "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations . . ." (2 Peter 2:9).

TEMPTING GOD:

The Old Testament gives us illustrations of the dangers of Christians tempting God. You might ask, "How could we do such a thing?"

1. **Through murmuring, unbelief and hardness of heart** (See Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95:8-11).
2. **Through unbelief and disobedience of leaders** (Numbers 14:22; Psalm 78:56).
3. **Through tempting God in our heart** (Psalm 78:17-19).
4. **Through limiting the Holy One of Israel** (Psalm 78:41).

5. **Through forgetting the works of God** (Psalm 106:13-15).

Because our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, having been purchased with the precious Blood of Jesus, we have a holy charge to give the Lord first place in our life. We must guard against allowing anything into our heart that would cause us to tempt God by our behaviour and we must guard against giving in to other temptations that take us into death rather than life. How we need to keep our eyes upon Jesus! No wonder James One gives us this warning:

Verse 16: *“Do not err* (‘‘roam (from safety, truth, or virtue): go astray, deceive, err, seduce, wander, be out of the way’’ – Strong’s), *my beloved brethren.*’’ His heart’s cry to each one of us is: **‘‘Guard against all temptations; for yielding to temptation is not worth the problems they give us. O, do not err, my dear friends.’’**

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What should we do when temptation comes our way?
2. What are some ways we can resist temptation?
3. What does temptation conceive?
4. What conceives sin?
5. What conceives death?
6. What were three temptations that Jesus faced?
7. Name some ways we can be guilty of tempting God?

Part Six:

GOD – THE SOURCE OF ALL BLESSINGS:

We continue our progress through this very practical Chapter by looking at our Heavenly Father to see what He does for us. Oh, how we need to understand the Father-heart of God, what He has provided for us and how He so longs to pour into us every good thing. Let the Scripture speak:–

Verse 17: *‘‘Every good gift and every perfect* (‘‘complete’’) *gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness* (‘‘change’’ – Young’s), *neither shadow of turning* (God does not cast any shadows). A fuller meaning of the word ‘‘perfect’’ is: ‘‘1. having all essential elements. 2. unblemished; faultless. 3. correct or precise. 4. utter or absolute. 5. excellent in all respects’’ (Collins)’’.

God only desires good things for us. He is the very essence of every thing good and perfect. Heaven is full of them and God pours them out upon those who walk with Him. As we look to Him, love Him and serve Him, we can expect all His good blessings to be sent down upon us. Our Heavenly Father delights to give us good things to enable us

to glorify Him in all things.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THOSE GIFTS?

- According to Isaiah 56:4-5 He gives us **an everlasting name**;
- In Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26 He gives us **a new heart and a new spirit**;
- In Jeremiah 24:7 He gives us **a heart to know Him**;
- In Matthew 11:28 He gives us **rest**;
- In Luke 11:13 He gives us **the Holy Spirit**;
- In John 10:28 He gives us **eternal life**; and
- In Revelation 2:10 He promises us a **crown of life** when we are faithful unto Him.

You might be able to find many more gifts of God in the Scriptures, but all will have the marks of God's goodness to us stamped upon them. He is the Father of lights (all other "lights" are subject to Him); there is no darkness at all in Him. God is also true – there is no turning, no changing of His mind. His promises stand firm and sure.

“Praise be to God for giving us through Christ every possible spiritual benefit as citizens of Heaven! For consider what He has done – before the foundation of the world He chose us to become, in Christ, his holy and blameless children living within His constant care. He planned, in His purpose of love, that we should be adopted as His own children through Jesus Christ – that we might learn to praise that glorious generosity of His which has made us welcome in the everlasting love He bears towards the Son. It is through the Son, at the cost of His own blood, that we are redeemed, freely forgiven through that full and generous grace which has overflowed into our lives and opened our eyes to the truth. For God has allowed us to know the secret of His plan, and it is this: He purposes in His sovereign will that all human history shall be consummated in Christ, that everything that exists in Heaven or earth shall find its perfection and fulfilment in Him. And here is the staggering thing that in all which will one day belong to Him we have been promised a share (since we were long ago destined for this by the One who achieves His purposes by His sovereign will), so that we, as the first to put our confidence in Christ, may bring praise to His glory! And you too trusted Him, when you had heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. And after you gave your confidence to Him you were, so to speak, stamped with the promised Holy Spirit as a guarantee of purchase, until the day when God completes the redemption of what He has paid for as His own; and that will again be to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:3-14, J.B. Phillips New Testament in Modern English).

What a tremendous inheritance is ours in Jesus Christ!

What confidence this gives to us in our walk of faith.

THE WORD OF TRUTH:

“ . . . Your Word is truth ” (John 17:17).

Verse 18: *“Of His own will begat He us (He is our Father) with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits (the firstfruits were always consecrated to God) of His creatures.”* (God created us to be like Him, to reflect His life through us by the indwelling word of truth).

You and I have been called to a very high calling – Christ’s ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) – that through us God might show Himself to the world.

The word of truth working in us has sufficient power to do this. That word must **“become flesh”** (John 1:14) in us, so we will show by example of life-style what a wonderful, loving Heavenly Father we have.

The Living Bible says this:– **“But whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God, the Creator of all light, and He shines forever without change or shadow. And it was a happy day for Him when He gave us our new lives, through the truth of His Word, and we became, as it were, the first children in His new family”** (James 1:17-18).

Jesus said (to those who believe on Him): **“If you continue in My Word (the Word of truth) then are you My disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free . . . If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed”** (John 8:31,32,36).

Man is forever trying to undermine and reject the Bible as the Word of God – the Word of truth – but to us who are saved it is His message to us that has proved itself beyond doubt to be the inspired, infallible, eternal Word of the Living God.

Christians are born again, **“not of corruptible** (“decayed, perishable” – Strong’s) **seed, but of incorruptible** (“immortal” – Strong’s), **by the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever”** (1 Peter 1:23).

We stand or fall by the Word of God.

NOTHING PENETRATES LIKE THE WORD OF GOD:

If you turn to Hebrews 4:12 you will read of the penetrating power of the Word of truth: **“For the Word of God is quick** (“alive”) **and powerful** (“energetic in exercise, powerful in action, effectual in operation” – Bullinger’s), **and sharper** (“more cutting”) **than any two-edged sword, piercing** (“to pass or go through”) **even to the dividing asunder** (“act of partition, division or separation” – Bullinger’s) **of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow** (“the fatty network of connective tissue that fills the cavities of bones” – Collins) **and is a discerner** (“skilled in judging, capable of judging” – Bullinger’s) **of the thoughts and intents** (“what is in the mind, idea, notion”) **of the heart.”**

JESUS IS CALLED THE WORD:

1. **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”** (John 1:1).
2. **“That which was from the beginning, which we have seen with our**

eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life”; (1 John 1:1).

3. **“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”** (1 John 5:7).
4. **“. . . and His name is called The Word of God”** (Revelation 19:13).

What a privilege is ours to know God by Word, as well as Spirit, so we can indeed be the firstfruits of His creatures.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What does James 1:17 tell you about the heart of God?
2. How are we born into God’s kingdom? (Verse 18)
3. Name some of the blessings God pours out upon us.
4. How important is the Word of God?
5. What is it that sets us free?
6. Do you know the truth?

Part Seven:

In this study we look at what our mannerism should be in the light of the preceding statements (see Pages 13 and 14 which tell us about Verses 17 and 18 of James Chapter One). They teach us something of what the Father has provided for us. He has given us a tremendous heritage, an identification with Himself – even made us a reproduction of Himself, filled with every good and perfect gift.

WHAT WE MUST DO:

Verse 19: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”:

Here we are given three instructions:

1. **“Be swift”** (“quick, nimble, fast” – Bullinger’s) **to hear** (“to perceive with the ears, to learn by hearing, be informed” – Bullinger’s).

Our ability to learn by hearing is very important. Sixteen times in the New Testament we are told: **“He that has an ear, let him hear”** (Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; 7:16; Luke 8:8, 14:35; Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9).

So many problems amongst Christians today are there because we do not take the time to listen. If we do not hear what Jesus is saying to us, we won’t even begin to know what to do.

“Blessed is the man that hears (“to hear, listen, to give heed, obey; hearken or hear diligently, surely, certainly, attentively, indeed” – Wilson’s) **Me, watching** (“to wake, to be sleepless, to watch; to watch over anything, to give attention to it, to watch at” – Wilson’s) **daily at My gates, waiting** (“to keep, to watch, to guard; to watch or wait for an

advantage; to wait or attend upon” – Wilson’s) ***at the posts of My doors***” (Proverbs 8:34).

“Keep your foot when you go 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” (Ecclesiastes 5:1).

“The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord has made even both of them” (Proverbs 20:12).

To be ***“swift to hear”*** means we are cultivating a teachable spirit. Don’t come across to people as being “a know-it-all.” Remember, a disciple is “a learner, pupil; one who is always seeking to better himself by listening to the voice of his master.” Be quick to listen!

2. ***“Slow to speak.”*** Our first instruction was to be quick to hear. This second instruction is to be slow – slow to speak. How often we make fools of ourselves by speaking out or judging people and situations before we have the full facts of the matter. We need to take time to assimilate (“to learn, absorb and understand it thoroughly” – Collins) the things of God and whatever else we are involved with. The Bible has quite a lot to say about restraining the tongue – it is our biggest enemy! (see James 3:1-13).

“Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile (“deceit”)” (Psalm 34:13).

“He that keeps his mouth keeps his life: but he that opens wide his lips shall have destruction” (“downfall, ruin” – Young’s)” (Proverbs 13:3).

“Whoso keeps his mouth and his tongue, keeps his soul from troubles” (Proverbs 21:33).

“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile (“a bait for fish, hence, any cunning contrivance for deceiving or catching” – Bullinger’s) (1 Peter 3:10).

“A fool’s mouth is his destruction (“a breaking in pieces; destruction, ruin” – Wilson’s), ***and his lips are the snare*** (“a noose, hook, trap” – Strong’s) ***of his soul”*** (Proverbs 18:7).

When it comes to talking, Christian, the Bible says “Slow down!”

3. ***“Slow to wrath”*** (“temper of mind; anger that carries the desire for revenge” – Bullinger’s). Self-control is all-important if our Christian testimony is going to have impact upon others - both inside and outside the church. Anger, resentment, unforgiveness, moodiness, touchiness, etc. are all part of the old life. They do not represent Jesus Christ, nor do they glorify Him. When these “carnal moods” control our temperament (“an individual’s character, disposition and tendencies as revealed in his re-actions” – Collins) the control of the tongue is impossible. When that starts lashing out, fuelled by carnal wrath, people get hurt. Friendships get wrecked. Testimonies are mocked. Worst of all, Jesus is not seen in that life. What does the Bible have to say about it?

“Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil” (Psalm 37:8).

“He that is soon angry deals foolishly: and a man of wicked devices (“thoughts, plans”) is hated” (Proverbs 14:17).

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city” (Proverbs 16:32).

“Be not hasty (“be suddenly alarmed or agitated; to hasten anxiously” – Strong’s) **in your spirit to be angry: for anger rests in the bosom** (“the chest or breast” – Collins) **of fools”** (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

We are taught to put these angry, wrathful things out of our lives (Colossians 3:8). Anger disqualifies a person from higher ministry (Titus 1:7). Why do we have to be **“slow to wrath”**?

Verse 20: “For the wrath of man works not the righteousness (“the doing or being what is just and right; the character and acts of a man commanded by and approved of God, in virtue of which the man corresponds with Him and His will as His ideal and His standard; a right state, of which God is the standard” – Bullinger’s) **of God.”**

Verse 21: “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness (“filth, dirt”) **and superfluity** (“abundance, super abundance” – Young’s) **of naughtiness** (“vice generally, especially malice, and the evil habit of it” – Bullinger’s), **and receive with meekness** (“enduring all things with an even temper, tender, free from haughty self-sufficiency” – Bullinger’s) **the engrafted** (“to implant, adapted for inward growth” – Bullinger’s) **Word** (the spoken Word – hence, the need for us to be swift to hear), **which is able to save your soul.”**

It is our old nature that “deafens” us to hearing the Word of God. That is why we must keep turning away from it. The old nature is wrathful, angry, works against the righteousness of God, is filthy, full of rebellion, pride, etc. Through the new birth we are changed to become meek before the Word of God. It is through listening closely, then being slow to speak and slow to wrath that we see our old nature brought into subjection to the Word of truth and made to be one of our Heavenly Father’s first fruits. Hearing is so important!

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD:

When we have a hearing ear, we have a receptive heart. When we have a receptive heart, God’s Word is able to penetrate into the inner recesses of our being (see Hebrews 4:12) and bring about cleansing.

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed (“to keep watch, guard; to watch, mark, observe; to take heed, beware” – Wilson’s) **thereto according to Your Word”** (Psalm 119:9).

“Now you are clean through the Word which I (Jesus) have spoken unto you” (John 15:3).

Are you hearing from Jesus? He is speaking today. After the hearing comes the doing, which is the subject we look at in our next Lesson.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are some ways you would encourage others to be “swift to hear”?

2. If you are counselling someone with an anger problem, how would you advise them?
3. What does “receive with meekness the engrafted word” mean to you?
4. Have you seen change in your life since letting the Word of God come in?
5. Why should we be “slow to speak”?

Part Eight:

BEING DOERS OF THE WORD:

In this Lesson we are looking at a very important part of Christianity; that of being DOERS (“active or energetic people” – Collins) of the Word. Verse 21 taught us to **“receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your soul.”** The word “engrafted” means “adapted for inward growth; to implant” (Bullinger’s) or “to incorporate in a firm or permanent way” (Collins). **The word received must be allowed to work in us!** This comes about as a result of an implanting by the Holy Spirit. Like a seed, the Word germinates and grows. Unless it is restricted it will continue to grow to maturity so it can reproduce more seed.

For the Word to do its proper work in us, we must know how to co-operate with God to the end the purpose of that Word being in us is fulfilled.

Verse 22: “But be ye doers (“a maker, performer”– Young’s) **of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving** (“to reckon wrong, miscount; hence to draw false conclusions. Then to cheat or deceive by false reasoning” – Bullinger’s) **your own selves.”**

This Verse is a very challenging one. Do we understand what it is saying to us? Do we know in our own hearts what the difference is between being a “hearer only” and being “a doer” of the word? We need to, for one is deception – self-deception – and the other is truth.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT:

This subject of hearing only (without the corresponding actions) and doing is so important that Jesus summed up the entire “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew Chapters 5, 6 & 7) by giving us the example of the wise man and the foolish man who built their houses. **Both heard the word of Jesus** – only the wise man was a doer of that word. He heeded what Jesus said and built his house and life upon the obedience to His Word. He succeeded in life, and his house stood against all the storms of life that came against it. The Word of Jesus brought a security, strength and protection against all that life threw against that wise man’s house. He endured unto the end. He lost nothing.

The foolish man, however, did not fare so well. **He heard exactly the same word from Jesus that the wise man did,** but did not believe it enough to put it into practice. He thought having the knowledge of the Word would be sufficient, but it wasn’t. The foolish man did not take the time to get his house built upon the solid foundation of the Word of Jesus. In his haste to get on with life **he overlooked the importance of applying that word in a practical way in daily life.** He rushed ahead and built a beautiful new home that was a wonder to behold. But it was not on a firm foundation. It did not take long for the pressures and storms of life to come against that house. And when they did, cracks began to appear. All was not as it seemed. The foolish man’s house came crashing

down in ruins. Jesus said: **“and great was the fall of it”** (see Matthew 7:24-27 and Luke 6:47-49). He did not endure unto the end. He lost everything.

The wise man was a doer of the Word. He put into practice what Jesus said. He triumphed over all the adversities of life, bringing glory to God in the process.

The foolish man was only a hearer. He went to church regularly, listened to what was preached, but did nothing practical with it. He did not “mix faith” with the Word preached: “. . . **but the word preached did not profit** (“to further, help, benefit; be of service to any one” – Bullinger’s) **them, not being mixed** (“to mingle, blend”) **with faith** (“firm persuasion, the conviction which is based upon hearing, not upon sight, or knowledge; a firmly relying confidence in what we hear from God in His Word” – Bullinger’s) **in them that heard it”** (Hebrews 4:2).

The foolish man did not put into action what he heard. He thought he knew better and rushed ahead . . . to destruction! He deceived himself! He could not say he never heard. He heard, but did not!

(For a further study on “The Sermon on the Mount” please obtain our “KINGDOM LIVING” Manual that is available).

ARE YOU FORGETFUL?

Verse 23: “For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass”

Verse 24: “For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway (“immediately”) forgets what manner of man he was.”

Are you a mirror gazer? Spiritually speaking, how can you tell whether or not you are? The test is how soon do you forget what has been preached? If you have forgotten almost as soon as church is over, you are deceiving yourself! You need to retain “the word preached” so you can mix faith with it and become a **DOER!** Otherwise everything you do in life will help you to be just like that foolish man who built on the sand. Wake up, dear friend, and become a doer of the Word.

“For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (Romans 2:13).

We cannot afford to forget the Word of the Lord. More and more we should be applying its principles in our lives, for we are living in perilous times. Let us have a holy fear of God that will make us to hold fast to His promises.

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest (“demanding or receiving serious attention” – Collins) **heed** (“to take to heart”) **to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip** (“float, carried or pass away beside the truth”).

“For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast (“sure”), **and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;**

“How shall we escape, if we neglect (“to fail to give due care, attention or time to; to fail (to do something) through thoughtlessness or carelessness” – Collins) **so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him . . . ?”** (Hebrews 2:1-3).

Christianity is a life of **HEARING AND DOING**. There must be both. Inaction on our part to apply the promises of God into daily living only takes us into self-deception. We will not be able to blame anyone but ourselves for this. Let us take heed to the Word – and **DO** it!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How can we improve our hearing of the Word?
2. How can we improve our doing of the Word?
3. Do we need other people to help us?
 - (a) if no, why?
 - (b) if yes, why?
4. If someone asked you to describe what it means to be deceived, what would you tell them?
5. How can we give “more earnest heed” to the things of God?

Part Nine:

As we come to the next Verse in our study of James One, we discover the theme of **DOING** continues – not only being **DOERS** of the Word, but also a **DOER** of the **work**.

Verse 25: *“But whoso looks* (“to stoop down near by anything, to bend forward near in order to look at anything more closely” – Bullinger’s) *into the perfect* (“what has reached its end, term, or limit; hence, complete, perfect, full, wanting nothing, with special reference to the end for which it was intended” – Bullinger’s) *law of liberty, and continues* (“to remain, persevere” – Strong’s) *therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed* (“happy”) *in his deed* (“doing, denoting the action and its result”).

The Amplified Bible puts it this way:–

“But he who looks carefully into the faultless law, the [law] of liberty, and is faithful to it and perseveres in looking into it, being not a heedless listener who forgets, but an active doer [who obeys], he shall be blessed in his doing – in his life of obedience.”

To be really blessed in our deeds, we must take time to carefully look into God’s Word. It is only as we discover what His Word is saying that we are able to take it into our hearts, digest it, and put it into action. What we hear from the Word we should obey. Not spasmodically (“sudden brief spells” – Collins), but continually. Hence the need for a daily disciplined walk with Jesus, where we seek to hear His voice, seek His written Word also, to the end that we might be found **DOING** what He tells us.

TAKE HEED:

In Mark 4:23-25 Jesus gives us this warning to take heed:–

“If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

And He said unto them, TAKE HEED WHAT YOU HEAR: with what measure you mete (“to distribute or allot” – Collins), **it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear** (“to hear, to have the faculty of hearing; to perceive with the ears; to give ear, listen; to learn by hearing, be informed” – Bullinger’s) **shall more be given.**

For he that has, to him shall be given: and he that has not, from him shall be taken even that which he has.”

Take heed what you hear!

Our ability to hear determines what we can do. If we “slack up” on hearing the Word of the Lord, then Jesus says we will lose even that which we now have. We must **“continue therein”** (James 1:25).

If you turn to Luke’s rendering of this statement of Jesus, you will see that He also says to **“Take heed therefore HOW you hear”** (Luke 8:18).

Jesus and His Word are the foundation upon which we build our life. In 1 Corinthians 3:10-11 we are warned:–

“But let every man take heed how he builds thereon.”

Remember the wise and foolish men of Matthew 7:24-27? The wise man took heed to what and how he heard, and then he built his house upon that foundation of the Word heard. The foolish man listened to the same Word of Jesus, but did not apply it. He lost everything.

We must not become forgetful hearers!

Rather, let us remember God’s promise to Joshua and apply it to ourselves:–

“This book of the law (the Word of God) **shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate** (“to think about something deeply; to reflect deeply” – Collins) **therein day and night, that you may observe** (“to keep, to watch, to guard; to keep in view, to observe, to mark; to observe, i.e. not to violate, a covenant, a precept, the sabbath, a promise” – Wilson’s) **to DO according to all that is written therein: for then you shall make your way prosperous** (“flourishing, favourable, thriving in a healthy way, affluent”), **and then you shall have good success** (“the favourable outcome of something attempted” – Collins)” (Joshua 1:8).

Another meaning of the word “meditate” is “to murmur, to mutter; to make sound with the mouth . . . When understood, therefore, of meditation, it implies what we express by one talking to himself” (Wilson’s).

A DOER OF THE WORK:

The outcome of the things we hear, and apply from the Word of God, is seen in our **WORK**. In James 1:22 we read about being doers of the Word; now in Verse 25 we are to be doers of the work. The “work” is the outward working of the will of God that comes to us through attentive hearing of the Word and our **“mixing faith”** (Hebrews 4:1-2) to that Word heard. What is on the inside God wants to display outwardly to the world by our doing the work and being blessed in our deeds.

This is God’s purpose for us – to be **DOERS!**

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

“In all things showing yourself a pattern of good works” (Titus 2:14 and 3:8).

The blessings of God are poured out upon those who DO according to the Word – who are people of faith – people of action. ***“Faith without works is dead!”*** (James 2:17-18).

Let it be made plain here: I am not talking about works for salvation. Rather, I am talking about works that come as a result of genuine salvation and a daily relationship with Jesus.

Continuing in God’s perfect law of liberty (His mighty Word breathed upon by the Holy Spirit) – and not forgetting it – motivates us to be **DOERS** of the work. The blessings will then be automatic, as God delights to reward us openly when we obey Him with faith actions. Praise the Lord!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are the key words in James 1:25?
2. What are some ways of ***“looking into the perfect law of liberty”***?
3. How can you encourage yourself to continue in the Word?
4. How would you advise others to do it?
5. What does it mean to meditate in the Word as God told Joshua (1:8)?
6. What are some things that make us doers of the work? And what works would you expect from someone putting God’s Word into practice?

Part Ten:

We come now to the final two Verses of James One – a Chapter that has shown us the great need to be practical in our Christian walk. True believing of the Word of God is demonstrated by our doing of the Word, as well as good works. It is character as well as charisma (“Charisma” is a word used a lot these days: in the Scriptural meaning it means “a (divine) gratuity, i.e. deliverance (from danger or passion); (specifically) a (spiritual) endowment, i.e. (subjectively) religious qualification, or (objectively) miraculous faculty:– (free) gift” (Strong’s); the dictionary meaning is “1. a special personal quality or power of an individual making him capable of influencing or inspiring large numbers of people. 2. Theologically, a divinely bestowed power or talent” (Collins). One can be “charismatic” without being practical in Christian works). Hence the subject of this Lesson is:

PURE RELIGION:

Verse 26: ***“If any man among you seem*** (“to appear to the mind or eye; look, to give

the impression of” – Collins) **to be religious, and bridles** (“to restrain, control, i.e., like a horse bridle”) **not his tongue, but deceives** (“to delude, mislead with false statements” – Bullinger’s) **his own heart, this man’s religion is vain** (“empty of results”).”

The word “religious” in this Verse is stated in a bad sense, as being “superstitious”; one who “mutters forms of prayers” (Bullinger’s), making out he or she is spiritual. Strong’s gives the meaning as “ceremonious in worship; pious.” The expressions of the tongue and heart will reveal where he/she is at. James wants us to be part of the true religion – pure religion – so our lives will speak, show and do the will of God to the glory of God. Before I give more understanding of “pure religion” let me share Verse 27 with you:–

Verse 27: “Pure religion and undefiled (“unstained, unsoiled” – Bullinger’s; “not tarnished, corrupted or polluted”) **before God and the Father is this, To visit** (“to go to see, with a view to help, relieve, or deliver”) **the fatherless** (“orphan, bereaved”) **and widows** (“a woman bereaved of her husband”; a man bereaved of his wife is called a widower) **in their affliction** (“pressure; a condition of great distress, pain or suffering; something responsible for physical or mental suffering, such as a disease, grief, etc.” – Collins) **and to keep** (“to watch over, take care of”) **himself unspotted** (“without spot, stain, or blemish, especially with reputation; free from moral stigma or blemish” – Collins) **from the world.”**

What is pure religion?

If we are going to fulfil the Bible teaching for living, it is necessary to understand what it requires of us.

The word “**pure**” here means “pure from everything that would change or corrupt the nature of the subject with which it is combined, free from every foreign admixture, whether good or bad; clean, and free from every stain, odour, colour, or any useless thing whatever, free from every false adornment” (Bullinger’s).

It is clean, clear, transparent – has nothing to hide. It is having genuine motives and attitudes in serving the Lord.

“**Religion**” is, according to Collins Dictionary, “belief in, worship of, or obedience to a supernatural power or powers considered to be divine or to have control of human destiny.” It is the formal expression of that belief.

As the word is used in James 1:26-27 it means: “religious observance, the outward ceremonial service of religion, the external form” (Bullinger’s). It is the way we demonstrate our worship and fear of God.

Pure religion is concerned with serving and pleasing God, not man.

Much of religion today has become very traditional, political and man-centred. We must turn from the world’s brand of religion and keep ourselves following the teachings of the Word of God.

The Word of God teaches us here:

1. To bridle our tongue.
2. To visit the fatherless and widows.
3. To keep ourselves unstained from the world.

BRIDLING OUR TONGUE:

James has a lot to say about our tongue (which means we will come back to it again in this series). We need to take good heed to what the Scripture teaches through this servant of God. Please turn to James 3:1-13 and see how it is impossible to tame our own tongue by self-effort. Verses 2-4 show us if we can bridle the tongue we can bridle the whole body! Until our tongue is under the control of the Holy Spirit (it is interesting that God chose to give Spirit-filled believers a new language to praise and glorify Him – Acts 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 14:2, 4, 18, 39) it will always lead us into trouble.

The Tongue:

- offends (James 3:2);
- boasts great things (James 3:5);
- is a fire (James 3:6);
- a world of iniquity (James 3:6);
- defiles the whole body (James 3:6);
- sets on fire the course of nature (feeds the flesh, not the spirit) (James 3:6);
- is set on taking us to hell! (James 3:6);
- cannot be tamed by man (James 3:8);
- is an unruly evil (James 3:8);
- is full of deadly poison (James 3:8);
- blesses and curses, which should not be (James 3:9-13);
- speaks evil of his brother and sister (James 4:11).

The Bible has a lot to say about bridling our tongue. Space only allows a little to be shared.

Psalm 34:13: *“Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile”* (“to cause to fall unexpectedly; to deceive, beguile by promising one thing and doing another; fraud, hypocrisy” – Wilson’s”; “clever or crafty character or behaviour” – Collins).

Proverbs 13:3: *“He that keeps his mouth keeps his life: but he that opens wide his lips shall have destruction”* (“downfall, ruin” – Young’s; “a breaking in pieces; destruction, ruin” – Wilson’s).”

Proverbs 21:23: *“Whoso keeps his mouth and his tongue, keeps his soul from troubles”* (“distresses” – notice the “s” on the end of trouble; it creates a plurality of problems).” Wilson’s gives the meaning as “straits, distresses, afflictions; an enemy that distresses or troubles.”

1 Peter 3:10: *“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain* (“pause; to stop, i.e. restrain, quit, desist” – Strong’s) *his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.”*

Ecclesiastes 10:12: *“The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious; but the lips*

of a fool will swallow up himself.”

Now read James 1:26 again.

VISITING THE FATHERLESS AND WIDOWS:

Pure religion responds to God – the Father heart of God. God the Father feels for His children. He desires to comfort them in their time of need. He does this through people like you and me.

How long has it been since you responded to visiting someone in need? It is so easy to overlook the needs of others. And, yes, it does often take real effort to go visit someone else. But it is all part of pure religion. God expects it of us. Let us be sensitive to the needs of others and allow the compassionate Father-heart of God to be seen at work through us.

Turn to Matthew 25:31-46 (the Parable of the sheep and goats) to see how important visiting is to Jesus – and how important it is for us to be doing it.

KEEPING OURSELVES CLEAN FROM THE WORLD:

A true Christian is one who has been called out of the world to walk with Jesus in “newness of life” (Romans 6:1-23; 2 Corinthians 5:17). It is a life of separation unto God. We live to please Him, not ourselves. The reason why the word “religion” has become so meaningless (something almost to be avoided!) is because those confessing and professing Christianity have not lived separated life-styles. **How will the world ever know the truth of Jesus if we live no different to them? . . . if we love the same things as they do?** We must be so different from the world once we have been cleansed from our sins by the precious blood of Jesus (1 John 1:7), otherwise our Christian faith is powerless. Don’t be ashamed to come out from the world’s ways and be different (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). To witness effectively to those still bound by the world, we must have a changed life-style that says a loud “Amen” to our message. If we live like they do and love the same things they do, there will never be any conviction in their hearts to turn to Jesus for new life. Why should they be expected to change if we won’t let go of the same things? We have a responsibility to know right from wrong, to live daily unto God, allowing the world, the flesh and the devil to be crucified unto us - yet in all this so-called “giving up” of things the Christian can live with the JOY of the Lord as his strength!

Let us not live “seeming” to be religious, but rather let us demonstrate to the world that pure religion is not only God’s way (and pleasing to God), but also the only way we should ever desire to live ourselves. Our hearts, lives and tongues should be continually giving thanks to God for delivering us into a new life of pure religion. God bless you.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How can we bridle our tongue?
2. Can you think of a time when your tongue got you into serious trouble?

3. Why do you think visiting others is such a difficult task?
4. What are some ways to keep yourself unspotted from the world?
5. How different are you from those in the world who do not know Jesus?
6. In what way can you further impact the people around you?

CHAPTER TWO

Part One:

These Bible Studies are arranged for the benefit of Christians everywhere, many of whom in overseas countries have a poorer grasp of Bible words owing to the unavailability of good study books at affordable prices.

The Book of James is a very practical instruction on how to live the Christian life in a way that pleases God. Chapter One teaches the importance of having our own life equipped in the areas of patience, wisdom, single-mindedness, enduring temptation; then to grasp the great truth that God's Word has been planted in us so we can be doers of the Word and work. Pure religion is what James calls it and it makes us bridle our tongue, visit the fatherless and widows, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

THE SIN OF SOCIAL PARTIALITY:

As we commence Chapter Two we are immediately challenged on our attitudes towards other people.

- Do we judge them by the clothes they wear?
- Do we accept or reject them according to their living status?
- Job status?
- Income?

We know the world functions that way – but what about the born-again believer in Jesus Christ?

Let the Bible speak:–

Verse 1: *“My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory* (‘‘goodness, grace; real knowledge of a matter, truth, nothing concealed’‘), *with respect* (‘‘partiality, being biased, prejudiced; not complete’‘) *of persons* (See Acts 10:34-35).

Verse 2: *“For if there come unto your assembly* (‘‘meeting, church’‘) *a man with a*

gold ring, in goodly (“expensive, bright”) **apparel** (“a robe, garment; generally applied to what is ornate and splendid” – Bullinger’s), **and there come in also a poor** (“beggarly, having nothing at all”) **man in vile** (“filthy, dirty, foul”) **raiment** (“dress”);

Verse 3: “And you have respect (“to look upon, to fix the eyes upon, have respect to, with favour or partiality” – Bullinger’s) **to him that wears the gay** (“bright, brilliant, radiant”) **clothing, and say unto him, You sit here in a good** (“pleasant, acceptable”) **place; and say to the poor, You stand there, or sit here under my footstool** (“sit on the floor at my feet!”).

Verse 4: “Are you not then partial (“to separate thoroughly, to withdraw from or (by implication) oppose; to discriminate” – Strong’s) **in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?”**

Because of our past upbringing, and even generations of traditions within families, it can be a very hard thing for a Christian to break free of this partiality towards certain classes of people. Jesus died for all – not just the rich and well-dressed. If we do not deal with this being a respecter of persons we find our whole life will revolve around only certain types. The world, generally, has us moulded into upper, middle, or lower class. The system, unfortunately, is also geared in such a way that the rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer. Even in church life we have to guard against this being partial towards other classes, and even other races of people. Bad attitudes toward other races, life-styles, colour, religions, has brought a scourge on society today: “ethnic cleansing.”

My experience as a Pastor has taught me that church leaderships have to guard closely against developing only a certain class of people in their church. There is a big natural temptation to want to gear things to attract the middle and upper class, sometimes for obvious reasons – they have more to tithe!

But a true Christian fellowship should be able to minister to all. **Christians should see everyone as being equal before God: that Jesus is the Answer to all men’s needs, no matter what their social position in life.** Because a person has better clothing, or more wealth, it does not make him less susceptible to sin! Flesh is flesh everywhere! First impressions and attitudes that a new person gets when coming into church for the first time are often those that stay with him for a long time. People can tell whether they are accepted or rejected.

Let me also say here that once a person has become born-again by God’s Spirit and enters into the reality of the Christian life, his standard of living and dress usually rises. One does not need to stay “scruffy” in appearance once the power of sin and the past have been washed in the cleansing blood of Jesus. He becomes a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17) and a whole new attitude toward himself and life in general begins to take place. When old habits of sin are broken we do not have to waste our finances on worldly pursuits, drink, drugs, cigarettes, etc. The wise Christian will manage his finances in such a way that he can honour God first with his giving and care more for his family needs:–

“Honour the Lord with your substance (“wealth, sufficiency”), and with the first-fruits of all your increase: So shall your barns be filled with plenty, and your presses shall burst out with new wine” (Proverbs 3:9-10; also Proverbs 11:25; Malachi 3:8-12; Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians Chapters 8 and 9 all teach Christians of the need to give to God and His work).

James is not giving us an excuse as Christians to present ourselves in such a way as

to bring a reproach. Some use the excuse that to reach certain types one has to dress like them. Not so. It is the heart that communicates – not the clothing! The love of Jesus for them – not the “fashion fads”!

ATTITUDES:

Having right attitudes towards our fellow human beings is so important. Wrong attitudes over the social status of others make us “become judges of evil thoughts” (James 2:4).

What did James say? These partial attitudes make us harbour evil thoughts in our minds! It is carnality!

To be doers of the Word means we have to face these carnal attitudes and deal with them in the right Christian manner. We cannot afford to allow evil thoughts to block our effectiveness for God.

We can be doctrinally right in our believing, yet have wrong or bad attitudes that wreck our effectiveness as Christians.

HOW DOES BEING PARTIAL AFFECT OUR WITNESSING?

How often do we **not** witness to someone because of their social status?

Let's face it – we **do** allow a person's position in life to affect us. For example:–

“I can't witness to that man about Jesus – he's the boss!”

“I can't share Jesus with her – she's the landlady!” or “my school teacher!” or “a sharp-tongued person!” or “a politician!” and on and on we could go. We are so affected by social status – and we shouldn't be. Regardless of their station in life **ALL NEED THE LOVE OF JESUS!**

Whether the person is a magistrate, company manager, rubbish disposal man, or even unemployed, has nothing to do with the real values of life! Christians are called by God to set the right attitudes and standards, to lead by example and in such a way that others see **“the Lord of glory”** in us. **Without partiality!**

Malachi Chapter Two, Verses 7-9 is a rebuke to God's people for being partial:

“For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at His mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But you are departed out of the way; you have caused many to stumble at the law; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible (“despised through pride” – Wilson's) **and base** (“humbled” – Young's) **before all the people, according as you have not kept My ways, but have been partial in the law”** (KJV).

“Priests' lips should flow with the knowledge of God so the people will learn God's laws. The priests are the messengers of the Lord of Hosts, and men should come to them for guidance. But not to you! For you have left God's paths. Your 'guidance' has caused many to stumble in sin. You have distorted the covenant of Levi, and made it into a grotesque (“strangely or fantastically distorted; bizarre” – Collins) **parody** (“1. a musical, literary, or other composition that mimics the style of another composer, author, etc., in a humorous or satirical way . . .

3. something so badly done as to seem an intentional mockery; travesty” – Collins), **says the Lord of Hosts. Therefore I have made you contemptible** (“despicable” – Collins) **in the eyes of all the people; for you have not obeyed Me, but you let your favourites break the law without rebuke**” (TLB).

“ . . . but have shown favouritism to persons in your administration of the law [of God]” (Malachi 2:9, AMP.).

When Paul wrote to Timothy he charged him with the responsibility of being fair and just to all in the matters of church life and not to be partial:

“I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that you observe (“to guard, keep watch, not to sleep, preserve” – Bullinger’s) **these things without preferring** (“prejudicing” – Strong’s) **one before another, doing nothing by partiality”** (1 Timothy 5:21).

We must guard against being partial! Too often we judge wrongly because we do not have the full facts, or we carry a certain bias toward that person which clouds our judgment. Another word for it is called prejudice, which means “1. an opinion formed beforehand, especially an unfavourable one based on inadequate facts. 2. the act or condition of holding such opinions. 3. intolerance of or dislike for people of a specific race or religion, etc. . .” (Collins).

The tragedy is that our world today is controlled by prejudices. The greater tragedy is that it is all too-prevalent in the Christian Church too.

How we Christians need the wisdom of God in our attitudes and relating to others! Why? Because **“the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated** (“easily persuaded” – Young’s), **full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy”** (James 3:17).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How can we change any prejudices towards others?
2. If you felt your church was only “a certain class” church, what could you do to change it?
3. If you have felt prejudiced against by a church, what are the options open to you?

Part Two:

This Lesson continues on in the same context as our previous one about being partial. To be “partial” means one is “relating to only a part; not general or complete; biased,” (Collins); “prejudiced.” In the area of our relationship with our fellow men we need to be aware of how much this does affect us. It takes the love of Jesus working in and through us to overcome this.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE RICH AND POOR:

Verse 5: *“Hearken* (“listen, perceive with the ears, be informed by hearing” – Bullinger’s), *my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen* (“to pick out for Himself – preferred, favoured, loved”) *the poor* (“beggarly, having nothing at all”) *of this world rich* (“abounding” – Strong’s) *in faith* (“firm persuasion, the conviction which is based upon hearing, not upon sight or knowledge; a firmly relying confidence in what we hear from God in His Word” – Bullinger’s), *and heirs* (“those who have possessed their inheritance”) *of the kingdom* (“the kingdom of God, the sphere of God’s rule, now the sphere of the Holy Ghost’s workings” – Bullinger’s) *which He has promised* (“announced concerning Himself”) *to them that love* (“to regard, esteem, to cherish with reverence, to love” – Bullinger’s) *Him?*

Verse 6: *“But you have despised* (“to look down on with contempt, scorn;” – Collins; “esteem lightly, dishonour”) *the poor. Do not rich men oppress* (“to overpower”; “overpower”; “to afflict or torment” – Collins) *you, and draw you before the judgment seats?*

Verse 7: *“Do not they blaspheme* (“to show contempt or disrespect for God” – Collins) *that worthy* (“beautiful, good, excellent” – Young’s) *name by the which you are called?”*

Let me share these verses with you from the “New International Version” Bible:–

“Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom He promised those who love Him? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering (“any false or defamatory words spoken about a person” – Collins) *the noble name of Him to whom you belong?”*

The question will arise: “When is rich rich?” and “when is poor poor?” Most Christians in a materialistic nation like New Zealand live somewhere in the middle between poor and rich?

The answer in Scriptural thinking is this: “It is not how much or how little a person owns, but how his riches control him. The moment we trust in our riches, rather than faith in God’s Word, we are heading into an area of life that will cause us to neglect or despise the poor. This in turn puts us off-side with the Lord and we start to dishonour that worthy name of Jesus by which we are called.”

Christians must also guard against the tendency to want to make friends with the rich and to avoid the poor. The Bible teaches us that God is looking among the poor to make them rich in faith, to make them into people who will demonstrate the truth of the Gospel. The poor have a better respect to God (generally) and find it easier to trust God than those who are rich.

WHY MUST WE GUARD AGAINST TRUSTING IN RICHES?

Let us turn to 1 Timothy 6:7-19 and see what it has to say about riches and the love of money.

“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment (“clothing”) *let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and*

hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For 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. But you, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are also called and have confessed a good profession before many witnesses. I give you charge in the sight of God, Who quickens (“makes alive”) all things, and before Christ Jesus, Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That you keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who in His times He shall show, Who is the blessed and only Potentate (“possessor of power, used of those who are in possession of authority, and occupying a high position” – Bullinger’s), the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man has seen, nor can see: to Whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, Who gives us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate (“be liberal” – Young’s); Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (KJV).

They that will be rich:

- **fall into temptation** (“persuaded or enticed to do something, especially morally wrong or unwise:– Collins) (Verse 9).
- **fall into a snare** (“anything that traps or entangles someone or something unawares” – Collins) (Verse 9).
- **fall into many foolish** (“thoughtless” – Young’s) **and hurtful lusts** (Verse 9).
- **will drown in destruction** (“that which causes ruin and death” – Bullinger’s) (Verse 9).
- **will drown in perdition** (“loss, destruction, ruin; the end pronounced upon all who, having heard the summons to repentance and faith in Christ, have persisted in impenitence. The loss of all that such ever had, or might have had for ever; the destruction of such, in body, soul and spirit; an utter and final ruin, which will not be reversed” – Bullinger’s) (Verse 9).

The love of money:

- **is the root of all evil** (Verse 10).
- **causes covetousness** (“to be jealously eager for the possession of something, especially that which is someone else’s” – Collins) (Verse 10). Covetousness is the will and/or desire to have more.
- **takes us away from the faith** (Verse 10).
- **causes us to be pierced through with many sorrows** (“pain, torture, grief, sorrow” – Young’s) (Verse 10).
-

This is what “The Living Bible” tells us:

“Do you want to be truly rich? You already are if you are happy and good. After all, we didn’t bring any money with us when we came into the world, and we can’t carry away a single penny when we die. So we should be well satisfied without money if we have enough food and clothing. But people who long to be rich soon begin to do all kinds of wrong things to get money, things that hurt them and make them evil-minded and finally send them to hell itself. For the love of money is the first step toward all kinds of sin. Some people have even turned away from God because of their love for it, and as a result have pierced themselves with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

It then goes on to tell us in strong words what we should do:

“Oh, Timothy, you are God’s man. Run from all these evil things and work instead at what is right and good, learning to trust Him and love others, and to be patient and gentle. Fight on for God. Hold tightly to the eternal life which God has given you, and which you have confessed with such a ringing confession before many witnesses. I command you before God Who gives life to all, and before Christ Jesus Who gave a fearless testimony before Pontius Pilate, that you fulfil all He has told you to do, so that no one can find fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ returns. For in due season Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only Almighty God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, Who alone can never die, Who lives in light so terrible that no human being can approach Him. No mere man has ever seen Him, nor ever will. Unto Him be honour and everlasting power and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

“Tell those who are rich not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone, but their pride and trust should be in the living God Who always richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give happily to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. By doing this they will be storing up real treasures for themselves in heaven – it is the only safe investment for eternity! And they will be living a fruitful Christian life down here as well” (TLB).

THE RICH YOUNG RULER:

In Matthew 19:16-30 and Mark 10:17-31 Jesus gives us the story of the rich young ruler. Jesus told him to give his riches to the poor (which would give him treasure in heaven), to take up his cross and follow Jesus. He couldn’t do it. He went away sorrowful.

Jesus said: **“How hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”**

Take time to study the account of the rich young ruler.

No wonder James is rebuking the Christian for showing partiality to the rich. They are far bigger enemies of the Gospel than the poor! Desiring to be like them and to have what they’ve got paralyses our faith and thinking!

“But you, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are also called . . .” (1 Timothy 6:11-12).

Our natural tendency is to get rich – to look after “Number One” (me!) The Bible says this is a way to flee from . . . to fight against! It will take us away from the faith and into sorrows, destruction and perdition!

James 5:1-6 gives us a pretty stern picture of what God thinks of the rich. Let each of us make sure that we have our finances in their rightful place of priority and that we will not be guilty of accumulating riches in these last days. There is a work for Jesus to be done and, yes, it does take a lot of money to do it. That’s why we need to be bountiful givers and always on the watch that we do not allow our riches to separate us from the love of God. If we do not control them, they will control us.

Maybe one reason why there is not so much joy among Christians today is because we have got ourselves caught up in the “deceitfulness of riches” (Mark 4:19) and become sorrowful? What do you think?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are some ways to change our attitudes towards the rich?
2. What are some ways to change our attitudes towards the poor?
3. In the light of what the Bible says about the love of money, do you think it is right for Christians to hoard their money?
4. If you were the rich young ruler in Jesus’ day, what would you have done?
5. What are some ways that you would like to release more finances into the work of God for the winning of the lost?
6. How can we keep our minds clean from desiring more and more riches?

“I have shown you all things, how that so labouring you ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

“Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you mete withal it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:38).

Part Three:

As in our previous Lessons in James Chapter Two, we continue on the theme of prejudices, respecting of persons and partiality. It is a very important area to be aware of and, unfortunately, not a lot is preached in Christendom today about it. Our attitudes towards others determines how effective we are in ministering answers to them in their time of need. People “pick up” our attitudes very quickly and this causes them to either draw back from us if they are negative and critical, or to trust us if they are loving and accepting.

LOVE IS THE KEY:

There is no substitute for the love of God. Love demonstrated through us to others is still the most powerful ministry any Christian can have. According to 1 Corinthians 13 it is possible for us to attain many spiritual and noble heights in the things of God, BUT IF WE DO NOT HAVE THE LOVE OF GOD WORKING IN US TO OTHERS, WE ARE NOTHING!

Verse 8: *“If you fulfil* (“to bring about, complete, accomplish” – Bullinger’s) *the royal* (“kingly” – Young’s) *law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbour as yourself, you do well* (“good, excellently, properly”).

Verse 9: *“But if you have respect* (“to show partiality” – Bullinger’s) *to persons, you commit* (“to work, practise” – Young’s) *sin, and are convinced* (“convicted”) *of the law as transgressors* (“to step aside or overstep a limit; to break a law”).”

The love of God working through us must be according to the Scriptural standards and not our own. How easy it is just to love our friends, or those who show us some attention. Listen to the word of Jesus: *“If you love only those who love you, what good is that? Even scoundrels* (“worthless or villainous person” – Collins) *do that much. If you are friendly only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even the heathen do that”* (Matthew 5:46-47, TLB). (Luke 6:32).

Jesus is showing us that if we only love our fellow Christians, or the circles we move in, we are no better than the sinners. They have that kind of love too! **Our love must reach far beyond that!**

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

Jesus said we are to love our neighbour as ourself. The classic question is then asked, “And who is my neighbour?”

That question is so important that it has been made (in the wisdom of God) a part of the eternal Scripture (Luke 10:29). If you turn to Luke 10:25-37 you will see that God has shown us who our neighbour is and that Christians have an obligation to show mercy to hurting humanity, no matter who they are, or where they have fallen.

Notice it was the religious priest and Levite who, seeing the half-dead man in his hour of need, both made a decision not to help him, but actually “passed by on the other side.” **They crossed the street to get away from the ministry of mercy and love. They were respecters of persons . . . didn’t want to get involved. They left the man in his problem. They demonstrated by their actions they did not have the Bible kind of love. Because they were in “God’s ministry” did not excuse or justify them in leaving the wounded man without their help.**

Jesus came to lift us from “the guttermost” to “the uttermost.” And we, in the name of Jesus, can lift others up too. This is the royal law. We can “bring Jesus onto the scene” of any situation if we truly love people without being a respecter of persons; the poor as well as the rich; the unlovely as well as the lovely; the broken as well as the whole.

“For brethren, you have been called unto liberty (“freedom to go where one will” – Bullinger’s); **only use not liberty for an occasion** (“impulse, opportunity”) **to the flesh, BUT BY LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; You shall love your neighbour as yourself”** (Galatians 5:13-14).

If we do not let the love of Christ within us motivate us into helping meet the needs of others, we are sinning - Christian sinners! Sounds silly, doesn't it? Especially when we know Jesus came to set us free from sin and all its power! Loving others is something we do. We choose to love our neighbour or we choose not to. If we choose to love some and not others, we still are counted as transgressors.

LOVE DOES NOT DEMAND LOVE IN RETURN:

Love is a choice and love is an action. Christians are commanded to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind; and our neighbour as ourself (Mark 12:28-34). We need to understand that not everyone will receive our love; that we cannot demand people to love us back when we show them love and mercy. In our last Lesson we read about the rich young ruler coming to Jesus (Matthew 19:16-30, Mark 10:17-31 and Luke 18:18-27). Mark 10:21 tells us Jesus **“beheld him and loved him”** yet the man still chose to turn away sorrowful and resist the great love of Jesus. That would have been very hard for him to do, but he did it to his own tremendous loss. It is possible that right now he is in hell cursing his riches and the foolish decision he made to reject the love of Jesus.

If people can spurn the love of Jesus, they can spurn yours and mine. But that doesn't mean we stop loving people, for the whole spirit of Christianity is **LOVE**. **GOD IS LOVE!**

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for God is love . . .

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another . . . If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected (“completed, made perfect, so as to be full, wanting in nothing, to bring to a full end, consummated” – Bullinger's) **in us . . . God is love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment** (“1. to afflict with great pain, suffering, or anguish; torture. 2. to tease or pester in an annoying way. 3. physical or mental pain. 4. a source of pain, worry, annoyance, etc.” – Collins). **He that fears is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar** (“false; a deceiver”): **for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loves God loves his brother also”** (1 John 4:7-21).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are some ways we can increase our love for others?
2. What are some ways we can demonstrate our love to others?
3. Upon what standards is our love for others to be based?
4. In what way does the Bible account of “The Good Samaritan” speak to you?
5. How should we re-act when our love is spurned?

6. Do you struggle to love someone you know? Why do you think that is?

Part Four:

The challenge to us about being partial continues in our study of James Two. This time, however, it is not only toward other people but toward God Himself and His Word.

We can be a respecter of portions of the Word of God! To pick up the Scriptural flow of our Lesson, let me quote here James 2:8-9 from the Amplified Bible before continuing: ***“If indeed you [really] fulfil the royal Law, in accordance with the Scripture, You shall love your neighbour as [you love] yourself, you do well. But if you show servile regard (prejudice, favouritism) for people, you commit sin and are rebuked and convicted by the Law as violators and offenders.”***

KEEPING THE WHOLE LAW?

Verse 10: ***“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend*** (“to stumble against, fall over; trip” – Bullinger’s) ***in one point*** (even one single point!), ***he is guilty of all.”***

The Living Bible says it very clearly:–

“And the person who keeps every law of God, but makes one little slip, is just as guilty as the person who has broken every law there is.”

Verse 11: ***“For He that said, Do not commit adultery*** (“voluntary sexual intercourse between a married man or woman and partner other than the legal spouse” – Collins), ***said also, Do not kill. Now if you commit no adultery, yet if you kill, you are become a transgressor of the law.”***

So many people today are still trying to serve God by the law of the Ten Commandments – but it can’t be done. We can never serve God acceptably according to the Old Law.

If we could **JESUS WOULD NEVER HAVE NEEDED TO COME AND DIE THE CRUEL, HUMILIATING DEATH ON THE CROSS THAT HE DID!** (See Galatians 3:10 -14, 18-29).

The rich young ruler told Jesus he had kept all the commandments from his youth up – yet he knew there was something missing in his life: ***“What lack I yet?”*** (Matthew 19:20). His lack was that riches had taken the place of the **LORDSHIP OF JESUS** in his life.

Jesus told him, ***“Get rid of your riches, and come and FOLLOW ME.”*** **WITH ALL HIS KEEPING OF THE COMMANDMENTS HE COULD NOT DO THE ONE THING THAT IS NECESSARY – HE COULD NOT GIVE HIMSELF TO JESUS. HE WENT AWAY SORROWFUL.**

THE OLD VERSUS THE NEW:

The big battle for Christians in the New Covenant is the ongoing “pull” of the flesh to try and take us back under the Law. The Apostle Paul rebuked the Galatians for allowing themselves to go back into legalism (Galatians 3). He called them foolish

("thoughtless" – Young's; "unintelligent; by implication sensual: foolish, unwise" – Strong's). He told them they were bewitched! ("To have a spell cast over, to be misled as if by magic arts"). Their fascination with the old Law took them away from the faith and truth of Jesus into a religious, legalistic witchcraft! **Guard against this!**

Under the Law we only have to make one mistake! That makes us as guilty as the biggest sinner! But God so loved us that He sent Jesus to be our Saviour, Lord and Friend. Through **FAITH IN HIM** we receive forgiveness of sins and newness of life. **JESUS** steps into our life and He becomes our merciful High Priest to lead us ever unto God through His wonderful grace (Colossians 2:6-15; Hebrews 4:12-16).

The Old Testament Law put the emphasis upon "**YOU shall not . . .**" and we could not stop ourselves from transgressing!

The New Testament way puts the emphasis upon JESUS – we trust and believe Him to take away the very desire to sin. **We accept Him by faith and walk with Him in the power of the Holy Spirit.** He is the One who will present us "**faultless before the Father's throne with exceeding joy**" (Jude 24), "**without spot, wrinkle or blemish – and holy!**" (Ephesians 5:27).

ONLY TWO THINGS:

To please God there are only two things He asks of us:–

1. To LOVE HIM with all our heart, soul, strength and mind.
2. To LOVE OUR NEIGHBOUR as ourself.

That takes JESUS IN US!

Let us watch very carefully that we do not get mixed-up in trying to keep the commandments and "this religious rule or regulation," but that we always seek to maintain and "**walk in the liberty wherewith CHRIST HAS MADE US FREE!**" (Galatians 5:1).

- Christianity is a life – eternal life! Not a set of rules and regulations.
- Christianity is a releasing experience – not a list of "do's" and "don'ts." We are no longer under the Law! The Law makes us respecters of persons. The Law keeps us locked-up into a consciousness of sin! Jesus has taken away my sin and Jesus has made me to love God and people like no one else ever could!
- Christianity is "**CHRIST IN YOU THE HOPE OF GLORY**" (Colossians 1:27). Glory!

It is Jesus we answer to – no-one else.

Verse 12: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" ("freedom to go where one will, liberty" – Bullinger's).

The Amplified Bible says the law of liberty is the moral instruction given by Christ, especially about love.

Verse 13: “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that has shown no mercy; and mercy rejoices against judgment.”

Let me share these verses with you from the Living Bible:–

“You will be judged on whether or not you are doing what Christ wants you to. So watch what you do and what you think; for there will be no mercy to those who have shown no mercy. But if you have been merciful (remember the Good Samaritan? He showed mercy when he ministered love and compassion to his neighbour who had fallen among thieves – Luke 10:25-37), then God’s mercy toward you will win out over His judgment against you.”

Here again we see a simple appraisal of the difference between the Old and New Covenants. The Old is summed up in the word “judgment” while the New is summed up in the word “mercy.” If we judge others we shall be judged. If we show mercy upon others we shall have mercy showered upon us.

The Bible declares that **“Mercy rejoices** (“glories, triumphs”) **against judgment”** (James 2:13).

Aren’t you so glad that Jesus came and took our judgment upon Himself at the Cross so we can now clothe ourselves in His mercy?

“Wherefore in all things it behoved (“to be under obligation” – Strong’s) **Him** (Jesus) **to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people”** (Hebrews 2:14-18).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Under the Law, what happens when one makes a little slip or mistake?
2. What are the two things God requires of us?
3. Describe, in simple terms, what Christianity is.
4. What does “Christ in you the hope of glory” mean?
5. What is the difference between mercy and judgment?

Part Five:

Our previous Lessons in James Two have been taken up dealing with various prejudices that can arise in our Christian walk. This has been necessary because it is those very things which defeat the over-all purpose of this Chapter – and indeed the Christian life itself. The real subject addressed in this Chapter is **FAITH** and the importance that **our FAITH** is demonstrated clearly for others to see.

DO WE HAVE THE FAITH OF OUR LORD JESUS?

This is a very challenging question. True faith is not really our faith, but that which comes from Christ to us. Look back to Verse One of James Chapter Two and see James setting the theme of the Chapter:

“My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory (“dignity, honour, praise, worship” – Strong’s; “opinion, notion, real knowledge of a matter . . . what is not concealed, truth . . . renown . . . Then from the meaning seeming comes from appearance, form, aspect, . . . that appearance of a person or thing which attracts attention or commands recognition, looks like something, equivalent therefore to splendour, brilliance, glory” – Bullinger’s), **with respect** (“partiality, being biased, prejudiced; not complete”) **of persons.”**

The issue is **“having the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ,” “the faith of . . . the Lord of glory.”** Having **HIS FAITH.**

Being a respecter of persons hinders that faith. It works against what God desires and requires of us. Being partial towards others is part of the old nature; therefore it is not of faith.

WHAT IS FAITH?

The word “faith” in Verse One means: **“firm persuasion, the conviction which is based upon hearing, not upon sight, or knowledge; a firmly relying confidence in what we hear from God in His Word”** (Bullinger’s).

“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17).

“Word” in that Verse is from the Greek “rhema,” meaning “a saying, speech, matter, thing; i.e. the spoken word” (Young’s).

Faith comes by hearing from God – not by what knowledge we gain! So, in looking at faith in our life we must ask ourself: “Am I hearing from God?” If I am, faith is being generated in my heart. What for? In order that I may fulfil whatever is required of me when God speaks to me. God speaks through many avenues and I must recognise **when** He is speaking to me, i.e., through His spoken Word, through His written Word, by His Spirit, through my conscience, through other people, through fellowship and Christian meetings, through compassion, whatever.

FAITH HAS A COMPANION:

Let’s see what else we can discover about faith:

Verse 14: “What does it profit (“advantage” or “assistance”), **my brethren, though a man say he has faith,** (same meaning as Verse 1) **and have not works** (“work, deed, the result or object of employment; work as a single act; then, that which is brought into being or accomplished by labour, the thing wrought” – Bullinger’s) **can faith save him?”**

Faith – **Bible faith** – always has a companion. That companion is **WORKS**. Works responds to faith. Faith is an **ACTION**. Faith is a **DOER!** Faith is not passive or inactive. We cannot separate works from Bible faith.

The Amplified Bible puts it this way: **“What is the use (profit), my brethren, for anyone to profess to have faith if he has no [good] works [to show for it]? Can (such) faith save [his soul]?”** (James 2:14).

FAITH IS PRACTICAL:

Faith always has corresponding actions - otherwise it is not faith.

Verse 15: *“If a brother or sister be naked* (“lightly clad”), *and destitute* (“1. lacking the means of subsistence; totally impoverished. 2. completely lacking; deprived or bereft of” – Collins) *of daily food,*

Verse 16: *“And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace* (“a state of health or well-being, it denotes a state of untroubled, undisturbed well-being” – Bullinger’s), *be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding you give them not those things which are needful to the body; what does it profit?*

Verse 17: *“Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone* (“by itself”).”

Here we are given a very practical example of faith at work in a day-to-day situation. If we are aware of someone in need of food and clothing (especially those in the Christian fold – see Galatians 6:10) and do nothing to alleviate that need, the Bible says our faith is useless. This example is faith at work through compassion – seeing the need and doing something about it. (Remember the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:33-34? **He saw the need and was moved with compassion to DO** something about helping the half-dead man).

If our faith is unable to respond to visible needs, then how can we expect our faith to respond to God in the invisible realm?

James is being very practical with us and is teaching us how to get faith working. Start in the simple ways by seeing a need and responding to it. Develop a responding heart! See needs! It is surprising how many things Christians do not see today, mainly because of prejudices that cause us to not want to see, or not want to get involved, or not want to share our bountiful provisions and blessings with others who are less fortunate than we are.

- Do we have the living active faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, or are we guilty of holding on to a faith without works?
- Can **my** faith stand the challenge of the Word of God, or is it dead, being alone?

It is important for us to face these questions, for we must have faith to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

BIBLE FAITH CAN CAUSE PEOPLE TO DO RADICAL THINGS:

As I put pen to paper, my thoughts ran to the Bible account of the healing of the man sick of the palsy (Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:18-26). Mark’s account gives us a clear description of why those four men did what they did to get their sick friend to Jesus. They were radical to say the least. Faith arose in their hearts when *“it was noised* (“heard, reported”) that He (Jesus) *was in the house*” (Mark 2:1). **JESUS, the Author and Finisher of FAITH, was there!** (Hebrews 12:2). Multitudes flocked to that house to hear Him. He preached the Word (“logos” meaning “preaching the written word”) unto them. He generated faith. Faith challenged those four men. They had heard Jesus. They knew He was the answer to their friend’s need. Faith said they must get him to Jesus. But how? There was no room to get him through the doors –

or the windows! What would they do? Faith was alive in them; they had to get him to Jesus. What would you do? Give up, or get radical? One of them suggested making a hole in the roof and letting the bed down to where Jesus was. Logic says that is absolutely ridiculous! But faith says, “If we can get him to Jesus, **HE WILL BE HEALED!**”

“But there’s a roof in the way! What will the people say?”

But **FAITH** was at work. Up on the roof they struggled with their friend; off came the tiles, and with care they lowered him down to Jesus. That stopped the meeting! But Jesus honoured their faith – the man was healed: **“Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion** (“in this manner”).”

CALEB:

Caleb was a great man of faith. For over 40 years he resisted the unbelief of his fellow Israelites and believed God’s promise to him that Hebron would be his inheritance (Joshua 14:6-14). At 85 years of age Caleb boldly asked Joshua for that inheritance. It was granted him. There was only one problem: Hebron was possessed by the Anakims, who were giants (Numbers 13:33). But giants did not put Caleb off, even if he was 85! He went up there and drove out the giants (Joshua 15:13-14). Through active faith he possessed his possessions at a time in life when most have retired!

DAVID:

David, as a young man, displayed radical faith when he single-handedly went out against the giant Goliath (1 Samuel 17:37, 40-51) and killed him with a sling and a stone. That action was the means of the nation of Israel being restored back to a place of power instead of becoming slaves to the Philistines.

JEHOSHAPHAT:

Jehoshaphat was quite radical in marching out to war against the Moabites and Ammonites with a group of singers at the front of the army (2 Chronicles 20:1-30). God had spoken to them to do it that way and, even though to the natural mind that is a ridiculous thing to do, faith believed and went to work. The singers sang and praised the Lord - and God gave them the victory.

THE CENTURION:

The Centurion (“Roman officer”) had a servant at home **“sick of the palsy** (“paralytic”), **grievously tormented** (“racked with pain”).” He came to Jesus to tell him of this need. Jesus responded by saying, **“I will come and heal him”** (Matthew 8:5-13). The Centurion’s reply was that there was no need for Jesus to do that. All He had to do was, **“Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.”** Jesus marvelled at the man’s faith; **He had not found faith like that in any one in Israel!** The Roman had discovered a great key to faith: having a teachable spirit and being in submission to higher authorities. In his life as a soldier he had quickly learned how these principles work. When Jesus came along, he acknowledged Him as the Highest Authority of all. All Jesus needed to do was to use that authority by speaking the Word and everything else would have to come into submission and obey. As far as the Centurion was concerned Jesus did not need to even touch the sick – **only speak the Word. That is**

great faith. The result? His servant was healed the same hour! Radical faith. We need more of it!

THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN:

In Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30 we read of the faith of the Syrophenician woman. She had a daughter who was tormented by an evil spirit. When she came to Jesus, He did not respond in any way; in fact He answered nothing. That is a challenge to one's faith. Then to make matters worse, the disciples openly tried to get Jesus to send her away. When Jesus did respond He told her He was not sent to anyone but "the lost sheep of Israel." She was a Greek, which meant He was telling her He had nothing for her. These incidents would put most people off thinking they were going to get help.

But that woman had **FAITH!** Faith told her **Jesus was the answer to her need.** She humbled herself and likened herself to a dog under the table – all she needed was a few crumbs, that would be sufficient.

Jesus was so moved by this He exclaimed: ***"O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will."***

What was the result? Did she have faith or not? The Bible says, ***"Her daughter was made whole from that very hour."***

Faith pressed through. Faith was not put off by negative circumstances. Does our faith measure up to these Bible examples?

For further illustrations on faith, study the men and women who are recorded in Hebrews Chapter 11. They will inspire and challenge you.

We will continue on the subject of Faith in the remaining Lessons from James Two.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Because someone says they have faith, does that mean they do have faith?
2. How can you tell when someone has faith?
3. Explain what the meaning of the word "faith" means to you.
4. What is faith's companion?
5. Can you think of an experience you have had when you used radical faith? Share it.

Part Six:

We continue our study from James Two on the subject of faith. In the previous Lesson we found out what faith is, that faith has a companion (called works), faith is practical, and faith operates in simple as well as radical ways.

FAITH IS AN ACTION – “SHOW ME YOUR FAITH!”

Let the Scriptures challenge us concerning our faith:

Verse 18: *“Yea (“yes”), a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works. and I will show you my faith by my works.”*

I think it is unfortunate that in today’s Christianity faith has been limited to a confession ... something we say we believe in. Bible faith is more than that. **Faith is an action. A doing thing. A demonstration of what we believe** (not merely a confession of it). It is not enough merely to say we have faith. This verse challenges us to show our faith. If there are no works to demonstrate our faith, what are we going to show? James says talking faith proves nothing. It is when we do things that show we have faith . . . **“I will show you my faith by my works.”**

“BUT I BELIEVE IN GOD!”

Verse 19: *“You believe (“to adhere to, trust, rely on” – Young’s) **that there is one God; you do well: the devils** (“evil spirits”) **also believe, and tremble** (“to shudder so that the skin becomes rough and pimples and the hair stands on end” – Bullinger’s).”* It is right and proper to believe in God. But Christianity is more than believing in one’s heart. That believing must be turned into obedience. **Obedience is an action. Faith is an action based upon the conviction of the truth of the Word of God – written and spoken! When God speaks we DO what He says to us!**

EVIL SPIRITS BELIEVE ALSO!

To keep our Christianity locked-up within the fact we believe, by giving mental assent to the truth of God, is not accepted as faith for a progressive, ongoing walk with our Lord. In fact James in this Verse shocks us into reality by saying even evil spirits believe! It causes them to shake, shiver and shudder, but nonetheless they do believe. Now, surely, we are not going to limit our Christian believing to the same level as them??!!

Evil spirits **know** who Jesus is:

*“**And there was in their synagogue** (“house of assembly, congregation”) **a man with an unclean** (“impure, embracing impurity of all kinds” – Bullinger’s) **spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with You, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art You come to destroy** (“death in battle, to kill; the loser losing utterly” – Bullinger’s) **us? I know You who You are, the Holy One of God.**”*

*“**And Jesus rebuked** (“admonished strongly, chided”) **him, saying, Hold your peace** (“be muzzled, have the mouth stopped”), **and come out of him.**”*

*“**And when the unclean spirit had torn** (“to draw out and beat, tear, lacerate” – Young’s) **him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.**”*

*“**And they were all amazed** (“to be awed, astonished, either with wonder or fear” – Bullinger’s) **insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine** (“teaching”) **is this? for with authority commands He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him”** (Mark 1:23-27). See also Luke 4:32-37, 41, and Matthew 8:28-34.*

“And unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, You are the Son of God” (Mark 3:11).

“And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” (See Acts 19:13-16).

All these Scripture references show us clearly that devils do know and believe Jesus. No wonder they shudder and tremble! No wonder they live a miserable existence and seek to make others miserable with them! They are continually tormented with the knowledge of who Jesus is and that He is going to send them to their eternal destruction at the end. Through faith in Jesus we also have power and authority over evil spirits and **WE** can command them to leave **IN THE MIGHTY NAME OF JESUS!** Hallelujah!

Now, why did that Verse in James take us from practical faith to talking about evil spirits? Because evil spirits are continually working against us to turn us away from the faith we have in Jesus Christ. They don't want us living in faith and exercising the practical outworking of it.

“But Elymas the sorcerer* (‘‘a wise, learned magician’’) ***(for so is his name by interpretation) withstood (‘‘to set one’s self against, opposed, resisted’’ – Bullinger’s) ***them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith . . .***’’ (see Acts 13:6-12).**

Faith must be more than passive believing!

NO FAITH – NO USE!

Verse 20: ***“But will you know, O vain*** (‘‘empty, fruitless, worthless, to no avail, senseless or futile’’) ***man, that faith without works is dead?”***

For the Christian, **FAITH** is an absolute necessity.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him (God) . . .’’ (Hebrews 11:6).

- We are justified by faith (Galatians 2:16; Romans 5:1).
- We have access into the grace of God by faith (Romans 5:1-2; Ephesians 2:8).
- The life we now live as Christians must be by faith (Galatians 2:20).
- We receive the promise of the Holy Spirit by faith (Galatians 3:14).
- The just live by faith (Galatians 3:11; Habakkuk 2:4).
- Faith enables us to overcome the world (1 John 5:4).
- The shield of faith prevents the fiery darts of the devil getting through to us (Ephesians 6:16).

In this Lesson we discovered that we can have a dead faith (one without works) or we can have a living faith (faith that is demonstrated by works). If our faith is a dead faith,

then that dead faith makes us a vain man or woman – useless in the purposes of God. We will never accomplish anything worthwhile in the Kingdom of God if our faith is dead. We need to know this, and make sure we do everything we can to have a living, vibrant, active faith that glorifies God, helps mankind and routs the devil and his evil hordes.

Right now, let us examine our faith:

“Examine (“put to the test” – Bullinger’s) **yourself, whether you be in the faith; prove** (“examine, prove by test” – Bullinger’s) **your own selves . . .”** (2 Corinthians 13:5).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Is our life-style a clear example to others of what walking and living by faith is all about?
2. How do we demonstrate our faith?
3. Is believing in God enough?
4. Who else believe in God?
5. Why do evil spirits tremble?
6. What is the difference between dead faith and living faith?

Part Seven:

“Faith without works is dead!” Faith must be demonstrated by corresponding actions. Faith is a doing thing. The challenge of James to us is that we be practical Christians, able to show forth to the world the reality of Jesus – in all areas of life. We please God by faith (Hebrews 11:6) and faith comes to us by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

The word “faith” means “firm persuasion, the conviction which is based upon hearing, not upon sight, or knowledge; a firmly relying confidence in what we hear from God in His Word” (Bullinger’s).

For the Christian to walk in Bible faith, it is of the utmost importance that we know when we are hearing from God. We must know His voice. Faith comes by hearing that voice, whether it comes to us via the Word of God, the Spirit of God, through fellowshiping with His people, through our conscience or by means of compassion, etc. God speaks today!

ABRAHAM, THE FATHER OF FAITH:

Verse 21: “Was not Abraham (the name means “father of a great multitude”) **our father justified** (“made or declared righteous” – Young’s) **by works, when he had offered Isaac** (“laughter”) **his son upon the altar** (“a place of sacrifice”)?”

The great Bible account of Abraham offering up his son Isaac upon the altar can be found in Genesis 22. It is a tremendous lesson on how faith supersedes even the human emotions of family bonds of love. There is no doubting that Abraham dearly loved the son of his very old age – he was 100 years old when Isaac was born, having believed God for 25 years to see him become a reality. Isaac would have been approximately 14 or 15 years of age when God asked Abraham to give him **as an offering**. That meant slaying his own son upon an altar dedicated to God! Abraham knew the voice of God. **He had walked with God for many years and knew the difference between God speaking and his own thoughts.** He had learned that God always knows best; that truth only comes from God. What God asked of him would be best and right. Isaac was Abraham's most cherished possession; his pride and joy; his testimony to many people of God's faithfulness to him (think of the persecution Abraham faced when for 25 years he testified that God was giving him a son!). Abraham dearly loved Isaac!

But God asked for him back. What a test to his faith. Would Abraham obey, or would he justify himself by saying God gave Isaac to him in the first place and therefore there was no need to give him back? What a test!

What did Abraham do? He went with Isaac to the land of Moriah ("Jah or Jehovah provides," or "my teacher is Jah: seen of Jah" – Jah is used in the sense of Victor). Moriah was where God told him to go (Genesis 22:2). Abraham obeyed God! He even took the wood for the burnt offering (which was to be Isaac!) with him.

When Abraham got to the place, he separated himself (with Isaac) from the others, making a tremendous faith statement:–

“. . . I and the lad will go yonder AND WORSHIP, AND COME AGAIN TO YOU” (Genesis 22:5).

WORSHIP IS LINKED IN TO SACRIFICE:

Worship! This is the first time the word is used in the Bible. What a setting! What an impact! Abraham considered the offering up to God of his most prized possession an act of worship!

The word "worship" here means "to bow self down" (Young's). Abraham, through faith, was demonstrating to God that NO-ONE . . . NO-ONE . . . NO-ONE . . . or NOTHING . . . NOTHING . . . NOTHING came between him and God. God came first in his life, no matter what. His faith would prove it.

The key to worship is giving something to God. Worship is linked in to sacrifice. Sacrifice to Abraham meant a burnt offering! Oh, how the Church of Jesus needs to know the faith of Abraham so we can discover the meaning of true worship. God is seeking worshippers today (John 4:23-24).

At the place where the sacrifice was to be made, Isaac asked his father where the lamb for a burnt offering was. How heart-rending that must have been for Abraham. Again Abraham makes a tremendous faith statement:–

“My son, GOD WILL PROVIDE HIMSELF A LAMB for a burnt offering . . .”
(Genesis 22:8).

Abraham built the altar . . . he laid the wood in order. Then he took his son and tied him up so he could not escape what was to come. We are not told what Isaac thought

or said about all this, but Abraham knew that God had asked of him his son. (God never asks of us what He is not prepared to do Himself. He sacrificed Jesus His only begotten Son for your sins and mine). Abraham took the knife and was about to slay his son in obedience when, suddenly, the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven. **God had tested Abraham's faith and knew that by his actions NOTHING came between him and God.**

At that moment a miracle provision of God took place – a ram was caught in a bush by his horns. Abraham took that ram and offered it to God instead of Isaac his son. God provided for Abraham because of Abraham's faith and obedience.

If you turn to Hebrews 11, the great faith chapter of the Bible, Verses 17-19, you will read that Abraham so believed God that if he had to kill Isaac, God would have raised Isaac from the dead. What faith!

Faith says God can do anything!

As a result of Abraham's actions (works), God gave to him one of the most remarkable promises in Scripture:

“By Myself have I sworn, says the Lord, for because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate (the place of authority) of his enemies; And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice” (Genesis 22:16-18).

Abraham was a great man of faith because he obeyed God's voice. Today, we are as great in our faith according as we, too, can obey God's voice.

Verse 22: “Seest thou how faith wrought (“worked, woven”) with his works, and by works was faith made perfect (“complete”)?”

Verse 23: “And the Scripture was fulfilled which said, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed (“counted, reckoned” – Young's) upon him for righteousness: and he (Abraham) was called the Friend (“loved, beloved, dear” – Bullinger's) of God.”

- Abraham believed . . .
- Abraham exercised faith through obedience and works . . .

And it was counted to him for righteousness.

Believing + faith and works = righteousness.

What is righteousness? “Righteousness” is “the **doing** or being what is just and right; the character **and acts** of a man **commanded by and approved of God**, in virtue of which **the man corresponds with Him and His will as His ideal and His standard**; it signifies the sum total of all that God commands and approves. As such it is not only what God demands, but what He gives to man, and **which is appropriated** (“made to be one's own”) **by faith**: and hence it is a state called forth by God's act of justification . . .” (Bullinger's).

Abraham gives to us a wonderful example of faith in action.

1. He **believed** God. (***“Take your son, your only son, and offer him for a sacrifice . . .”***) (Genesis 22:2).
2. Through obedience he released faith to work. (***“Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass . . . and took Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering . . . and went unto the place of which God had told him”***) (Genesis 22:3).
3. In **doing** what God wanted, Abraham was made **righteous**. (James 2:23).
4. Because of the aforementioned **actions**, God called Abraham His **friend** (James 2:23; Isaiah 41:8 and 2 Chronicles 20:7).

The above four points bring fulfilment and victory to Christians and obvious delight to God our Blessed Heavenly Father. Why? Because this is His will for us.

Verse 24: ***“You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”***

May this Lesson on faith and works from the life of Abraham inspire you to rise to greater acts of obedience and faith to glorify His Name and Word.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What is the message of God to you in this Lesson?
2. In the light of Abraham’s worship unto God, how does your worship compare?
3. What does John 4:23-24 ask of you?
4. What does faith talk (say)?
5. What does faith obey?

Part Eight:

We come now to the final Lesson in Chapter Two of James. It continues on the challenging theme of faith and works; this time from the life of Rahab:

RAHAB:

Verse 25: ***“Likewise also was not Rahab (means “breadth”) the harlot (“one who sells their body sexually”) justified (“made or declared right”) by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?”***

The story of Rahab is found in Joshua 2. She lived in Jericho and was a prostitute. Joshua, the new leader of Israel, had sent two men to spy out Jericho. When they got there, they went to stay in Rahab’s house. Their coming was noticed and the king of Jericho sent men to Rahab’s house to fetch the spies. But Rahab had managed to hide the spies on her roof under stalks of flax and they were not caught. After the king’s men left, Rahab went up on the roof in the night and began to talk to the spies

from Israel, telling them that she knew God had given the land of Jericho to Joshua's army. The people of Jericho had heard of the mighty works of God at the Red Sea and the way the Israelites had overcome and destroyed the two powerful kings, Sihon and Og (Joshua 2:9-10).

The things the people of Jericho had heard about the God of the Israelites had caused their hearts to melt and become very discouraged. They recognised the Omnipotence of God – that no one could stand before Him.

As sinful as Rahab was, she had heard the testimony of God and His people. **In hearing, faith rose in her heart to believe.** She began responding to the truth of God and, when the two spies turned up at her door, she gave them protection, knowing that they would be her only hope of salvation - both for herself and the life she was living; and for her family. They (the spies) would be the means to prevent her coming under the judgment of God when Jericho fell. That is faith.

She had believed in her heart the message of God. Now, when she had an opportunity to **do** something about it, she took it.

Rahab entered into a covenant with the spies. Seeing she had spared their lives from the king of Jericho, would they spare her life, and her family's when the army of Israel passed through? The deal was made, **"Our life for yours . . ."** (Joshua 2:13-14).

The spies were then let down by a cord through the window of Rahab's house (her house was on the wall of the city).

That cord or scarlet thread (Joshua 2:18) was to be the means of Rahab's salvation from destruction. It represents the blood of Jesus to us. When we believe on the shed blood of Jesus and cling to God through it, we escape the coming judgment of God. To everyone else in Jericho that scarlet cord would not have meant anything, but to Rahab and the Israelites that was her escape from death and destruction into a new life with the people of God. Praise the Lord! It was the sign of the covenant they had entered into.

It took faith to hang that scarlet cord out of her window when the Israelites came. And when they did, they kept their promise (just as God does to us) and all in her house who came down that scarlet thread were saved alive. See also Joshua 6:17-25.

Rahab left her past behind. Through faith she came into a new life to serve the true and living God. That faith was demonstrated through her **working** to protect the spies from being caught. Her actions brought her a place of remembrance in the great chapter of faith (Hebrews 11:31).

James 2:25 tells us Rahab was justified by works. The word "justify" means "to set forth as righteous, to justify by a judicial act. By a judicial decision to free a man from his guilt (which stands in the way of his being right) and to represent him as righteous" (Bullinger's).

When we exercise our faith in works we are setting ourselves free from the sins and bondages of the past. Rahab was delivered from a life of sexual sin and shame. She was justified by her works of faith.

Abraham was justified by his works of faith (James 2:21) when he offered up Isaac. Whether we come from a sinful background like Rahab's or a righteous background like Abraham's, it makes no difference. Faith must be demonstrated by corresponding **actions – works**. Faith is no respecter of persons.

Verse 26: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

Faith without works is incomplete. In fact it is worse than that – it is **DEAD!** Something that is dead is lifeless, and therefore useless. We are not called to a dead faith, but a living one. **JESUS**, the Author and Finisher of our faith, is **ALIVE TODAY!** And our response to our Resurrected Lord should be with a dynamic, working faith that brings glory to Him, and justification to us.

Jesus Christ was raised from the dead for our justification (Romans 4:25). But that justification does not become complete until faith is applied:– **“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access (‘‘a leading or bringing to the presence of anyone; freedom of access’’ – Bullinger’s) – (in this case God Himself) by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”** (Romans 5:1-2).

SUMMING UP THIS CHAPTER:

James is teaching us of the importance of having the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, without being respecters of persons. Our prejudices cause faith to be limited and even to die; this chapter is emphasizing the absolute necessity of having a faith that produces works. Otherwise our faith is dead, useless, unacceptable. We are given examples of how to release faith, as well as the lives of people like Abraham and Rahab to learn from.

God’s desire is that His people walk in His righteousness and demonstrate works that justify us as being men and women of faith. Let us learn the lesson of faith well, so that God can confirm and fulfil all His promises to us, for He is faithful that promised. Hallelujah!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Did Rahab’s past life prevent her from exercising faith?
2. How did Rahab find justification?
3. How did she receive faith in the first place?
4. What did the scarlet thread do for Rahab, and what does it speak to us of today?

CHAPTER THREE

Part One:

Welcome to Chapter Three.

How the Word of God challenges us to right living! The Book of James is no exception, for it is full of practical teachings which reveal the absolute need for Christians to walk and live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The Living Bible, in its introduction to this Book, has this to say: “The Book of James describes a rugged, sometimes painful kind of Christian living. James is practical, gutsy and crystal clear in meaning - though we’d like to avoid its impact.”

Perhaps James Chapter Three is one of the most challenging of all chapters in the entire Word of God, as it deals with that very unruly member of our body – the tongue! Let us, then, be very open and honest before Almighty God as we allow the Holy Spirit to put His finger upon this area of our life and bring us through to that place where we can continually glorify God.

BE CAREFUL ABOUT TELLING OTHERS THEIR FAULTS:

Verse 1: *“My brethren* (“brothers”), *be not many masters* (“a master or a teacher of scholars or disciples” – Bullinger’s; “the one in authority”), *knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation* (“the judgment pronounced” – Young’s).”

Right from the outset of this Chapter, we are warned about being quick to reprove other Christians about their faults. Let me share this Verse with you from the Amplified Bible:

“Not many [of you] should become teachers [self-constituted censors and reprovers of others], my brethren, for you know that we [teachers] will be judged by a higher standard and with greater severity [than other people]. – Thus, we assume the greater accountability and the more condemnation.”

The Living Bible puts it this way:

“Dear brothers, don’t be too eager to tell others their faults, for we all make many mistakes; and when we teachers of religion, who should know better, do wrong, our punishment will be greater than it would be for others.”

It is amazing how many people want to be in positions of authority in the Christian Church ... to be able to tell others what to do, etc. James is telling us here that it is an awesome responsibility to be in the position of teaching others. We must be able to teach, as well as control ourselves – especially our tongues – so we are a true example of what a Christian life really is. It is far easier to tell others what is right than to actually live by example. Those who are called into positions of authority have to answer to God more so than those who are not.

Verse 2: *“For in many things we offend* (“to stumble against, fall over, trip” – Bullinger’s) *all. If any man offend not in word* (“the spoken word”), *the same is a perfect* (“what has reached its end, term, or limit; hence, complete, perfect, full, wanting nothing”– Bullinger’s; “unblemished, faultless . . . excellent in all respects” – Collins) *man, and able* (“having the necessary power, resources, skill, time, opportunity, etc. to do something” – Collins) *also to bridle* (“lead, guide, curb, restrain, check; like the reins of a horse bridle”) *the whole body.”*

The power our tongue has is such that it has its affects upon our whole body – whether it is controlled to good affect, or whether it is not controlled to bad affect. How important it is for us to discipline ourselves in the things we say. So . . . **WATCH YOUR WORDS!**

A PERFECT MAN?

Is it possible? God’s Word would not talk about it if it were not possible! **What is more, it is His will for us.**

Jesus said: *“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect”* (Matthew 5:48).

Perfection of the saints was in the heart of God when He sent Jesus to this earth to seal the New Covenant in His own blood. The first Covenant under the Ten Commandments could never do for us what the blood of Jesus did. Man could never become perfect (“whole, complete, faultless”) under the Old Testament Law. But under the New Testament we are redeemed to be just that – perfect! (see Hebrews 10:1-14). For us to desire to be anything less is to take away the power of the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ the Lord!

The Bible teaches us about:

- Perfect love (Colossians 3:14; 1 John 4:12,18);
- Perfect faith (James 2:22);
- Patience making perfect (James 1:4); and a
- Perfect man (Genesis 17:1; Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 1:28; Hebrews 6:1 and James 3:2).

In each of these the tongue has to be controlled!

TONGUES TO CONTROL THE TONGUE:

Have you ever wondered why God has given Spirit-filled believers an ability to speak in other tongues? This is one of God's ways of helping us master the tongue! Jesus is Lord of the tongue when the Holy Ghost is in control. When we are speaking the Holy Spirit language we are exalting Jesus Christ, edifying ourselves and not criticizing anyone else! Praise the Lord! To control the tongue means to control the whole body. For the Christian it also means that the more we rule ourselves the more authority we will have to rule in the Body of Christ.

OUR WORDS TELL OTHERS THE CONDITION OF OUR HEART:

Jesus took time to tell us the importance of speaking the right things. If you turn to Matthew 12:31-37 you will see just how necessary it is that we have an understanding about our words. For example, the unpardonable sin has to do with things **spoken** against the Holy Spirit (Verses 31-32). It is not divorce or re-marriage, but it is to do with our **TONGUE AND WHAT IT SAYS!**

Jesus said: “. . . **out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks**” (Verses 34-35).

When we speak we are telling those who hear us the condition of our own heart. By our words they know whether we are healthy or sick in heart!

Jesus said we will be called to account (“the word, spoken, not written . . . the word as that which is spoken, an exposition or account which one gives” – Bullinger's) for our words on the day of judgment, especially the idle (“unprofitable”) ones (Verse 35).

Our words either build up or knock down – are positive or negative – they edify or criticize. Not only others, but ourselves!

“. . . By YOUR WORDS YOU shall be justified, and by YOUR WORDS YOU shall be condemned” (Verse 37).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why are those who teach us more accountable to God?
2. Do you think God is fair in making teachers more accountable? Why?
3. Can you give practical ways whereby we can stop offending with words?
4. How can you become perfect before God?
5. Do words affect our heart? And why?

Part Two:

In Part One of this Chapter, James opened to us the subject of our spoken words, the need to stop offending with our tongues and to aim at perfection. The theme of the tongue continues throughout the Chapter, so it is important that we seek to “get to grips” with what the Scriptures are teaching.

THE TONGUE MUST BE DISCIPLINED!

In this Chapter, James enforces his teaching on a disciplined tongue by using the illustrations of the horse and the bit (Verse 3), the ship and the rudder (Verse 4), the fire and the wood (Verses 5-6), the untamed animals (Verse 7), the fountain and the water (Verse 11), and the tree and the fruit (Verse 12). We shall look at each of these as we go through Verse by Verse.

Verse 3: *“Behold, we put bits* (“a metal mouthpiece for controlling a horse on a bridle; anything that restrains or curbs” – Collins) *in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.”*

The bit, in comparison to the size of a horse, is very small. But it is strategically placed in the horse’s mouth so it can control the whole horse. It is not the size of the horse that dominates – it is the ability to control the mouth! So it is with us. Our tongue is only a very small member but it controls our whole body – for good or for bad.

The bit controls the horse, whether it is to run, to stop, to go left or right. The whole horse comes into obedience when the bit is applied. The Holy Spirit is God’s “bit” in our mouth and, as we yield to Him, we find that “the words of our mouth and the meditation of our heart are acceptable in God’s sight” (Psalm 19:14). He will guide us into the way of right words . . . saying those things that edify, speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), etc.

Let our relationship with Jesus Christ be such that it affects our words in a very positive way.

“Let no corrupt (“bad, putrid, rotten” – Young’s) *communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed (“marked, branded as God’s own, secured”) *unto the day of redemption.*

“Let all bitterness, and wrath (“passion, – as if breathing hard; fierceness, indignation” – Strong’s) *and anger, and clamour* (“crying out, screaming, shouting” – Bullinger’s), *and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice* (“spite, ill will or baseness of any kind”):

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:29-32).

Here we have some very practical advice from the Scriptures. On looking at these Verses it is easy to see when the tongue is being controlled and when it is out of control. Guard the tongue!

Verse 4: *“Behold, also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven* (“urged on, compelled”) *of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm* (“rudder”), *withersoever the governor* (“to make straight, guide straight, i.e. to guide or steer a ship, the steersman” – Bullinger’s) *listeth* (“wills”).”

Here we are given a lesson on how a huge ship can be controlled by a very small rudder. Even in the midst of raging winds and pounding oceans, that little rudder will direct the whole ship to wherever the pilot wants it to go. The Word of God is showing us also that when the storms of life come against us, if we have our tongue under control, we will not be driven by the prevailing moods around us or the natural turmoil

brewing up within us. We don't have to be like the rest of humanity and "mouth off" our foul moods and feelings. We are disciples of Jesus, remember!

THE TONGUE IS A BOASTER:

Verse 5: *"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasts* ("to speak in exaggerated or excessively proud terms of one's possessions, skills, or superior qualities; brag; talk big" – Collins) *great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindles!* ("light up, arouse")

Verse 6: *"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity* ("the doing contrary to right, wrong, injustice to others, repugnant" – Bullinger's): *so is the tongue among our members, that it defiles* ("stains, marks") *the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."*

Let me share these two Verses from the Living Bible:

"So also the tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do. A great forest can be set on fire by one tiny spark.

"And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is full of wickedness, and poisons every part of the body. And the tongue is set on fire by hell itself, and can turn our whole lives into a blazing flame of destruction and disaster."

Our tongue gets us into trouble more than anything else! In the Christian Church the tongue would be the cause of more hurts and divisions than anything else! The tongue, by nature, is a boaster (see Psalm 12 and Psalm 73:8-9). Some sound advice is given us in Proverbs 15:1-5, 23,26).

THE STORY OF THE GOSSIP:

I remember the story was told of a gossip in the church. She just could not help herself from criticizing everything and everyone. No matter where she went she took her problem with her. One night she was asked to the pastor's house for supper. She very gladly accepted and it wasn't long before she was in "full swing" giving her "expert advice" about everyone else in the church. That night, however, was to change her whole life. Unbeknown to her, the pastor had put on his tape player and recorded her conversation. After supper the lady rose to leave. The pastor stopped her and told her he had just received "the latest tape that contained things she needed to hear." Of course she thought she was being "let-in" on something that would make her "special" to the pastor. The tape was played. Very quickly the lady realised what had happened and pleaded with the pastor to stop the tape at once. He refused. She was made to sit through the evening again and to hear all the negative garbage she had spoken about others. She pleaded with the pastor to give her the tape. He refused. "He thought he might play it to the church." She offered to buy it – "name the price." The lady broke down and wept as she realised what kind of person she really was. The pastor explained to her that God also had a copy of all her conversations and she would have to stand before Him one day and give account. On hearing herself that night, the lady repented and asked God's forgiveness, also that of the pastor. All because she heard herself played back on tape! The message is just as applicable to men!

Would you be ashamed if your words were played back to you in front of your friends, the church? Think about the fact that God has a copy and one day He will play it back to us. What will we have to answer Him? Where will our boasting be then?

THE TONGUE IS A FIRE:

It takes only one little spark in the right place (or wrong place, which ever way you take it) to set fire to a huge forest plantation and cause millions of dollars worth of damage, loss of jobs, even life itself. The tongue is like that. One wrong word to the wrong person can be misconstrued (“interpreted wrongly”). Then, when it is repeated back to the person concerned, a fire breaks out that can, if not put out quickly, bring about permanent breakdown in relationships. That little spark of criticism gets fanned by the winds of gossip and before you know it, you have a forest fire of upset people to contend with.

The tongue is a world of iniquity. By nature it loves to run down, gossip, criticize, boast. The only way some people feel edified is when they have knocked others down.

The tongue out of control - the tongue with no self discipline – will so work against us that we stand the real possibility of destroying ourselves totally. The tongue left to itself will put “stains” upon our whole body. It will take us on a downward path that leads to hell. That is very serious language, but that is what James is warning us about here. If we do not “get to grips” with the things we say, we will not only destroy others (they will be shocked when they hear we are Christians), but we will also destroy ourselves.

How can we stop this downward, “hell-bent” trend? **GOD!** Without Him we cannot change. With Him we cannot remain the same!

Yes, we have to have help from above. Without the touch of God in our heart we will continue to speak that which is “by nature” and that way is heading towards hell. The tongue – just a little part of the body – but how dangerous it can be.

Let us take James’ teaching to us very seriously and discipline ourselves (through the enabling of the Holy Spirit) to speak that which is edifying.

Some Scriptures to meditate on:

Psalm 34:13: – **“Keep your tongue from evil** (“bad, adversity, affliction, calamity, mischief” – Strong’s), **and your lips from speaking guile** (“to deceive, beguile by promising one thing and doing another” – Wilson’s).”

Proverbs 13:2-3: – **“A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors** (“deceivers, treacherous dealers” – Young’s) **shall eat violence. He that keeps his mouth keeps his life: but he that opens wide his lips shall have destruction** (“downfall, ruin” – Young’s; “a breaking in pieces” – Wilson’s).”

Proverbs 21:23: – **“Whoso keeps his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles** (“distresses; an enemy that distresses or troubles” – Wilson’s).” (Notice the plurality of the last word – troubles).

James 1:26: – **“If any man among you seems to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is vain** (“empty, useless”).”

1 Peter 3:10: – **“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain** (“to

abstain - from action; forbear; to check with a bridle” – Collins) **his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile** (“craft, deceit, subtility” – Strong’s).”

Loving life and seeing good days are all to do with the way we use our tongue. It goes even beyond that, for: **“Death and life are in the power** (“ability, agency, dominion” – Wilson’s) **of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof”** (Proverbs 18:21).

Let us make sure our tongue is being used to create and maintain life – both toward ourself, as well as others. To do this effectively the tongue must be disciplined!

Part Three:

THE TONGUE IS A REBEL!

We continue our study of James Three on the all-important subject of the tongue. Outside of the Lordship of Jesus Christ ruling over us, it is impossible to tame the tongue. All around us is evidence of uncontrolled tongues! People everywhere have been hurt, maimed, ruined and even died as a result of words spoken from the mouths of undisciplined men and women. If only we realised the effects our words have upon others! How we need to speak those things that do edify, rather than that which does destroy.

Verse 7: “For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed of mankind”: (Collins gives us the meaning of “tame” as “changed by man from a naturally wild state into a tractable (‘easily controlled or persuaded’), domesticated, or cultivated condition; to break the spirit of, subdue or curb.”)

Man is able to do that with all kinds of creatures – he tames them to do incredible feats. Television, films and circuses are forever showing to us the feats of animals taken from the wilds, but now tamed and trained to do wonders. Man loves harnessing others! But himself? There is a little part of him he cannot tame . . . Let the Bible speak:

Verse 8: “But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly (“unrestrained” – Young’s; “disposed to disobedience or indiscipline” – Collins) **evil, full of deadly** (“death-bearing, fatal” – Strong’s) **poison** (“venom” – Young’s).”

The seriousness of our study is borne out by the fact that the tongue of man affects his life in the same way a bit in a horse’s mouth affects the direction of a horse, and a rudder on a ship determines where the ship ends up. This brings home to us the point that without Jesus Christ in our life it is impossible for us to tame the tongue. We, in our own strength, are unable to change the direction our tongue is taking us. The Bible tells us the tongue is set on a course that leads to hell! (James 3:6). On this point alone we can see that without God in our life we are doomed to destruction.

The positive side of this Lesson is that God has offered Himself to us in the Person of Christ to take away “the deadly poison” out of our tongues (by cleansing our hearts, **“for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”** – Matthew 12:34). **Jesus came to TAME US, and to enable us to control our tongue.** Through controlling our tongue He is able to be glorified in our whole body (James 3:2).

We do not like to admit that we can be guilty of spreading poison with our lips. But it is true. The Bible shares other Verses which confirm what James tells us (when evil prevails):

“Rescue me, O Lord, from the evil men; protect (“to keep in a safe place; to guard or secure from enemies, dangers” – Wilson’s) **me from men of violence, who devise evil plans in their hearts and stir up war every day. They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent’s; the poison of vipers is on their lips. Selah”** (Psalm 140:1-3, NIV).

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, described those outside of God as follows:- **“Their throat is an open sepulchre** (“burial-place” – Bullinger’s); **with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps** (“kind of viper”) **is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery** (“1. intense unhappiness, discomfort, or suffering; wretchedness” – Collins) **are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes”** (Romans 3:13-18).

OUR SPEECH BETRAYS US:

For the Christian the aforementioned Scriptures should be describing our past and not our present. At all times we must guard our lips and bring glory to God.

When Simon Peter denied his Lord three times just before Jesus went to the Cross, it was his tongue - his speech - which let him down. On being questioned on whether or not he was a disciple of Jesus, he covered up by telling lies. On the third occasion those who heard Peter’s denial of Christ, said: “Surely you are also one of them (a disciple of Jesus); for your speech betrays you” (Matthew 26:69-75). His Galilean accent gave him away. Peter could not handle this pressure and exploded into a flurry of cursing and swearing, declaring **“I do not know the man!”** (Mark 14:66-72).

Every Christian goes through similar circumstances to that of Peter. What will we do when the pressure comes on us? . . . When we discover we are the only Christian in the crowd? Will we deny our Lord? Will we show forth an unbridled tongue, or will we guard our lips?

IN THE MIDST OF EVIL DAVID PRAISED GOD:

The Psalmist David often found himself among evil men. Psalm 57 is an example: **“My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword”** (Verse 4).

Unlike Peter, David lifted himself to God with a tremendous confession and exaltation of the Lord his God:

“Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth. They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah. My heart is fixed (“prepared, set up, established” – Young’s), **O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise . . . I will praise You, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto You among the nations . . .”** (Psalm 57:4-11).

The attitudes of these two men under pressure and persecution of sinful men were so different. Peter wilted, denied his Lord and finished up swearing and cursing. David lifts his standard in God and determines to praise the Lord **“among the people”** and **“among the nations.”** David’s confession was that of a man “tamed by his Lord”

while Peter's was that of a man struggling and afraid to uphold his testimony among sinners.

Christian friend, if we do not allow Jesus Christ to be Lord of our tongue, then we will fall into the same trap as Simon Peter. God has called us to be like David and use our tongue to praise and glorify God, even among those who are not saved.

How wonderful it was that the Lord's mercy extended to Peter and he was forgiven. Through the mighty Holy Spirit filling his life, he became a great Apostle of the New Testament Church, going from strength to strength. We can do likewise when Jesus is Lord of the tongue.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. In the light of James 3:8, how can the tongue be controlled?
2. If you were Peter in the illustration given, what would you have done differently?
3. If you were David in Psalm 57, how would you have praised the Lord among the people?
4. What should Christians do who have problems with their tongue?

Part Four:

One does not need to delve into the Bible very far before you discover it has a lot to say about the tongue and that which comes forth out of our lips. These studies on the tongue from James Chapter Three will only reveal but a few of the Scriptures and so a further search in your own time will prove to be very beneficial. The books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Isaiah have quite a lot to tell us about what comes out of our lips. I list an example from each just to give you a quick insight:

Job:

In the first two chapters of Job we read of the terrible series of events that happened to him. He lost his oxen, asses, servants, sheep, more servants, camels, yet more servants, his own sons and daughters, their house (most likely provided by Job), and then his wife turned on him, telling him to ***"curse God, and die."***

What was Job's response? Job, the Bible tells us, was ***"perfect and upright, and one that feared"*** ("reverenced") ***God, and turned aside from evil"*** (Job 1:1). He was the greatest of all the men of the east (Job 1:3). Now, as his very own wife stands before him, ridiculing his integrity (she was speaking out of re-action and hurt), we have recorded this amazing statement: ***"In all this did not Job sin with his lips"*** (Job 2:10). Here we see a true example of James 3:2. God was right! Job was a perfect man – he did not sin with his lips! Nor did he charge God foolishly (Job 1:22).

Psalms: A Prayer.

"Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue" (Psalm

120:2).

“Set a watch (“guard”), O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psalm 141:3).

Proverbs:

“He that hides hatred with lying lips, and he that utters a slander (“evil account or report” – Young’s; “any false or defamatory words spoken about a person” – Collins), is a fool. In the multitude of words there wants no sin: but he that refrains (“keeps back,” – Young’s; “to abstain from action; forbear; to check with a bridle” – Collins) his lips is wise. The tongue of the just (“righteous”) is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth. The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom” (Proverbs 10:18-21).

Isaiah:

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts (“warfare, service” – Young’s): the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of Him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim’s (“a member of the highest order of angels in the celestial hierarchies; fiery six-winged beings attendant upon the Lord Jehovah” – Collins) unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity (“perversity” – Young’s) is taken away, and your sin purged (“to be covered, pardoned” – Young’s). **Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6:3-8).**

The emphasis placed upon our lips is very large. What a great challenge the above Verses present to us, teaching us that it is possible to live with our tongue in control.

THE SNARE OF BEING DOUBLE-TONGUED:

As we continue now in James Three, we discover the battle that many Christians have in being consistent in the things we say. Our last Lesson told us the tongue cannot be tamed by man; that it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. This has created all kinds of problems for Christians!

Verse 9: “*Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith* (“with it”) *curse* (“to wish evil to” – Bullinger’s) *we men, who are made after the similitude* (“likeness, comparison”) *of God.*”

Verse 10: “*Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.*”

Now that we have become Christians we have yielded our life over to God. As we progress on in the things of the Lord, we often find that our tongue wants to revert back to its old nasty way. It does not want to come under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It does not like being disciplined. It has been our means of protection, defence and attack for so long it likes to “reserve its right” for “special” occasions. So we become double-tongued just like James is saying: we bless God and we curse men. We

“sweet-talk” God and we slander men. That is not the Christian way. A double-tongued person is disqualified from church leadership according to 1 Timothy 3:8.

WE MUST BE CONSISTENT:

There has to come a stable consistency in our Christian walk and it shall be declared by the fruit of our lips. Putting it another way, our tongue will show by its words that we are truly “under new ownership and management.” Let me remind you again of the words of Jesus: **“For by your words you shall be justified** (“being righteous and guiltless”), **and by your words you shall be condemned** (“pronounce judgment against yourself” – Bullinger’s)” (Matthew 12:37).

Going back to Job, we see he had his life together. He was consistent no matter what circumstances he faced. Out of his mouth came blessing. Job’s wife, however, even though she was the wife of the greatest and most perfect man of the east and lived in the godly environment his influence created, had not the same commitment and devotion to God. When the trials and pressures of life came against her family, she could not control her anger against God, for she thought (like so many do today) that God had let them down in their hour of need. Her tongue exposed the condition of her heart. She wanted her husband to **“curse God, and die.”** What anguish that statement must have brought Job, but he was not moved; his heart was fixed, trusting in his Lord. He did not utter foolish words. He did not re-act out of hurt or anger over his great loss. Rather he blessed God by worshipping Him (Job 1:20-22). Behold the perfect man!

The Prophet Isaiah came into a beautiful walk and relationship with God after he allowed God to do a cleansing work in his lips. Before that experience of cleansing there was an unwillingness on Isaiah’s part to yield totally to God’s will. A vision of the Lord and hearing His voice brought great conviction of the state of his own mouth. How willing God was to cleanse away that guilt and condemnation – the very moment Isaiah cried out to Him under great conviction of sin.

Isaiah’s whole life was changed, cleansed and forgiven just as soon as he had allowed God to touch his mouth and lips. The result of this cleansing of lips was that Isaiah responded to the call of God by saying, **“Here am I; send me.”** Was he accepted? Most certainly, Yes! God said, **“Go, and tell . . .”** What a great prophet Isaiah became.

IT DOES MATTER WHAT WE SAY:

Too many of us are too casual about our words. It does matter what we say. We represent God on this earth – and people are watching and listening to us all the time.

We make a promise to someone to meet them at such and such a time, then turn up late, or not at all. That is not good for a Christian. We promise with our mouth to do a certain job for a certain person, but we never get around to doing it. That is not good for a Christian. We offer our service to help out in the Lord’s work (and church work), but after two or three times, we don’t turn up any more. No explanation is given – we just don’t turn up. That is not good for a Christian.

When we make promises with our mouth we are committed before God to fulfilling that promise. “That which is gone out of your lips you shall keep and perform” (see Deuteronomy 23:21-23).

Your word should never have to be doubted. Each Christian should be a person of their word. What they promise should be kept.

God knows the heart – **“out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”** (Matthew 12:34).

When we bless God and curse men, it is because our heart has not come to that place of pleasing God in all things. Our speech will betray us every time. Let us be careful to ask God to: **“Set a watch before my mouth and to keep the door of my lips”** (Psalm 141:3).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How difficult do you think it would have been for Job to not sin with his lips?
2. How would you have handled the re-action of Job’s wife?
3. Do you think Isaiah’s experience of having his lips cleansed is a key for people answering the call of God today?
4. How can we stop blessing God and cursing men out of the same mouth?
5. What are you like at keeping your promise?
6. Are you guilty of not keeping your word?
7. What do you need to do to make good a broken promise?

Part Five:

We continue our study of the tongue by again looking at the inconsistency of it, even after we have become Christians. Unless the tongue is controlled we will be hypocrites, “for out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing” (James 3:9-10. See also Psalm 62:3-4). Blessing and cursing – life and death! The Scriptures tell us so: **“Death and life are in the power of the tongue!”** (Proverbs 18:21).

With our mouth we have the power to create or destroy! To give life or bring death! Many thousands of people have died as a result of being cursed. Cultures worldwide have “witch-doctors” or people similar who are able to pronounce words over people to make them do as they are told, or else they will die. Curses upon people are very real in the witchcraft and Satanic realms. **The devil knows there is power in spoken words - don’t you think it is time we discovered the power we have to bless, to build up, to create better environments through the words we speak?** Praise the Lord, Yes!

WE MUST BRIDLE THE TONGUE:

Before we move on in James Three, let me take you back quickly to James 1:26 where we read: **“If any man among you seem to be religious** (“the zealous and diligent performer of the outward service of God” – Bullinger’s), **and bridles not his tongue, but deceives** (“to delude with false statements” – Bullinger’s) **his own heart, this man’s**

religion is vain (“foolish, useless, empty”).”

It matters not how great we may become in the things of God; if we do not bridle – control our tongue – we are only deceiving ourselves. Our Christianity is in vain! So we must look at the things we speak forth out of our mouth very seriously. It is quite wrong for us to curse our fellow man – he is made in the image of God! We have done this in the past and, unfortunately we have even done it as Christians – against those who also are Christians! (Ecclesiastes 7:22). How true it has been at times to “Bless God like little angels on Sundays, and curse men like devils on Mondays.” James tells us this has to stop! Our tongue is destroying us! How we need to have the experience Isaiah had (see last Lesson, Isaiah 6), where God touched his lips with a live coal off His altar. That altar altered him!

Verse 11: “Does a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?”

Could you imagine a public drinking tap being in demand if when you drank from it you didn’t know what would come out? If one time you got fresh water, another time salt water, another time stagnant mud water . . . you wouldn’t want to drink there. In the same way people judge us by our words. If sometimes we are joyfully positive about Jesus Christ, but at other times we are woefully negative, murmuring, complaining and criticizing people, our testimony becomes suspect. It destroys faith in what we are seeking to uphold. And in this case it is Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God! People don’t want to be a part of it because of what we say with an unbridled tongue.

WE REAP WHAT WE SOW, or GATHER WHAT WE PLANT:

The answer to the question asked in Verse 11 is simply “No.” In natural things you cannot have a pure and an impure mix. It is likewise the same in spiritual things. So let us be consistent.

Verse 12: “Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.”

In the natural kingdom you get what you plant; you reap what you sow. You do not plant an orange seed and expect to produce apples. You do not plant a fig tree and expect to pick ripened berries from it. You get figs from fig trees, oranges from orange trees, apples from apple trees.

When God plants the seed of the Word into our hearts, He expects a harvest of the fruit of that Word. That harvest is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-26). The unbridled tongue is a part of the old life and does not belong in the new.

An unbridled tongue affects our spirit!

“A **wholesome** (“healing; sound” – Wilson’s) **tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness** (“1. deliberately deviating from what is regarded as normal, good or proper. 2. persistently holding to what is wrong. 3. wayward, contrary, obstinate, cantankerous” – Collins) **therein is a breach** (“fracture, figuratively ruin: breaking, hurt” – Strong’s) **in the spirit**” (Proverbs 15:4).

It causes us to fall:

“**For Jerusalem** (“possession of peace” and “double peace”) **is ruined** (“stumbled,

decayed, fallen, cast down, overthrown, weakened”), **and Judah** (“he shall be praised”) **is fallen** (“cast down, overthrown”): **because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of His glory**” (Isaiah 3:8).

When we consider that Jerusalem is a type of the Christian Church and Judah represents the praising Church, we can see that the tongue can play a significant role in causing Christians to fall from grace.

No wonder the Psalmist David declared: **“I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me”** (Psalm 39:1).

David knew the principles recorded in the Proverbs:

“. . . the mouth of the upright shall deliver them” (Proverbs 12:6).

“He that keeps his mouth keeps his life” (Proverbs 13:3).

“Whoso keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles” (Proverbs 21:23).

SHOW BY EXAMPLE AND WISDOM:

Verse 13: **“Who is a wise** (“wise i.e. clever, skilled, skilful, especially one who has natural abilities, as opposed to one who owes all to teaching” – Bullinger’s) **man and endued with knowledge** (“to fix one’s mind upon, i.e. to understand, to know how to do anything, to know well, to have knowledge” – Bullinger’s) **among you? let him show out of a good conversation** (“behaviour” – Strong’s) **his works with meekness** (“enduring all things with an even temper, tender free from haughty self-sufficiency, tender of spirit in bearing with others” – Bullinger’s) **of wisdom** (“wisdom, cleverness, skill, etc.; a right application of knowledge; wisdom regarded as residing in the mind” – Bullinger’s).”

For the Christian to control his tongue there are some necessary ingredients we have to instil into our life. They are:-

1. Wisdom.
2. Enduement of knowledge.
3. Good conduct (actions).
4. Meekness borne out of wisdom.
 - Wisdom is gained through prayer commitment and having a teachable spirit (James 1:5-6).
 - Enduement of knowledge is gained as we fix our mind upon God’s Word and way, and as we give ourselves to understanding (Proverbs 2:1-12). The result of this is that we are delivered **“from the man that speaks froward** (“perverse, perverted” – Young’s) **things”** . . . from **“the strange woman, even from the stranger who flatters** (“to smooth the tongue or lips; to flatter, to deceive” – Wilson’s) **with her words”** (Proverbs 2:12,16).
 - Good conduct comes as wisdom and knowledge are worked into us. The more wise and knowledgeable we become, the more our speech and actions will glorify God. When people can see good and genuine actions

in our lives, they will take a lot more notice of what we say. Our words then say “Amen” to our life-style!

- Meekness with wisdom shows itself in our dealings with others, especially those we find difficult. Through meekness we can restore those who have fallen in a fault (Galatians 6:1). We are able to identify where they are at and minister accordingly. Meekness of wisdom keeps a firm guard on our tongue so that we watch the things we say with great care.

Yes, the tongue is a great cause for many problems. Naturally speaking, it cannot be tamed. But through the help and grace of God we are able to face up to this little traitor of humanity, bring it into discipline by the things mentioned in this study – so much so that the Lord’s name is magnified and redeemed man is perfected in word and deed!

Why not finish this Lesson by declaring with the voice of thanksgiving unto God:

***“O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You: my soul thirsts
for You in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
I have seen You in the sanctuary and beheld Your power and
Your glory.
Because Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify You.
I will praise You as long as I live, and in Your name I will lift up
my hands
My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise You.
On my bed I remember You;
I think of You through the watches of the night.
Because You are my help,
I sing in the shadow of Your wings.
My soul clings to You;
Your right hand upholds me”*** (Psalm 63:1-8, NIV).

God bless you.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you know of any case where someone has been affected by a curse?
2. Do you know how to break a curse over anyone’s life?
3. How can we become more consistent in our Christian life and speech?
4. How important is it to develop wisdom in our life?

5. What other things (beside wisdom) help us to control our tongue?
6. Have these Lessons challenged you to control your tongue more?

Part Six:

It is my prayer that you are finding these Lessons helpful in your ongoing Christian walk. James is practical and is not afraid to speak out on matters that need to be faced. The way we use our tongue – or, we let our tongue use us! – **IS MOST IMPORTANT. THAT IS VERY EVIDENT BY THE AMOUNT OF SPACE GOD GIVES TO IT IN HIS WORD!**

FACING THE INNER CONFLICT:

As we move on to the next Verses of James Three, we see the necessity of having a clean, right heart. Jesus told us that it is **“out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”** (Matthew 12:34). What is He saying? He is telling us that what is in our heart is going to express itself through our mouth. Our words declare to others the condition of our heart!

Verse 14: **“But if you have bitter** (“pointed, sharp” – Young’s; “caused by strong unrelenting hostility or resentment; cutting, sarcastic” – Collins) **envying** (“jealousy” – Young’s; “a feeling of grudging or somewhat admiring discontent aroused by the possessions, achievements, or qualities of another” – Collins) **and strife** (“1. angry or violent struggle; conflict. 2. rivalry or contention, especially of a bitter kind. 3. trouble or discord of any kind” – Collins) **in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.”**

The Living Bible says it this way:

“If you are wise, live a life of steady goodness, so that only good deeds will pour forth. And if you don’t brag about them, then you will be truly wise! And by all means don’t brag about being wise and good if you are bitter and jealous and selfish; that is the worst sort of lie” (James 3:13-14, TLB).

The words of our mouth determine how much we are walking in truth. If we go about bragging about how good and “spiritual” we are, and, at the same time are known to be in conflict with our brothers and sisters, then we are turning the Christian way into a lie. The heart has to be dealt with – cleansed and changed through vital contact with the Living God Who said: **“I am He Who searches the reins and hearts . . .”** (Revelation 2:23).

He also told us: **“The heart is deceitful** (“crooked, slippery” – Young’s) **above all things, and desperately wicked** (“to be sick unto death” – Wilson’s): **who can know it? I the Lord search** (“investigate, examine closely”) **the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings”** (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

We Christians have to really work at allowing God to get a hold of the reins of our heart. Otherwise our heart will betray us. Our mouth will “run away” with itself as it discharges that which lies within. In all honesty we must face up to the truth.

- Do we have bitterness, envy and strife in our heart toward anyone else?
- If we have, why won't we let **forgiveness, love and grace** work in our heart to show that **JESUS NOW LIVES INSIDE US?**
- We hold the "key" to these things – that's why we must release them in Jesus' name! Give the "problem" to Jesus – then let the proof of that giving be demonstrated in the releasing of that person who has "bugged" you through **FORGIVENESS**. If we do not, and will not get our relationships right, then we find ourselves actually working against the Kingdom of God! Now we are Christians we must learn to solve our "problems" the Jesus way rather than man's way and man's wisdom.

Verse 15: *"This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly* ("of the natural earth"), *sensual* ("man as he is by nature, and is destitute of the Holy Spirit, therefore guilty of resisting the Holy Spirit" – Bullinger's), *devilish* ("demoniacal; applied to evil spirits which work to destroy us").

Verse 16: *"For where envying and strife is, there is confusion* ("a being in a state of disorder or instability, hence, disorder, anarchy, tumult" – Bullinger's) *and every evil work."*

(See also 1 Corinthians 3:3).

James is very strong about the need for right relationships. If God's people are not living right with one another, we are living according to a wisdom that is not of God!

There is a wisdom that is not of God. It is earthly, sensual, devilish! Paul told us it was the wisdom of the world that made the rulers crucify Jesus! (1 Corinthians 2:6-8).

He is showing us that man's wisdom works against the wisdom of God! **Christians cannot justify themselves by making excuses for wrong relationships.** Bitterness, envying and strife in our hearts has to be dealt with according to God's wisdom, which is love and forgiveness.

You might ask, "How do I know I have forgiven someone?" My answer is: "By the fact that when that person is spoken about, in your heart there will be no bad re-action and therefore you will not speak negatively or critically against them." Out of the abundance of your heart your mouth does speak. **If it's no longer in your heart then it will be no longer on your lips.**

Let me remind you again of the words of Ephesians 4:29-32 . . . ***"Let no corrupt* ("bad, putrid, rotten" – Young's) *communication* ("word") *proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath* ("the mind, the spirit that is breathed out, an intense passion of the mind" – Bullinger's – *"the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God"* – James 1:20), *and anger* ("anger with the desire of revenge"), *and clamour* ("a crying out, screaming, shouting" – Bullinger's), *and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice* ("evil, badness, including every form of evil – physical and moral" – Bullinger's): ***And be ye kind*** ("useful, beneficial, good, gentle; actively beneficent in spite of ingratitude" – Bullinger's) ***one to another, tenderhearted*** ("compassionate, merciful"), ***forgiving*** ("to be gracious to; to pardon, forgive graciously" – Bullinger's) ***one another, even as God for Christ's sake has*****

forgiven you.”

The Word of God also instructs us to:– **“Follow peace** (“unity, rest which reveals the absence or end of strife; a state of untroubled, undisturbed well-being. That peace which is the result of forgiveness enjoyed” – Bullinger’s) **with all men, and holiness** (“sanctification, essential purity” – Bullinger’s), **without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble** (“to excite tumult in; to disturb, annoy” – Bullinger’s) **you, and thereby many be defiled** (“stained, tinged, coloured” – Young’s)” (Hebrews 12:14-15).

OUR MOUTH IS THE VOICE OF THE HEART:

We see from the aforementioned Scriptures that the heart and the mouth are directly linked. The condition of our heart determines the way we speak – it cannot be hidden. When we find ourselves under pressure or on the end of a wrong deal, our mouth will reveal the type of person we really are. We have the choice of living according to man’s earthly wisdom or we can avail ourselves of the wisdom that comes from above – the wisdom of God. The wisdom of man tells us it is all right not to forgive, but the wisdom of God says we must forgive every one their trespasses. If we do not, then we tie God’s hands **and He is unable to forgive us!** (See Mark 11:25-26).

When Jesus Christ is seated as Lord of our heart then our mouth will speak forth those things that glorify God, as well as build up people.

Bitterness, envy, strife, lying, earthly wisdom, confusion and every evil work are the opposite to all that Jesus stands for. So they have to go. As long as those things remain in us we will be like that fountain of water that sends out fresh sometimes, salt sometimes, and stagnant mud-water sometimes. God is not the author of confusion!

All these conditions of heart will affect the way we talk. Let’s deal with them and fulfil the lot of the perfect man according to James . . . **“If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body”** (James 3:2).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you know of other Scriptures that link the heart with the words we speak?
2. Can you tell of the blessings of righting wrong relationships?
3. What causes confusion and every evil work?
4. How, do you think, does God try the reins of our heart and bring us into harmony with His way?
5. How do we “put away” things like bitterness and wrath?
6. What is the difference between earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom?

Part Seven:

In dealing with matters of the tongue, James has shown us how important it is to have

it harnessed – brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ – so that we shall be perfect, complete and wholly mature people in the Kingdom of God.

If we do not live with our tongue under discipline we will get deceived through envy and strife in our heart. Natural wisdom “justifies” these things, but there is no place for wrong relationships in the Christian Church. All envy, strife and wrong relationships have to do with the things we say with our tongue. Oh, how we need the wisdom of God to live right before Him!

HEAVENLY WISDOM:

Verse 17: *“But the wisdom* (‘cleverness, skill, etc.; a right application of knowledge; wisdom regarded as residing in the mind’ – Bullinger’s) *that is from above is first pure* (‘chaste, clean, not contaminated by anything . . . pure from every defilement’ – Bullinger’s), *then peaceable* (‘peaceful, healthful, wholesome’ – Bullinger’s), *gentle* (‘yielding, pliable; not insisting on the letter of the law, considerate, forbearing, kind, fair’), *and easy to be intreated* (‘easily persuaded’ – Young’s), *full of mercy* (‘active compassion, the desire of relieving the miserable’ – Bullinger’s) *and good fruits, without partiality* (‘without wrangling’ – please see notes on James Chapter 2 for more on the subject of partiality, respecting of persons, prejudices, etc.), *and without hypocrisy* (‘pretending to be what one is not’ – Collins).”

All the things mentioned in this Verse are the outworking of the wisdom that comes from God. If you want to, you can give yourself a little test to see whether or not you have God’s wisdom in your life. Ask yourself:

Are you:

- pure?
- peaceable?
- gentle?
- easy to get along with when others require information or things from you?
- full of mercy?
- full of good fruits?
- without partiality; not-prejudiced nor a respecter of persons?
- without hypocrisy?

Are you a genuine person?

Collins Dictionary gives the meaning of “wisdom” as being “the ability or result of an ability to think and act utilizing knowledge, experience, understanding, common sense, and insight.”

Wisdom is more than having knowledge. It involves the outworking of the character of God that is in us by the Holy Spirit and is manifested by the way we speak and act.

For those who are newer in the Lord, you will be wondering how you will ever be able

to get the wisdom of God in your life. The Word of God has such a lot to say about wisdom - so much so that it will never be exhausted on the subject.

WHERE DOES ONE START?

I will let the Scriptures speak:

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10). See also Proverbs 15:33.

“And unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28).

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do His commandments: . . .” (Psalm 111:10).

Doing (out of a heart of love for Jesus) **what the Word says is wisdom.** That is why James Three talks so much about the ruling of the tongue. We must **DO** it! Otherwise our tongue will wreck us!

The Book of Proverbs is all about learning wisdom, knowing wisdom, receiving wisdom, etc. (See Proverbs 1:1-7). You are encouraged to become familiar with the Proverbs – they are full of treasures for living in the wisdom of God.

Other Scriptures:

“Keep therefore and do them (the commandments of God); ***for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, who shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people”*** (Deuteronomy 4:6).

Redeeming our time has to do with wisdom:

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply (“to cause to go in” – Young’s) ***our hearts unto wisdom”*** (Psalm 90:12).

“See then that you walk circumspectly (“accurately, pointedly” – Young’s), ***not as fools, but as WISE, redeeming*** (“buying up”) ***the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”*** (Ephesians 5:15-17).

Bullinger’s meaning of the word “understanding” from this Verse is: “to bring together, as foes in battle; to collect together the single features of an object into a whole; hence, to collect, apprehend, grasp, comprehend, understand, to be earnestly occupied with the object, to reflect morally, ponder, lay to heart (implying mental activity, knowledge acquired by reflection and consideration).”

We certainly need to take a lot of time in seeking to understand the things of God. None of us spend enough time meditating on being “earnestly occupied with the objects” of what the Bible declares to be the will of God!

Let us ask ourselves afresh: “How well do we understand the will of God for our lives as we rapidly approach the coming of the Lord?”

Are we ready?

Are we doing what He has called us to do?

We must make time and take the time to get an understanding of what the will of the Lord is for our life – that is wisdom! To develop all the “graces” written in James 3:17 - that is wisdom!

Living life daily as openly and honestly as possible before God and man – that is wisdom!

“Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of My mouth. Forsake her not (wisdom), and she shall preserve you: love her (wisdom), and she shall keep you. Wisdom is the principal (“first in importance” – Collins) thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all your getting get understanding. Exalt her (wisdom), and she (wisdom) shall promote (“to raise to a higher rank” – Collins) you: she (wisdom) shall bring you to honour, when you do embrace (“to clasp or cleave to” – Young’s) her. She (wisdom) shall give to your head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she (wisdom) deliver to you” (Proverbs 4:5-9).

“Buy (“acquire, obtain” – Young’s) wisdom!” (Proverbs 23:23).

These Verses show us something of the importance of getting wisdom – that wisdom which comes from above.

Verse 18: “And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

The fruit of righteousness is “the doing or being what is just and right; the character and acts of a man commanded by and approved of God, in virtue of which the man corresponds with Him and His will as His ideal and standard; it signifies the sum total of all that God commands and approves . . .” (Bullinger’s).

In the Kingdom of God you and I adjust to God’s standards – He does not adjust or compromise to ours. We are called to abide by the teachings of His Word and, in James Three, we have been challenged to bridle our tongue as well as to make sure we get a grip of the wisdom that is from above, rather than the earthly wisdom that excuses us for living in wrong relationship with our fellow Christians.

Verse 18 sums up the Chapter by telling us of a great principle in life: we have to sow if we want to reap. Exactly what we sow is what we will reap. With our tongue we have in the past sown so much discord and heartache – and we have reaped accordingly. By controlling our tongue (which can only be done through a right relationship with Jesus and His Church) and getting wisdom as a way of daily living, then we can be quite certain that in the days ahead we shall see that peace of God working in every part of our life to the glory of His name.

Let us really take to heart the message of this Chapter and bless the Lord for the opportunity and privilege that is ours to represent Him on earth today. Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How much, do you think, is the tongue linked to wisdom?

2. How can you control your tongue?
3. How can you get more wisdom from above?
4. What areas of wisdom (as recorded in Verse 17) do you think are the hardest to obtain in your life?
5. What is the fruit of righteousness?
6. What do you understand of the will of God for your life?
7. How important is it to understand God's will for your life?

CHAPTER FOUR

Part One:

THE BATTLE WITHIN:

As we move into the Fourth Chapter of James we are immediately confronted with a very real battle area that Christians contend with – the battle within ourselves.

Verse 1: *“From where* (“from what place”) *come wars* (“battles, strivings, contentions” – Young’s) *and fightings* (“brawlings, controversies”) *among you? Come they not hence* (“from here”), *even of your lusts* (“pleasures, sweetnesses, gratification’s, enjoyments”) *that war* (“to wage war”) *in your members* (“a member, limb, part of the body”)?”

The inner conflict that we face as Christians becomes like a war breaking out when we make decisions to come under the Lordship of Jesus. There is a very natural part of us – the flesh – that does not like to be denied or disciplined. If we do not face-up to this conflict then our Christian walk will be weak. The flesh will rule over the spirit. Our commitment will waver because we grow tired of fighting – and losing!

The Amplified Bible states this Verse as follows:

“What leads to strife (discord and feuds) and how do conflicts (quarrels and fightings) originate among you? Do they not arise from your sensual desires that are ever warring in your bodily members?”

So often we can feel that other people are the cause of discords and feuds, etc., but James clearly tells us that it is not the outer conflicts that “spark” us, but rather the inner conflicts inside of us. If I am “out of sorts” with myself, it is very likely that my moods will show it. That makes me vulnerable to re-acting negatively to other people. On the positive side, when my spirit is ruling my bodily desires, then I find that I am able to control the outer relationships. In short, my biggest enemies are **not** those **without** me, but the battles that are **within me** – in my mind, emotions, bodily desires. **What a difference it makes when we know we have the victory over our self!** Praise the Lord!

Notice the meaning of the word “lust” in this Verse: “pleasure, gratification, enjoyment” (Bullinger’s). We must watch that we are not caught up into lustful living just because we desire to have a “good time” in life. God wants us to have a great life – and with much abundance – but its source must be from the Spirit and not the flesh. Otherwise we are putting our life into a war zone!

Verse 2: *“You lust* (“to fix the desire upon, to have the affections directed toward anything – of unlawful desires” – Bullinger’s), *and have not: you kill* (“envy, murder”) *and desire* (“are zealous”) *to have, and cannot obtain* (“acquire, attain one’s aim”): *you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not.”*

I like what the Amplified Bible says of this Verse:

“You are jealous and covet [what others have] and your desires go unfulfilled; [so] you become murderers. [To hate is to murder as far as your hearts are concerned.] (see 1 John 3:14-16). *You burn with envy and anger and are not able to obtain [the gratification, the contentment and the happiness that you seek], so you fight and war. You do not have because you do not ask.”*

Beloved, we must recognise these inner conflicts for what they are and realise that giving in to them does not bring the desired results we think they will. God has a far better way for us. But we need to seek Him and ask Him for His will to be done in us. This matter of asking God brings us to a very important question:

WHY DOES GOD NOT ANSWER ALL OUR PRAYERS?

Have you ever asked this question? Do you have any answers to it? James gives us a very valid reason why God doesn’t answer all our prayers:

Verse 3: *“You ask* (“to entreat, beg, supplicate; it implies a distinction in position and circumstances between the parties, and expresses a position from an inferior to a superior” - Bullinger’s), *and receive not, because you ask amiss* (“wrongly, badly, wickedly” – Bullinger’s), *that you may consume* (“waste”) *it upon your lusts* (same meaning as in Verse 1).”

God does not answer selfish prayers. If He did He would be helping us to destroy ourselves – and He doesn’t want that to happen.

God does not answer wrongly motivated prayers. Our lives are to be lived for His glory, not for the pleasures of our flesh. Look at Romans 8:1-14 and notice there is a clear difference between the flesh and the Spirit. That’s why we must be born again to enter the Kingdom of God. Being born again means our spirit comes alive unto God and we start to walk in newness of life. God hears and answers prayers that are prayed from our spirit, but never from the flesh.

God does not answer prayers that will promote wickedness or put down His own Kingdom. He does not bless that which is not of His will. He wants us to love Him far more than the world, the flesh and the devil (See 1 John 2:15-17).

It is right to pray for people and things that will build up and glorify God’s Kingdom. Jesus gave us right guidelines to praying aright (and not amiss!) in Matthew 6:6-15 and Luke 11:1-13.

Let us make sure that we know the difference between flesh and spirit, right and wrong, good and evil, peace and conflict, by having our life brought into “divine order” from within. **When we let Jesus Christ conquer our world within, we will then be able to conquer the world without and see the Kingdom of God firmly established more than ever before.**

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Can you name some of the things within us that cause wars to break out?
2. Is having a bad temper, or a lust problem, someone else's fault, or mine?
3. How can we conquer these inner conflicts?
4. Can you testify to gaining victories over some of these conflicts?
5. What should we ask God for, so we will not ask amiss?

Part Two:

James Four is quite direct in its teachings on why we do not get God's best for our lives. It exposes the truth of the lust of the flesh wanting to have "its" own way, rather than yielding to the Spirit. When the flesh rules us we live undisciplined lives!

SPIRITUAL ADULTERY:

To truly walk with God means decisions have to be made continually on what we allow ourselves to partake in and of. As Christians we have been called into Covenant relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. That means we have entered into a contract – an agreement – just like when we get married, we promise to be faithful and true always to the one we love. If that Covenant or promise is broken we become adulterers. It is the same in the Spirit – in a very real way Christians are spiritually "married" to Christ and we have promised to be faithful and true to Him always. To break our relationship of being faithful to God has very serious consequences. It is like committing adultery! Let's read now from the Scripture:

Verse 4: *"You adulterers and adulteresses* ("adultery" is "voluntary sexual intercourse between a married man or woman and partner other than the legal spouse" – Collins), *know ye not that the friendship* ("love, affection" – Bullinger's) *of the world is enmity* ("hatred, an adversary") *with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."*

Verse 5: *"Do you think that the Scripture* ("that which is written, the holy writings" – Bullinger's) *says in vain* ("to no purpose"), *the spirit* ("man's spirit") *that dwells* ("lives, abides") *in us lusts* ("longs for, desires earnestly") *to envy?* (This word "envy" is always used in a bad sense, e.g., jealousy of another's success, depreciation of his worth, envy of his excellence – envy led to the first murder: Genesis 4:1-17; Galatians 5:19-21)."

In the spiritual realm, what makes us an adulterer? The Bible gives the answer as being "friendship of the world"; that which takes us away from our "marriage" bond to Jesus. The world always appeals to and caters for the flesh. That's why it is so difficult for people who are materialistic in their thinking and living habits to enjoy the real victory of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever wondered why the great miracles and revivals of God often seem to be in the poor countries of the world?

James calls us adulterers because of the **soul's unfaithfulness to God**

“Worldliness is spiritual adultery. The world is that order of things about us, or that spirit within us, which is blind to the value and the reality of spiritual things. The worldly man is governed by the desires of the flesh or by the fashions and customs around him and refuses to acknowledge God’s right to rule. It is clear, then, that the world’s ways and its objectives are fundamentally at variance with the character of God and with His revealed will for His children. There are two friendships, friendship of God and friendship of the world. They are incompatible and irreconcilable and therefore we must choose which of these we will have. In the spiritual world our choice of friends determines our enemy. A man who desires to be the friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (quote from The New Bible Commentary).

LET THE TRUTH OF GOD’S WORD SPEAK!

If you turn to 1 John 2:15-17 you will read a real confirmation of James 4:

“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. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride (“arrogance”) of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides for ever.”

The word “lust” in Verse 16 is used exclusively of sinful desire, which corresponds to man’s depraved nature. It is a desire that attaches itself upon its object until it gets it. The flesh, being very selfish, is like that . . .

Finally, Verse 5 of James Four poses a very direct challenge: Don’t let the lusts of the flesh convince you that the Scripture does not really mean what it says. The Scriptures are true and we must make our life come into submission to the Lordship of Jesus. Otherwise we will be guilty of being spiritual adulterers, deceived by the lusts of our own flesh.

Let us live to be God’s friend and not His enemy! If we have broken our Covenant relationship with Jesus, then repentance is required; forgiveness will follow repentance.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why does this Verse 4 of James 4 call us adulterers and adulteresses?
2. What is friendship of the world?
3. Why cannot we be friends of the world?
4. Do you think God’s Word is being hard in these statements?
5. Does the Scripture mean what it says?

Part Three:

GRACE AND HUMILITY:

When we consider the statements of the Scripture, then look at our own lives, we cannot but wonder at the grace of God toward us. He surely loves us with a tremendous love, and desires so much that we grasp the truth of all He has done for us.

Even when we fail He is there with outstretched arms to take us back! How does this grace work for the Christian?

Verse 6: “But He (God) gives more grace. Wherefore He says, God resists (“sets Himself against or in opposition to” – Bullinger’s) **the proud** (“having too high an opinion of oneself, setting oneself above others; haughty, arrogant” – Collins), **but gives grace unto the humble** (“1. conscious of one’s failings, 2. unpretentious; lowly. 3. deferential or servile. 5. to lower in status” – Collins).”

God keeps giving us grace!

What is grace?

Bullinger’s gives us this meaning:

“a kind, affectionate, pleasing nature and inclining disposition, either in person or thing. Objectively it denotes personal gracefulness, a pleasing work, beauty of speech, etc. Subjectively it means an inclining towards, courteous or gracious disposition, friendly willingness; on the part of the giver of a favour, kindness, favour; on the part of the receiver, thanks.

The word denotes specially God’s grace and favour manifested towards mankind or to any individual, which, as a free act is no more hindered by sin than it is conditional upon works. It is the grace of God, because it denotes the relation assumed and maintained by God towards sinful man. It is joined with Christ, because it is manifested in and through Him.”

It comes from the Greek word “charis” meaning “grace, graciousness.”

Where would we be without the grace of God? It was there for us, when, as sinners, we cried out to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation: **“For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast”** (Ephesians 2:1-10).

It is still there for us as Christians in our times of going astray from God’s way. Although we don’t deserve God’s grace, He has made it available to us – on one condition: that we **HUMBLE** ourselves! Yes, God requires an acknowledgement from us of our need of Him. We can’t live without Him or His grace! But there is no grace to the proud. In fact God resists the proud! But He does give grace – wonderful grace – to those who acknowledge they’ve disobeyed His Word, humble themselves and ask His forgiveness. Praise the Lord! Let us never be too proud to come back to God when we’ve failed Him (for there are many times in life when we do fail Him).

James, in this Verse, was quoting from Proverbs 3:34: **“Surely He (God) scorns the scorers: but He (God) gives grace unto the lowly.”**

To “scorn” means: “1. open contempt or disdain for a person or thing; derision. 2. an object of contempt or derision” (Collins);

“To deride, or to mock anyone; a mocker, scoffer, scorners, i.e. a frivolous and impudent

person, who sets precepts and duties of religion, piety, and morals” (Wilson’s).

God sees to it that scorers reap what they sow! He gives to them what they give to others. But when humility is shown God pours in His grace!

The Amplified Bible renders James 4:6 this way:-

“But He gives us more and more grace [power of the Holy Spirit, to meet this evil tendency and all others fully]. That is why He says, God sets Himself against the proud and haughty, but gives grace [continually] to the lowly – those who are humble-minded [enough to receive it].”

GRACE IS NOT AN EXCUSE TO SIN:

The fact that God’s grace is available to us continually does not give us licence to go on a course in life of “sin and repent, sin and repent, etc.” because our hearts really want to walk the pathway of sin, but at the same time we don’t want to miss out on Heaven either. Grace flows to the truly repentant heart that humbles itself under the mighty hand of God. I’m sure that there are only a few people who have really known Jesus that want to sin wilfully like that. By far the majority of our failings are because we fail to keep our bodies and disciplines in obedience to God’s Word (See 1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

LET’S BE STRONG IN GRACE:

Paul exhorted Timothy to ***“be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”*** (2 Timothy 2:1-4). To do that would mean times of “hardness” (like that of a soldier), knowing we are in a battle for righteousness.

Think for a moment where the human race would be today if men and women did not find God’s grace in crucial times:

Noah (Genesis 6); **Joseph** (Genesis 39); **Moses** (Exodus 33); **Gideon** (Judges 6:17); **Hannah** (1 Samuel 1:18); **David** (1 Samuel 20:3); **Esther** (Esther 2:17 and 5:2); **Jesus** (Luke 2:40 and John 1:14-17); **the Apostles** (Acts 4:33), etc.

Praise God, **TODAY HE GIVES US MORE GRACE!**

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

Talk about the grace at work in the above-mentioned people.

1. What is the grace of God?
2. What does the grace of God do?
3. What does pride do to us?
4. How can we be strong in grace?

Part Four:

In our last Lesson we saw how the grace of God is poured out into the lives of those who humble themselves. As we come to this study we see how God’s Word gives us

keys to an overcoming life as a result of humility.

SUBMIT TO GOD:

Verse 7: “**Submit** (“to set in array under” – Young’s; “1. to yield oneself as to the will of another person – a superior person, etc. 2. to subject or to be voluntarily subjected to” – Collins) **yourselves therefore to God. Resist** (“to stand against, to set one’s self against, i.e. to withstand, oppose, resist, either in words, or deeds, or both” – Bullinger’s) **the devil** (“false accuser, slanderer” – Strong’s), **and he will flee** (“to run away quickly” – Collins) **from you.**”

Humility leads to submission!

We can check how humble we are by how submissive we are to God - and those He has placed over us in the church, at work, and at home. A proud person is not a submissive person. So we see here that the grace of God is poured out on those who humble themselves and submit themselves to God.

Please note, it is important that we take heed to the whole of James 4:7 and not just take a part out of context. For example, many people quote, “**Resist the devil, and he will flee from you**”; but we cannot see the devil flee from us until first **we have submitted ourselves to God . . . humbled ourselves before Him . . .** realizing that we have no strength of our own against the devil . . . we only stand in victory over Satan when we are truly submitted to God.

In light of the preceding Verses of this Chapter we see now that the Christian is in a warfare that is not only fleshly – the carnal nature fighting against the Spirit – but that behind it all, **stirring**, is the devil. But, from a position of being submitted to God, we can see a total victory over Satan. The Christian has no need at all to fear the devil while we walk submitted to God. Yet so many today live in fear, thinking they have an evil spirit in them, etc., when we should be aligning ourselves with the Word of God and experiencing His victory! Right within us – **NOW!**

We submit when we pray: “**Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven**” (Matthew 6:10). Jesus was submitted to the Father’s will, always seeking to please Him (John 8:29). Even at His greatest time of agony in the Garden of Gethsemane He submitted Himself to God (Matthew 26:29). Jesus is our Example to follow. Let us submit ourselves to Him at all times.

RESIST THE DEVIL:

When we have done as God has asked us and submitted to Him, we then have the right to resist the devil. **To resist means we do not let him cheat us out of what and who we are in Christ.** We recognise his tactics against us and stand for our rights. **We oppose him! We take authority over him! In God WE are the boss, not the devil!** If we do nothing Satan will push us around. But when we resist him in the name of Jesus Christ he has to flee away quickly. Hallelujah!

Christian – in today’s world we have to learn to be more God conscious than devil conscious! I’m not saying the devil does not exist – his signs and destructive works are everywhere. **But too often we give him more power than he has got.** At Calvary **JESUS STRIPPED SATAN OF HIS POWER!** He is a “toothless lion” who roars as loud **AS WE LET HIM!** (See 1 Peter 5:6-9 which is very similar to James 4:6-8; 1 John 3:8 and 4:4; Hebrews 2:14; Luke 10:17-29).

Satan only has as much power as the Christian lets him have. This may sound a little controversial but we need to know what power and authority we have in Jesus Christ over him. The devils are subject unto us in Jesus' name! (Luke 10:17-20). We let the devil "kick us around" far more than we need to. Resist him! Let him know we are under new management now! Once he was the boss, but now Jesus is! And we stand on that! Jesus cannot be conquered – so why should we?

Everywhere Jesus went and ministered, devils were cast out, the people were set free. It was the same with the early Church Apostles and ministers in the Book of Acts. It should be the same with us.

Know you have the victory! Know that **"GREATER IS HE WHO IS IN YOU than he that is in the world"** (1 John 4:4). Know that!

Know that Jesus has given you the Holy Spirit to speak the Word of God into any and every devilish situation – and see the devil flee. The Bible declares: **"Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil and he will FLEE from YOU!"**

In summing up our last two Lessons we see the sequence as follows:

1. Humility releases grace.
2. Humility causes us to voluntarily submit to God.
3. Submitting to God lifts us out of our natural weakness into God's supernatural strength.
4. God's strength is greater than the devil's. Therefore we can resist the devil and he must FLEE from us.
5. That allows us to get on with the job of doing God's will. Hallelujah!

In Jesus Christ **YOU ARE A CONQUEROR!**

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What is humility?
2. What is the difference between voluntary submission and enforced submission?
3. Is there any place in Christianity for enforced submission?
4. Do you think we give too much power to the devil?
5. How do we conquer Satan and his strategies, schemes and attacks against us?
6. How important is it to know what the Bible says on these subjects?

Part Five:

We continue our study of this very practical Book with a similar theme as our previous Lessons – learning to live close to God.

DRAWING NEAR TO GOD:

Verse 8: *“Draw near* (“to bring near, cause to approach”) *to God, and He will draw near* (“to move towards”) *to you. Cleanse* (“to make clean, clear” – Young’s; “1. to remove dirt, filth, etc., from. 2. to move guilt from. 3. to cure” – Collins) *your hands* (in the spiritual sense this is speaking of our actions and dealings with others), *you sinners* (“erring from the way or mark, erring from the divine law; sinful” – Bullinger’s); *and purify* (“to cleanse, make pure”) *your hearts you double minded* (“undecided”).”

When we follow the advice given in this Chapter we see that we can come out of a life of carnality and unfaithfulness into a clean, close relationship with God. When we humble ourselves and submit to God, the way is open for us to get close to God. This Verse shows us God’s desire to draw close to us – and He does so when we work on cleaning up our life. Sin separates us from the very presence of God, and this includes Christians too.

Our Lord does not turn a “blind eye” to sin. Rather, He has made it possible for every one of us to come out of all sin into His marvellous light. We come to God on His terms, not ours. The more we allow God to influence our life the more we will clean up our actions.

The Amplified Bible says:

“Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery]” (James 4:8).

“You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world] and breaking your marriage vow to God! Do you not know that being the world’s friend is being God’s enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God” (James 4:4, AMP).

These are very direct statements from the Word of God. It makes the choice very clear: we are either all-out for God, or we are half-hearted and double-minded in the world. We cannot be both. God says we make the choice. Let us make the choice that sees us faithful to the Lord and not spiritual adulterers!

TURNING FROM OUR SIN:

We also need to understand that sin is not referring only to the bad things in life, but sin is “erring from the divine law.” We may be living morally right, but spiritually wrong. That’s why we need to heed the teachings of this Chapter.

Verse 9: *“Be afflicted* (“to labour severely, be worn by labour; to be touched or affected with a sense of misery” – Bullinger’s), *and mourn* (“grieve, sorrow as for one dead”), *and weep* (“to lament, not only by shedding tears, but also by every outward expression of grief” – Bullinger’s): *let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness* (“dejection”).”

The Amplified Bible ties this Verse so beautifully into the preceding ones by saying:–
“[As you draw near to God] be deeply penitent and grieve, even weep [over your disloyalty]. Let your laughter be turned to grief and your mirth to dejection and heartfelt shame [for your sins].”

There is no cause for joy and rejoicing when we have sin in our lives!

James is speaking to Christians! We have been unfaithful and disloyal to God. As a result sin has come in and widened the gap between us and God. He is not as close as He should be! He is not as close as He longs to be! But we have to make the first move. We humble ourselves – then His grace flows! We submit to God – then the devil has to flee from us! We draw near to God - then He draws near to us! Then, as we see in Verse 10: **We humble ourselves (again!) – and the Lord shall lift us up!**

Verse 10: “Humble yourselves (“make yourselves low”) in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up.”

We humble ourselves in God’s sight . . . on His terms. Let me give you James 4:7-10 from the Living Bible, which puts this passage of teaching in a nutshell:

“So give yourselves humbly to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. And when you draw close to God, God will draw close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and let your hearts be filled with God alone to make them pure and true to Him. Let there be tears for the wrong things you have done. Let there be sorrow and sincere grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. Then when you realize your worthlessness before the Lord, He will lift you up, encourage and help you.”

The key word to walking right with God is “humility” - humbling ourselves before Him. It is not for us to point the finger and tell others what they should be doing, but to let the finger point at us in a challenge to “humble ourselves.” Even Jesus **“humbled Himself and became obedient unto death . . .”** (Philippians 2:5-12). How much more then, should we?

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Colossians 2:12-14, NIV).

“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8, KJV).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are the steps we take to draw near to God?
2. Does God want to draw near to us?
3. How do we deal with sin in our life?
4. What does humility mean?
5. What causes spiritual adultery?
6. How much does choice have to do with walking with God?
7. Has this Lesson caused you to think about how close to God you really are?

Encourage others to draw closer to God!

Part Six:

As we continue on through the Book of James we see how practical it is, as well as discovering how we are brought back to important matters. This Lesson is one of being reminded again of things touched on earlier in the book.

THE THINGS WE SPEAK:

Verse 11: *“Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaks evil* (“to speak downwards against, in a hostile sense” – Bullinger’s) *of his brother, and judges* (“to divide, to separate, to sift, to make a distinction” – Bullinger’s) *his brother, speaks evil of the law* (“that which is set up and recognized as a standard for the administration of justice” – Bullinger’s), *and judges the law: but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge.”*

After Chapter Three of James we would have thought that there would be no need to be reminded of matters of the tongue again! Obviously this is of major concern for **Christians** as James challenges us to stop speaking evil one of another. He goes on to tell us the importance of this: if we don’t control our mouth and what it speaks concerning our brothers and sisters, then we move out from being **doers** of the law (or ways of God) to becoming a judge! When we become a judge of the law instead of a doer, we are usurping God’s authority. We disobey the Word – we are saying we know better than God! No wonder the next Verse follows with what it does:

Verse 12: *“There is one lawgiver, Who is able to save and to destroy: who are you that judges another?”* (See also Romans 2).

The word “save” here means:

“To make sound, to save, preserve safe from danger, loss, or destruction. In a Christian sense, to save from death and judgment, (as the consequences of sin) and to bring in all positive blessing in the place of condemnation. To save from the penalty of death and destruction, (not merely to make happy) but to bestow everlasting life as the result of resurrection” (Bullinger’s).

Our salvation rests in the hands of one Lawgiver, Jesus Christ! If He holds the keys to our future – and He does! – then we had better make very sure that we are living according to the way He has told us. It is not for us to sit back and judge others on their life-styles, but to make sure Jesus does not have to sit in judgment on us, because we failed to heed the way He told us to go.

The word “destroy” here means:

“To destroy utterly; used chiefly of death in battle, to kill; to lose utterly (the subject being the sufferer.) The fundamental thought is not annihilation, but ruin, loss (as sheep lost to the fold and to the shepherd)” (Bullinger’s).

The New Bible Commentary has this to say on this passage of Scripture:

“To speak evil of one another, i.e. morally to fight against each other, is to offend against the majesty of the divine law. The general sense of the argument is that to speak against a brother is to condemn him, and to condemn or pass sentence is the

function of a judge. This fault-finding, or evil-speaking against a brother, implies that the law is inadequate in its judgment. Besides, the law of Christ forbids judging (Matthew 7:1) and, consequently, judging breaks the law. The Giver of the law is the only true and ultimate judge, who alone has the power to save and destroy. Who is man to dare to usurp the office and prerogative (“1. an exclusive privilege or right exercised by a person or group of people holding a particular office or hereditary rank. 2. any privilege or right. 3. a power, privilege, or immunity restricted to a sovereign government” – Collins) of the supreme Judge by judging his neighbour? True humility enjoins a deliberate refusal to enter into a spirit of judgment upon others, and an attitude of strict obedience to the law.”

This is very serious!

We Christians have a huge responsibility to listen to what God says . . . and do it!

So, let us watch our words.

“Reckless (“1. having or showing no regard for dangers or consequences; heedless; rash” – Collins) **words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing**” (Proverbs 12:18, NIV).

“The words of a talebearer (“whisperer, busybody” – Young’s) **are as wounds,** (“to wound self” – Young’s) **and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly**” (Proverbs 18:8).

Have you ever been caught out for unfairly criticizing other Christians? I have, and it can be very embarrassing to be faced up with it. I thank the Lord for those people who have the courage to “front us up” when we are guilty of judging others.

Too many times we get away with criticisms and statements we have made – and often those statements have not been right. We must guard against repeating gossip and stories about others. The Bible tells us to go to the person concerned – not go and “run them down” to someone else.

Oh, how we must grieve the heart of God over the things we say at times! The Proverbs have so much wisdom to teach us. Look at 21:23 which says: **“Whoso keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles.”** Notice the word “troubles” is in the plural! **There are many troubles to the Christian who does not discipline his mouth and tongue!**

(For further study on this subject, please refer back to the study Lessons on James Chapter 3).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. If a Christian brother or sister is offending you, what is the right course of action to take?
2. How important are James 4:11-12?
 - (a) Does it mean what it says? And
 - (b) What is the result of our disobeying God’s law?
3. According to Romans 2, those who do judge others usually are guilty of the

same sins themselves. Do you think this is true?

4. Jesus, our Lawgiver, has the power to save and to destroy. What does this mean?
5. What are we doing when we judge and criticize others?

Part Seven:

CONCLUDING JAMES FOUR:

James Four is a Chapter that challenges us about conquering ourself - those things we struggle with on the inside. It is teaching us of the necessity of getting our life into "divine order"; to live God's way and not our own. Learning to yield to the Lordship of Jesus Christ is easier said than done, but if we really want to be effective in the Kingdom of God then we must face up to the truth of the Word. It is "Not my will, but Yours be done, O Lord."

Am I . . .

LIVING FOR MY PLANS, OR GOD'S?

Verse 13: *"Go to now, you that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain":*

Verse 14: *"Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour ("breath, smoke; that which lacks permanence"), that appears for a little time, and then vanishes ("disappears out of sight") away."*

Christians must continually guard against getting caught-up with the ways of the world. It is not wrong to be involved in business, buying and selling, etc. What **is** wrong is when these things motivate us above God's will for us. **It is a matter of priorities. If we want the best out of life, then we need to be submitted to God's will.** That means we pray through our decisions about what work we should be involved with and what places we move to. Being in the right place at the right time, doing the right things is very important to Kingdom living people. Too many miss God's best because they rush into making decisions that eventually take them away from God's purpose rather than closer to it.

Life is too short and too precious to be wasting it! We cannot afford to do our own thing! We need God's guidance on all major decisions to do with life, work and living location. We are only here for a little time and then we, too, vanish away (into eternity).

HOW, THEN, SHOULD WE MAKE DECISIONS?

Verse 15: *"For that you ought to say, If the Lord will ("desire, intend, delight in, please" – Strong's), we shall live, and do this or that."*

To the Christian who lives under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, every thing, every decision of consequence in life, is made in submission to His will. That is our priority! We are serving God, not ourselves. We commit ourselves to decisions knowing God's

blessings are upon us – not committing ourselves and then hoping God’s blessings will be upon us. Continually we must check our attitudes and motivation in decision-making. Is it for self, or for God? The correct way is “If the Lord will . . .”

But obviously in James’ day, many Christians were not doing it correctly and were simply “doing their own thing.”

Verse 16: *“But now you rejoice* (‘to speak loud, be loud-tongued, boast or vaunt one’s self, to glory or exult both in a good and bad sense’ – Bullinger’s) *in your boastings* (‘a taking on of great airs,’ – Young’s; ‘a false pretender, a wanderer about the country, impostor’ – Bullinger’s): *all such rejoicing is evil* (‘causing or having labour, sorrow, pain; (denoting the more active form of evil,) hence, evil, malignant’ – Bullinger’s).”

The results of not submitting our life under the Lordship of Jesus are disastrous. How important it is to live right! . . . in word and deed! As our work takes up a very large amount of time in our short life of vapour, it is vital that our work is in “the will of God” for us. **Then our work place becomes a mission field. Our life is a testimony to the resurrection of Jesus. Our influence at the work place is glorifying to God. People see and know we’re different! We are living in divine order and not doing our own thing.**

Nobody likes a loud-mouth - especially a loud-mouth Christian! We are called to live under God’s will and that means He is involved in our decision making.

SUMMARY OF JAMES FOUR:

The summary of this Chapter is found in the final statement:

Verse 17: *“Therefore to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin* (‘error’ – Young’s; ‘offence, sinful’ – Strong’s).”

To the Christian this Verse gives us an excellent description of sin. **When we know what to do, we should do it!** Disobedience is a curse according to Deuteronomy 28!

Disobedience robs us of God’s blessings! It opens the door for the enemy to take advantage over us, to pull us down to live like the rest of his slaves. Kingdom people are born to fly higher than our own selfish aims and ambitions.

Let us face our real enemy – self – and be yielded to Jesus Christ in every area of life, so we can fully live in His abundant blessings. Hallelujah!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What can be wrong with moving about from city to city at regular intervals?
2. What is God’s will for your life?
3. If life is only a vapour (and it is), how much time do you have left to get your life into divine order?
4. How should your major decisions be made?

5. In what way has this Chapter spoken to you?

Part One:

CHAPTER FIVE

As we come to the
have already learned

Fifth Chapter of James we just how practical this book is. There is so much for us to take heed to in God's Word. This series of Lessons from James Five will be no different. Let us seek to take in as much as we can so that our life will be a real example of what a true Christian is in these troubled times.

RICHES – GOOD OR BAD?

This Chapter opens up with a hard-hitting challenge to those who are rich. It is not that riches are evil in themselves, but what our attitude towards money and wealth is - and the way we Christians use it when we have it.

Verse 1: *“Go to now, you rich* (“having or abounding in riches”), *weep* (“to lament, not only by shedding tears, but also by every outward expression of grief, bewail, mourn for” – Bullinger’s) *and howl* (“to cry to the gods with a loud voice, whether in prayer or thanksgiving; then generally to cry out” – Bullinger’s) *for your miseries* (“hardships, troubles, distresses and bodily pains” – Bullinger’s) *that shall come upon you.”*

Here we are being given a challenge about the place of riches in a person's life. Even though this is speaking to those who let their already obtained riches dictate their life-style, it is also necessary for Christians to be aware of what can happen when riches rule us. The Bible says it leads to a life of misery, hardship, tears and bodily pains. No one believes this when the flush of riches is upon them, but God's Word is true. Let us not forget 1 Timothy 6:9-11 . . .

“But they that will be rich fall into temptation (temptation to do wrong) *and a snare* (“trap”), *and into many foolish and hurtful* (“disabling, weakening, impeding; hurtful, noxious, disadvantageous” – Bullinger’s) *lusts, which drown men in destruction* (“that which causes death to self and ruin to others”) *and perdition* (“loss, destruction, ruin; the end pronounced upon all who, having heard the summons to repentance and faith in Christ, have persisted in not repenting. The loss of all that such ever had, or might have had for ever; the destruction of such, in body, soul, and spirit; an utter and final ruin, which will not be reversed” – Bullinger’s).

For the love of money (“covetousness”) *is the root of all evil: which while some coveted* (“do anything to get it”) *after, they have erred* (“wandered or led away from, seduced”) *from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

But you, O man of God, flee (“quickly run away from”) *these things . . .”*

Please note, it is not money and riches that are evil in themselves – it is **THE LOVE OF THEM** that corrupts.

Christians and Christian ministries need vast supplies of money to fulfil the great commission of Jesus **“to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”** We Christians should not have a “poverty spirit” that keeps us locked into a mind-set that more money will corrupt us automatically. It is those who covet money for the sake of selfish desires and position in life that get corrupted. Christians are not exempt from those temptations, but we should desire to see money released to us so we can release it to the Kingdom of God!

CAN GOD TRUST US WITH GREAT RICHES?

Can God trust us with money? . . . large amounts of money, that is?

You might say “I don’t know” in answer to that question. There is a Bible principle which tells us whether or not we can be trusted with large amounts of money. It says in Luke 16:10-13 . . .

“He that is faithful (“trustworthy, worthy of confidence, reliable, sure” – Bullinger’s) **in that which is least** (“the least, in magnitude, number or quality” – Bullinger’s) **is faithful also in much** (“many, much, of number, quantity, or amount” – Bullinger’s): **and he that is unjust** (“not as it should and ought to be; hence, unjust, unrighteous” – Bullinger’s) **in the least is unjust also in much.**

“If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon (“riches, wealth”), **who will commit** (“to entrust or confide anything to anyone”) **to your trust the true riches?**

And if you have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?

No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold (“cling”) **to the one, and despise** (“to think against”) **the other. You cannot serve God and mammon** (“riches, wealth”).”

From these verses we can say that God can trust us with large amounts of money, **if we are presently being faithful to Him with what we’ve got now. If we’re careless with small amounts, we’ll be careless with large amounts.**

If we’re givers to God and His work when we only have a little, we’ll be faithful givers to God when we have much.

The way we are handling our money right now is God’s yardstick to whether or not He can trust us with a big amount. Either God is first, or money and the love of it is first in our life. They cannot share equal position. It must be God or money. If it is God, then we have His promise of a life of love, joy, peace, fulfilment and eternal life. If it is the love of money, we have His promise of sorrow, hardship, bodily pains and eternal destruction. That’s why James is telling us loud and clear that rich men are not a happy lot. It might be the world’s idea of happiness, but it is not true. Their future is very bleak!

J.B. Phillips in his “New Testament in Modern English” calls the rich of James 5:1 “plutocrats.” A plutocrat is one who “rules and controls society by his wealth.” That’s

the way politics and the world operates today. Money talks! And that is why nations are crumbling everywhere today. For the Christian we must live by principles – God’s principles – not by how much money we have to spend.

Verse 2: *“Your riches are corrupted* (“to cause to rot or become putrid” – Bullinger’s), *and your garments* (especially the outer garment) *are moth-eaten* (“1. decayed, decrepit, or outdated. 2. eaten away by or as if by moths” – Collins).”

People who are never satisfied with what they’ve got and are always scheming how to get more, are driven by an unholy desire which proves to be very costly in terms of life-style. The very rich are always presented as “having made it” and being so happy, but the statistics give us the facts that there is a very high divorce and suicide rate among them.

Not only are those kind of riches corrupted, those riches corrupt those who have them.

Let us endeavour to always develop a right, godly attitude towards riches. Should we find ourselves in a position where our wealth is greatly increased, let us make sure we use it to bless God’s work as much as we can. I believe God does want to bless His people with riches for the furtherance of the Gospel (see Deuteronomy 8:18; 1 Chronicles 29:12 and Ecclesiastes 5:19). When that happens, do not forget the Bible also teaches us “. . . *if riches increase, set not your heart upon them*” (Psalm 62:10).

“A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that makes haste to be rich shall not be innocent (“clean, blameless” – Wilson’s)” (Proverbs 28:20).

“And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness (“especially by false statements, self deception” – Bullinger’s) *of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful*” (Mark 4:19).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why does the Bible give such strong warnings to the rich?
2. What is your real heart attitude towards having more riches?
3. If you inherited \$100,000.00 what would you do with it?
4. How much would you give to God’s work? (Be honest now!).

Discuss with another Christian friend how they see your attitudes to riches.

1. Would you be willing to make changes if your friend showed you that you were covetous?
2. Would your riches blind you from the warnings of God’s Word?

Part Two:

We continue on with our Lesson which discusses the dangers of living for riches. In Part One we discovered how we have to make a choice on who is “Number One” in our life – *“God or mammon*” (“riches, wealth”)? Riches, when trusted in, bring misery and

corruption. Trusting in God brings His blessings into our life.

Remember, it is not riches in themselves that are the problem – it is the love of riches that is the root of all evil. Wickedness, with riches, is a dangerous combination. Let's look at:

Verse 3: *“Your gold and silver is cankered* (“something evil that spreads and corrupts. To infect or become infected with or as if with canker. A cancerous sore” – Collins); *and the rust of them shall be witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heaped treasure* (“to lay up in store”) *together for the last days.”*

The very thing those rich men tried to secure their future to was the very thing that let them down. They trusted in their riches or, as someone aptly described it, “ill-gotten gain.” Money, without God's blessing upon it, causes corrosion. That's the way the New International Version Bible states it:

“Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.”

Money is a tool which can be used for the glory of God, but it can never secure us favour with God. No one can buy their way into heaven and we certainly cannot take our riches with us when we die. It is to be used wisely and well in this life for the enhancement of the Gospel, humanity and the caring for our family needs.

Verse 4: *“Behold, the hire* (“wages, pay”) *of the labourers* (“field workers”) *who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud* (“to take away or withhold money, rights, property, etc., from a person by fraud; cheat; swindle; to rob”), *cries: and the cries of them who have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth* (“hosts, armies” – Bullinger's).”

Now we are seeing the reason why the Bible is so strong at denouncing the rich men. They were getting rich at other people's expense! They were robbing their workers of what was rightfully theirs! The “haves” think they can get away with swindling the “have-nots,” but they won't. Every labourer who has had a wrong, rotten deal and has cried out to God for justice will be recompensed. God says their cries have been heard by Him. The “fat cats” will one day give account to God for their wicked deeds and be found wanting. Not one cent of their money will be able to change God's Word from being fulfilled. They will be “drowned in destruction and perdition.” We saw in the last Lesson that destruction in 1 Timothy 6:9 means “That which causes death to self, and ruin to others” and perdition means “loss, destruction, ruin; the end pronounced upon all who, having heard the summons to repentance and faith in Christ, have persisted in not repenting. The loss of all that such ever had, or might have had for ever; the destruction of such, in body, soul, and spirit; an utter and final ruin, which will not be reversed” (Bullinger's). What a terrible end the Bible promises to greedy men who are motivated by such means as to swindle the very people who are helping them to be successful! No wonder God hears the cry of the labourer!

Many rich people will try and bribe God on the Day of Judgment, but God will not be “bought” – nor will He be mocked. Money certainly won't change God one little bit, but it certainly can change a man into a beast! God forbid that any reading this, and who claims Christ as Lord, will be treating other people like these rich men did. God help us to repent of any such evils.

This Verse shows us there is a day of reckoning. It tells us God hears the cry of the oppressed. It tells us how many get oppressed in the first place – they are swindled by rich land owners or business men who use people unfairly for their own ends. Some will do anything just to make a bit more money. There would be less murders, far fewer drug addicts, far fewer problems everywhere if only man could keep the love of money out of his heart. Our whole society today is being evaluated in terms of dollars and cents – and it is costing us very dearly indeed in human terms.

Verse 5: *“You have lived in pleasure* (“to live in luxury in eating and drinking, to indulge one’s self” – Bullinger’s) *on the earth, and been wanton* (“to live strenuously, rudely, to live hard, revel, run riot; lead a life of luxury and gaiety, to the neglect of another or in opposition to him” – Bullinger’s; “immoral; to squander or waste”); *you have nourished* (“to make fat by feeding”) *your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.”*

The last part of this Verse *“as in the day of slaughter”* is an allusion to Jeremiah 12:1-3 where it talks of the luxurious rich, getting wealth by injustice, spending it on their pleasures and who were fattening themselves like sheep unconscious of their doom. They had been blinded by their riches and self-sufficiency, not realizing that they will be called to account before Almighty God for the way they have lived and the way they have cheated their employees.

Verse 6: *“You have condemned* (“pronounced judgment against”) *and killed* (“murdered”) *the just* (“fulfilling all claims which are right and becoming. A right state, of which God and His Word is the standard, so that no fault or defect can be charged. Conformity to God’s revealed will” – Bullinger’s); *and he does not resist* (“to set one’s self in battle array against; to set one’s self in opposition to” – Bullinger’s) *you.”*

The rich who live in pleasure are enemies to the true spirit of Christianity. They oppose us and are guilty of condemning and killing the just. They have chosen to serve the god of mammon and therefore make themselves the enemy of Christ. (See also James 2:6-7).

Let me share with you from J.B. Phillips the Verses we have covered so far in James Chapter 5:

“And now, you plutocrats (“one who rules and controls society by his wealth” – Collins), *is the time for you to weep and moan because of the miseries in store for you! Your richest goods are ruined, your hoard of clothes is moth-eaten, your gold and silver are tarnished. Yes, their very tarnish will be the evidence of your wicked hoarding and you will shrink from them as if they were red-hot. You have made a fine pile in these last days, haven’t you? But look, here is the pay of the reaper you hired and whom you cheated, and it is shouting out against you! And the cries of the other labourers you swindled* (“to cheat someone of money” – Collins) *are heard by the Lord of Hosts Himself. Yes, you have had a magnificent time on this earth, and have indulged yourselves to the full. You have picked out just what you wanted like soldiers looting after battle. You have condemned and ruined innocent men in your career, and they have been powerless to stop you”* (The New Testament in Modern English, James 5:1-6).

Please take time to meditate upon what God’s Word is saying and, whatever you do, do not be envious of those rich people who squander life and wilfully reject Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. Those of you who feel you have been cheated in life by the rich know that there is still the day of reckoning to come and God will deal justly with us all. Life is not only this present time on earth, but for all eternity. And eternity

is a very, very long time!!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why will riches be no good to people on Judgment Day?
2. Read Mark 10:17-26 and answer why you think the rich young ruler could not respond to the love of Jesus?
3. Why is it hard for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God?
4. If you were being exploited by the rich, what could you do about it?

Part Three:

The prevailing conditions of the last days of time before the return of Jesus are times of the very rich and the very poor. So far in this Chapter we have seen how the rich use their position to exploit the poor. God's Word does not give a very good report on how those rich people will finish up – full of miseries. The rich also are forward in persecuting Christians, which James Chapter Two showed us:

“. . . Do not rich men oppress (“to exercise power over or against;” – Bullinger’s; “1. to subjugate by cruelty, force, etc., to afflict or torment” – Collins) **you, and draw** (“drag”) **you before the judgment seats** (“lawsuits, law-courts”)?

Do not they blaspheme (“to speak injuriously, especially to revile God or divine things”) **that worthy name by the which you are called?**” (James 2:6-7).

These **“lovers of money”** oppose all that God and His people represent and, as such, are very capable of making life very difficult for the Christians. Because money “speaks” among those who live for the world, the rich hold great influence and can get “their way” when they want to. In the light of these things, therefore, the Christian has to have much wisdom, grace and patience as we wait for the coming of the Lord – our Just Judge who will recompense those who have been unjustly treated.

HAVE PATIENCE, BROTHERS AND SISTERS!

Let us turn now to James Five and continue:

Verse 7: “Be patient (“to suffer with long patience;” “1. enduring trying circumstances with even temper 2. tolerant; understanding. 3. capable of accepting delay . . .” – Collins) **therefore** (in the light of what the previous Verses are saying), **brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman** (“a farmer, one who tills the ground or keeps a vineyard”) **waits** (“to wait long, expect earnestly” – Young’s) **for the precious** (“valued, honoured, prized”) **fruit of the earth, and has long patience** (“endurance”) **for it, until he receive the early** (“the first or morning”) **and the latter rain** (“the rain which comes just before the harvest”).”

In the days before Jesus returns to gather up His saints (the harvest) there will be extreme pressures placed upon Christians. The devil is out to discourage and break as many as he can. He wants to wreck us, as well as tempt us to let go of our faith.

Opposition and open persecution will be increasingly concentrated against us. Open

hatred will be displayed more and more. “Why?” you might ask.

Because we are coming to the climax of the ages and the greatest spiritual conflict is raging. On the one hand Satan knows his time is short and wants to prevent God from fulfilling His promises. On the other hand God is using the very tactics of the enemy to mature the saints and give us patience. It is hard to be patient and to endure with spiritual principles when we are being cheated, ill-treated and set-up, especially by those who appear to have the best of this world’s goods. Yet they are never satisfied and the spirit that is in them is an anti-Christ spirit.

Therefore that spirit in them is also an anti-Christian spirit. We, by our very presence, are a conviction to their conscience that there is a just way for all mankind to live - the way of life in Jesus Christ.

THE WORLD WILL NEVER ALTER GOD’S PLAN:

Let us not get side-tracked by the opposition. **God’s Word is still THE TRUTH! His precious promises WILL ALL come to pass.** Nothing the devil can do – or his rich servants – will ever alter God’s plan for us. In the fiery trials of life the Christian gets refined and more purified. The grace of God flows more abundantly; His presence becomes more real and precious.

This Verse shows us that the Lord, too, requires long patience while He waits for the Christian Church to come to maturity. He will not come until She is ready!

We have to have patience with the world – and the Lord has to have patience with the Church! But be encouraged, God calls us “the precious fruit of the earth.” I’m sure we will be very glad that the Lord waited for us to be ready before He comes.

Verse 8: “Be ye also patient; stablish (“to set fast, fix firmly, make steadfast, establish” – Bullinger’s) **your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws near.”**

Just in case we got the idea from Verse 7 that the Lord will take **years** to mature the Church and therefore will not be coming in a hurry, Verse 8 re-affirms that the Lord is coming and that coming is close. We must be preparing ourselves for that coming by being patient and by establishing our hearts.

“In Scripture the “heart” is “the chief organ of physical life and occupies the most important place in the human system. By an easy transition the word came to stand for man’s entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and the emotional elements. In other words, the heart is used figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life” (Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words).

“The Bible describes human depravity as in the ‘heart’ because sin is a principle which has its seat in the centre of man’s inward life, and then ‘defiles’ the whole of Divine influence ... the heart, as lying deep within, contains the hidden man, the real man. It represents the true character but conceals it” (J. Laidlaw, in Hastings’ Bible Dictionary, reprinted from Vines).

To God and the Christian the “heart” is very important.

Jesus said, “**Blessed** (“happy”) **are the pure** (“pure from everything that would change or corrupt the nature of the subject with which it is combined, free from every foreign admixture, whether good or bad; clean, and free from every stain, odour, colour, or any

useless thing whatever; free from every false adornment” – Bullinger’s) ***in heart: for they shall see God***” (Matthew 5:8).

In Luke 21 Jesus also forewarns us of the conditions of the last days. They are called:

- They are called days of deception (Verse 8);

There will be:

- False Christ’s (Verse 8);
- Wars and commotions (“1. violent and turbulent disturbances; upheavals.
2. political insurrections; disorder” - Collins) (Verse 9);
- Times of terror (“trepidation; a state of fear or anxiety”) (Verse 9);
- Nations rising against nations (Verse 10);
- Kingdoms against kingdoms (Verse 10);
- Great earthquakes (Verse 11);
- A time of persecution and imprisonment (Verse 12);
- Betrayals by parents, Christian brothers and sisters, natural family and friends (Verse 16);
- Death (Verse 16);
- Hatred (Verse 17);
- Great distress (Verse 23);
- Wrath (Verse 23);
- Captivity (“to take by the spear” – Young’s; “to make prisoners of war” – Bullinger’s) (Verse 24);
- Signs in the sun (Verse 25);
- Signs in the moon (Verse 25);
- Signs in the stars (Verse 25);
- Distress of nations (Verse 25);
- A roaring of the sea and waves (“to make a loud noise, i.e. reverberate” – Strong’s) (Verse 25);
- Men’s hearts failing for fear (Verse 26); and
- The powers of heaven shaken (Verse 26).

These are the prevailing conditions in the world **WHEN JESUS WILL COME AGAIN!**

Jesus gives us the two great warnings of James 5:8 . . .

- (1) **“In your PATIENCE P O S S E S S ye your souls** (“instead of giving way to adverse circumstances, gain the mastery over your soul, to acquire, procure, possess”)” (Luke 21:19).
- (2) **“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your HEARTS be overcharged with surfeiting** (“seizure of the head; and hence, intoxication and its consequences, giddiness, headache, etc.” – Bullinger’s; “1. an excessive or immoderate amount. 2. overindulgence, especially in eating or drinking. 3. disgust, nausea, etc., caused by such overindulgence ...” – Collins) **and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day** (the day of the Lord) **come upon you unawares** (“suddenly”) . . .” (Luke 21:34-36).

We are, **right now**, in those days. Be patient, brethren!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How do you describe patience, and how do you get more of it?
2. How can you protect your heart in today’s worldly conditions?
3. Can you see the conditions of the last days as described by Luke? What are they telling us?
4. How do we possess our souls?
5. Describe more about what it means to you to be “pure in heart”?

Part Four:

James is giving us some solid information in his book. He is teaching us on matters that most would prefer to ignore, so we would be very wise to take heed to what God is saying through him to us.

GRUDGES:

Verse 9: **“Grudge** (“to groan or sigh, of persons in distress, etc.”– Bullinger’s; “to murmur;” “1. a persistent feeling of resentment, especially one due to some cause, such as an insult or injury. 3. to feel resentful or envious about someone else’s success or possessions” – Collins) **not one against another, brethren, lest you be condemned** (“to give judgment against; to judge or pronounce unfit for use”): **behold, the judge** (“he who decides” – Bullinger’s) **stands before the door.**”

Grudges! How easy to carry them! In the light of the preceding Verses you would think it might be excusable to carry a grudge or two. But no! The Christian has no justification to harbour such things.

Notice what the Verse says: Christian against Christian judging one another. That’s a

trick of the devil to get us side-tracked. The grudges were not being held against the rich who live not for God, but brother against brother! Carrying grudges in our heart against our fellow Christians puts us firmly in the wrong. We must forgive and forget! (How many of us say we forgive, but never forget?) The carrying of a grudge is not a minor problem – it is a major offence. The older we grow in the Lord, the more we must guard our hearts against prejudices and a judgmental spirit robbing us of our anointing and effectiveness for God. All persistent feelings of resentment must go!

This Verse clearly tells us we will be the one who is condemned – not the one who we are murmuring against! We should be displaying the “Jesus Spirit” and releasing all offensive things out of our hearts.

Of course we will be misunderstood, offended and talked about! That’s par for the course (especially if you’re worth your salt in Jesus). Let’s get used to rebuffs, criticisms and mistakes – yet let us learn from them so that the nature of Jesus can shine more and more through us. It is when we re-act wrongfully and out of hurt that grudges form. They then start to eat away at us like a cancer and, before long, we find we lose our joy and freedom that is rightfully ours in Christ Jesus.

JESUS THE JUDGE STANDS AT THE DOOR:

Jesus Christ has called the Christians to walk with Him. He is our Master, we His disciples. He knows the end from the beginning and He has forewarned us of things that will hinder us from fulfilling His will. Grudging, judging and condemning others is not good for us. Jesus our Judge is standing at the door. He watches us and longs for us to walk the way His Word has laid out.

Here are a few Scriptures that leave us in no doubt that Jesus is our Judge:

“And before Him (Jesus) shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats” (Matthew 25:32).

“For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22).

“And He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick (“living”) and dead” (Acts 10:42).

“Because He has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained . . .” (Acts 17:31).

The Apostle Paul said the day would come **“when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel”** (Romans 2:16).

Here is an excellent piece of advice for us to take heed to:

“You have no right to criticize your brother or look down on him. Remember, each of us will stand personally before the Judgment Seat of God. For it is written, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee shall bow to Me and every tongue confess to God! Yes, each of us will give an account of himself to God. So don’t criticize each other any more. Try instead to live in such a way that you will never make your brother stumble by letting him see you doing something he thinks is wrong” (Romans 14:10-13, TLB). See also 2 Timothy 4:1 and 1 Peter 4:1-7.

CONSIDER THE PROPHETS:

Verse 10: *“Take, my brethren, the prophets* (‘‘one on whom the Spirit of God rested; . . . one who speaks forth openly before any one; a proclaimer of a divine message; one who has immediate intercourse with God’’ – Bullinger’s), *who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction* (‘‘1. a condition of great distress, pain, or suffering. 2. something responsible for physical or mental suffering’’ – Collins), *and of patience* (‘‘slowness to anger, i.e. long suffering, patient forbearance’’ – Bullinger’s; ‘‘1. tolerant and even-tempered, perseverance. 2. the capacity for calmly enduring pain, trying situations’’ – Collins).’’

Throughout the Word of God we are given the examples of the Prophets who endured all kinds of persecution, but who won through because they kept their eyes on the Lord. Likewise, we need to learn from them and know that we can endure and overcome all the obstacles the enemy brings across our path. In a sense God is saying to us:

‘‘If you learn, and live after the example of those great men who went before, you will be counted by Me as one of them – a Prophet!’’

What a privilege is ours that God encourages us to live like them. The Apostle Paul made a very true statement when he said, *‘‘All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution’’* (2 Timothy 3:12).

There’s no escape! Godliness and persecution go together!

To consider the Prophets, it would be helpful to know who the Bible calls a Prophet, so here is an alphabetical list of both good and bad Prophets:

Aaron	Exodus 7:1;
Abraham	Genesis 20:1-7;
Agabus	Acts 21:10;
Ahijah	1 Kings 11:29;
Amos	Amos 1:1; 7:14-17;
Balaam	Numbers 22:5 to Chapter 24; 2 Peter 2:15-16;
Daniel	Matthew 24:15;
David	Matthew 13:35;
Eldad	Numbers 11:26;
Elijah	1 Kings 18:36;
Elisha	1 Kings 19:16;
Ezekiel	Ezekiel 1:3 & 2:5;
Gad	1 Samuel 22:5;
Habakkuk	Habakkuk 1:1;
Haggai	Ezra 5:1; Haggai 1:1;
Hananiah	Jeremiah 28:1, 17;
Hosea	Hosea 1:1;
Iddo	2 Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 13:22;
Isaiah	2 Kings 19:2, John 12:37-41;
Jehu	1 Kings 16:7;
Jeremiah	Jeremiah 1:1, 4-5;
Joel	Joel 1:1; Acts 2:16-21;
John the Baptist	Luke 7:28;
Joshua	1 Kings 16:34;
Jonah	2 Kings 14:25; Matthew 12:39;

Malachi	Malachi 1:1;
Medad	Numbers 11:26;
Micah	Jeremiah 26:18; Micah 1:1;
Micaiah	1 Kings 22:6-38;
Moses	Deuteronomy 34:10; Hosea 12:13;
Nahum	Nahum 1:1;
Nathan	2 Samuel 7:2;
Obadiah	Obadiah 1:1;
Oded	2 Chronicles 28:9;
Samuel	1 Samuel 3:20;
Shemaiah	2 Chronicles 12:5;
Zacharias	Luke 1:67-79;
Zachariah	Zechariah 1:1;
Zephaniah	Zephaniah 1:1.

There are 39 Prophets named – 40 if we include the greatest of them all, JESUS – for us to learn from as examples of men who suffered for their faith and obedience to God.

Have p-a-t-i-e-n-c-e, beloved!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How do you recognise a grudge, and how can you deal with it?
2. What is your concept of the coming Judgment?
3. What do the Prophets teach us?
4. Why, do you think, Prophets get a lot of opposition?
5. What would you do if God called you to be a Prophet?

Part Five:

In our last Lesson we were reminded that the Christian life involves suffering and learning patience. If we carry a grudge or grudges against our fellow believers we are causing personal suffering to our self. God has not asked us to suffer in that way – therefore grudges have to be dealt with and got rid of.

The other kind of suffering is God-ordained. It is part of the cost of belonging to Jesus. We suffer because we are of a different spirit to that of the world. It is through suffering that we develop patience and Christian character:

“We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials for we know that they are good for us – they help us learn to be patient.

“And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more each time we use it until finally our hope and faith are strong and steady.

“Then, when that happens, we are able to hold our heads high no matter what happens and know that all is well, for we know how dearly God loves us, and we

feel this warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love” (Romans 5:3-5, TLB).

The KJV says **“tribulation** (“pressure, affliction, distress, being squeezed”) **works patience”** (Romans 5:3).

That is all part of suffering for Jesus and the Gospel’s sake.

We now continue on in James Five and look at the subject of . . .

ENDURING HAPPILY:

Verse 11: **“Behold,** (“see”; “calling attention to what may be seen, heard, or apprehended in any way” – Bullinger’s) **we count them happy** (“pronounced blessed, congratulate”) **who endure** (“to undergo hardship, strain, privation, etc., without yielding”; – Collins; “a brave bearing up against sufferings in a courageous way”). **You have heard of the patience** (“endurance, continuance, a bearing-up under”) **of Job** (“hated” or “the cry of woe: I will exclaim”), **and have seen the end** (“the final issue or result”) **of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful** (“very tender-hearted or compassionate” – Young’s), **and of tender mercy** (“pitiful, compassionate for the ills of others” – Bullinger’s).”

We have learned by now that the Christian life is not free from suffering and pressures. To try and avoid them is futile. So, we must centre our attention on how to endure them. This Verse teaches us that we can be **happy in enduring!** Paul, in Romans 5:3, said he **“gloried”** or **“boasted”** in tribulations, because he had learned the end results of what they do for and to us. He learned to take a very positive attitude toward those things that came against him. They would not be allowed to defeat him, nor would they rob him of his joy in the Lord!

How about us?

Have we learned this great Bible truth yet?

Or, are we complaining about the trials we go through in this life? (See Acts 9:13-16; Acts 14:21-22: **“We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God”**).

J.B. Phillips in “The New Testament in Modern English” says this:

“. . . we can be full of joy here and now even in our trials and troubles. Taken in the right spirit these very things will give us patient endurance; this in turn will develop a mature character, and a character of this sort produces a steady hope, a hope that will never disappoint us” (Romans 5:3-4).

JOB:

You have heard of Job! The Bible takes it for granted that every growing Christian has heard of Job, especially the patience of Job. His story is challenging. Very briefly, the Book of Job tells us that he was a perfect and upright man who feared God. He went through a period in his life when, after accumulating great riches and assets, he lost them all virtually in one day – including the deaths of his ten children. Those major

calamities did not stop Job from his worship and relationship with God. On top of his natural disasters he came under severe Satanic attack and was smitten with sore boils from head to toe (when the Bible says “**sore**” you can accept they would have been very painful). His wife could not handle the pressures of those losses and re-acted against Job, telling him to “**curse God, and die**” (Job Chapters 1 & 2). When the news spread about what had happened to Job, his three friends came to visit him. Guess what? They sat on the ground with him for seven days – and never said a word! And when they did talk, they were accusing Job about sin being in his life! Sounds like Christian friends of the 90’s, doesn’t it?

At the end of his ordeal God spoke to Job, Job prayed for his friends and God restored to Job more than what he had before – even gave him ten more children. The message to us is that righteous Job was attacked by the devil because of his devotion and commitment to God, and through patience he patiently endured all the testings and opposition that came against him. If Job could do that under the Old Covenant, **how much more can you and I patiently endure under the better promises of the New Covenant? We can endure if we will continue to abide in Christ and let Him have His way in us at all times.**

Hebrews 10:36 tells us: “**For you have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise.**”

We have need of patience. That’s why we must learn from the Prophets, and Job. Most of us have not been through half of what they went through – and we grizzle like we’re being hard done by! If we don’t learn our lessons well, we’ll have to go through them again until we are refined in God’s purposes. Endure happily! Rejoice! “**For great is your reward in heaven**” (see Luke 6:20-23).

THE LORD IS VERY MERCIFUL:

How important it is for us to know that God is so merciful toward us. Sometimes when the going is tough, one can feel that maybe God has forsaken us or is punishing us, but that is not true. God in His mercy is refining and preparing us for all eternity. **We don’t always see His purposes when we are in the midst of a fiery trial, but afterwards we can see that we have learned important things.**

God loves us very dearly!

His heart toward us is very tender and compassionate. He is working in us, making us just like JESUS – **Never lose sight of that!** Know that suffering and learning patience is part of God’s way of making us into that which glorifies Him.

If you have a negative attitude towards the trials of life – change it. Start to rejoice in the goodness of God.

If you need someone to focus your attention on when you are going through tribulation, think on Job.

If you are doubting God’s presence in the midst of your trials, look again to **JESUS** and see Him as being very compassionate and merciful toward you.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How can you help yourself to be more happy when going through a trial?

2. What is Romans 5:3-5 speaking to you about trials and tribulations?
3. What have you personally learned from the life of Job?
4. Can you explain in your own words what the mercy of God means to you?
5. In what way is patience developing in your life?
6. Do you find you have patience in some areas of life, and very little in other areas? Talk about it.
7. How would you instruct others to develop more patience in their lives?

Part Six:

As we continue on with James Five we now face a Verse that brings us back to the importance of how we use our words, the way we make promises and the effects our words can have on us.

SWEAR NOT!

Verse 12: *“But above all things, my brethren* (“brothers”), *swear* (“to take or make an oath; to declare or promise with an oath” – Bullinger’s) *not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath* (“the object by which one swears, the witness of an oath; . . . that which restrains from doing a thing” – Bullinger’s; “a fence, a limit, i.e. a sacred restraint, special oath” – Strong’s); *but let your yea* (“yes”) *be yea; and your nay* (“no”), *nay; lest you fall into condemnation* (“the process of judgment”; “a false or feigned pretence, an acting as it were under a mask, hypocrisy” – Bullinger’s).”

The word of the Christian should be trustworthy. We have no need to live in such a way that we have to make oaths and swear “by God’s name” that we will keep our promise. **The Spirit of Truth (the Holy Spirit) within us makes us totally truthful and honest (if we are not, then we need to ask ourselves the question, “What spirit is motivating us?”).**

Words are very important. The confession of our lips determines what we are now – and what we will be in the future. Jesus said, **“For by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned”** (Matthew 12:37).

Our words!

“Death and life are in the power (“hand; ability; agency, dominion” – Wilson’s) **of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof”** (Proverbs 18:21).

Our tongue!

If we turn back to Matthew 5:33-37 we read the words of Jesus on the subject of the swearing of or by an oath:

“Again, ye have heard that it has been said by them of old time, You shall not forswear (“to swear against or falsely, to perjure oneself”; “to reject or renounce with determination or as upon oath” – Collins) **yourself, but shall perform** (“to give back, or in full, deliver”) **unto the Lord your 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 (“a footstool of His feet” – Bullinger’s); neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

“Neither shall you swear by your head, because you can not make one hair white or black.

But let your communication (“the word as that which is spoken” – Bullinger’s) be, Yes, yes; No, no: for whatsoever is more than these comes of evil.”

These Verses from Matthew and James show us that we should not allow ourselves to get into situations of swearing by an oath.

It is interesting to note that Simon Peter tried swearing by an oath to convince those about him that he did not know Jesus. This was at the time of Jesus’ trial and Peter’s denial (see Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72). There was great regret in his life over his actions.

We are not to take the name of the Lord in vain (Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12).

For further Scriptural reminders on our tongue and words, please refer to James Chapter Three.

INSTRUCTIONS ON VARIOUS WAYS OF PRAYER:

James Five now gives to us some very practical advice on prayer instruction. As we study the next few Verses let us have an open mind and seek to put the reality of them into practice.

Verse 13: ***“Is any among you afflicted (“to suffer evil, to endure or sustain afflictions” – Bullinger’s; “to undergo hardship: be afflicted . . . suffer trouble” – Strong’s)? let him pray. Is any merry (“to be of a cheerful mind, be of good cheer” – Bullinger’s; “to be of good courage” – Young’s)? let him sing psalms (“a sacred song, sung to musical accompaniment).”***

Verse 14: ***“Is any sick (“to be infirm, without strength” – Young’s) among you? let him call (“to bid to come”) for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”***

Notice that there are different prayer methods for different “problems”:

1. When we are suffering persecution and hardships as a result of our Christian witness WE PRAY FOR OURSELVES. We do not call out to others to pray for us. This really brings extra strength into our life. It is God’s purpose for us to have to draw upon His help and strength when we are suffering opposition from the enemy.

When being persecuted – pray for yourself.

2. When we are merry – of a cheerful mind and really “on top” of things – that is the time for us to be full of singing, rejoicing and praising the Lord. It is not necessary to be engaged in prayer the same way as mentioned in Point 1.

There is great victory in singing and rejoicing in the Lord.

3. When we are physically sick, we are told to call for the elders of the church so they can pray for us. From this Verse we see that it is taken for granted that the Christian believer is part of a local church which has elders (“those who have been raised up and qualified by the work of the Holy Spirit and appointed to have the spiritual care of, and to exercise oversight over the churches”).

In general terms, Christians are not called to walk alone, but to be a part of a fellowship of believers where there is care and attention available.

In the case of physical sickness we are told to call for the elders rather than try to battle through in prayer on our own. When we are physically sick **CALL OUT TO CHRISTIAN ELDERS FOR HELP AND PRAYER.**

Why?

One reason is that in the case of sickness they have more faith than the suffering one! It is often quite hard to have faith for healing for yourself when you are sick. Many times our pride stops us from calling for help. But this is what the Scripture tells us to do. **Call for your elders to come and pray for you. (That way they will know you are sick!).** Ask to be anointed with oil in the name of the Lord. They will come and pray for you, and God’s Word promises some very good results:

Verse 15: “And the prayer of faith (“firm persuasion, the conviction which is based upon hearing, not upon sight, or knowledge; a firmly relying confidence in what we hear from God in His Word” Bullinger’s) **shall save** (“to make sound, preserve safe from danger, loss or destruction” – Bullinger’s) **the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”**

When the sick person calls for the elders, and the elders respond to pray and anoint with oil according to God’s Word, **THE PRAYER OF FAITH** will save the sick and the Lord – not the elders – shall raise him up. If there has been any sins committed God will forgive them at the same time!

It pays to call!

Consider the above three points again. Make sure you know God’s Word of instruction, for in each of them we will need to act in the days ahead.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why is it so important to avoid swearing by an oath?
2. In Christianity how important is our word?
3. Can you remember an instance in your life when you –
 - (a) Let people down with the breaking of your promise?
 - (b) If so, what have you learned from it?
4. Why do you think the Bible gives us different prayer instructions for different “problems” we face in life?

5. Have you ever called for the elders to come and pray for you when you were sick?
6. If you are sick now, what should you do?
7. What is it that saves the sick?

Part Seven:

FULL CONFESSION!

We now move on to another very important subject for Christian believers – that of confessing our faults! Confession here has to do with honesty – living a life-style that is open to all with nothing to hide. This is not always as easy as it sounds! To start with, human nature (the natural side of us) does not like to admit to faults, weaknesses, mistakes or failure. We would rather no one else knew. We would rather keep it to ourself. We fear criticism or rejection if others really knew our faults. So we tend to “cover up”; to hope no one finds out what the real me is like. Unfortunately that makes us become double-minded, trying to live two different life-styles, i.e. the nice Christian person everyone expects me to be – and the real person I am when other Christians are not around me. That is hypocrisy! Let’s be honest with ourselves, other people and God too. We can’t hide anything from Him – and others find out eventually anyway.

So, what do we do? Let’s see what James instructs us . . .

Verse 16a: “**Confess** (“confess fully, freely and openly”) **your faults** (“a falling aside, mishaps”; – Young’s; “a false step, a trespass”; “a falling aside as from duty, etc., hence, sin, but as the missing of the right, rather than a transgression of the law, with special reference to the subjective weakness of the person, rather than the objective sin!” – Bullinger’s) **one to another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed** (“cured; to cause to live, revive, or recover from illness” – Bullinger’s – “healed” here is most likely referring to spiritual as well as physical healing).”

CONFESSION IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL!

Christians struggling with faults and problems need to be reminded that confession is God’s way rather than man’s way. **So much happens to us when we honestly confess the truth.** It was confession with our mouth “that we believe Jesus is our Saviour, and that God has raised Him from the dead” that brought about our salvation! (Romans 10:9-10). Confession of Jesus caused us to be born-again by the Spirit of God (John 3:2-11).

Confessing the truth sets us free!

When we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit to the point of overflowing, we again with our mouth begin “confessing,” but this time it is the Holy Spirit language. It releases us to a new realm of prayer, communication and understanding of God Who is a Spirit.

To grow in our Christian life we must confess what God’s Word says about us as new

creatures in Christ, rather than what **we** say or feel about us. **What we believe and confess will make all the difference to a “healthy” Christian life.**

Likewise, when we recognise our weaknesses or faults, God wants us to use the same principle of confessing it out. Go to someone you can trust (all Christians should have others who they can trust) and confess your problem, especially if you want to be free from it – and be healed!

Confession is a humbling of self. It is acknowledging we are wrong, or have failed, and that God knows what is the best thing to do. **Honest, humble confession releases our spirit to be able to receive God’s healing process in such a way that we can put the fault behind us and get on unhindered in our walk with the Lord.**

To complete the confession of our faults, the one we confide in should be able to pray for us, with the view that we be totally forgiven, restored and free to get on with serving God – without any guilt or condemnation. True confessions brings acceptance more than rejection; it brings more strength rather than weakness; it produces faith rather than fear. Confess your faults!

Let us be known for our open lives and total honesty one with the other.

Praise the Lord!

WHY PRAY?

I guess you have heard many times about the power of prayer. Yet we seem to always under-estimate what honest praying can achieve. When we confess our faults, prayer releases us back to freedom of relationship as well as delivers us from the guilt of the fault.

The second part of the Verse we are studying says:

Verse 16b: *“The effectual* (“capable of or successful in producing an intended result” – Collins) *fervent* (“intensely passionate, to boil, be hot, glowing” – Collins) *prayer* (“want, need; the expression of need; urgent request, supplication; marking especially our need and insufficiency; seeking and in special necessity” – Bullinger’s) *of a righteous man* (“one who lives according to God’s ways rather than his own”) *avails* (“to be strong in body; to be mighty, powerful; to prevail” – Bullinger’s) *much.”*

What a statement!

Effectual fervent prayer gets results!

Confession and prayer go together. When the vessel is clean and fervent, through prayer we can release the hand of God to meet our needs.

Let us obey the Word!

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed!”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why do people struggle with confessing their faults?

2. Do you struggle with trusting someone enough to share your problem with?
3. If your answer to Question 2 is “yes,” why do you think you feel that way?
4. What happens when we do confess our problems and faults honestly?
5. What happens when the righteous person prays fervently?
6. How does power fit into prayer?

Part Eight:

In our last study we discovered the importance of confession and prayer; how honest and humble confessing of our faults releases us within to get on with serving God. Living right before God and man has a profound effect upon getting our prayers answered.

PRAYER

We learned again the effectiveness of prayer. Let me quote to you the last part of Verse 16 from the Amplified Bible:

“The earnest (heartfelt, continued) **prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous** (“1. vast; huge. 2. very exciting or unusual . . . literally: that is to be trembled at” – Collins) **power available – dynamic in its working.”**

What a description of prayer!

Now we shall look at one man’s example from the Scriptures; the man Elijah, a Prophet of God:

Verse 17: “Elias (Elijah) was a man subject (“vulnerable”) **to like passions** (“strong affections, any strongly felt emotion, such as love, hate, etc.” – Collins) **as we are, and he prayed earnestly** (“with zeal, seriously, to set one’s self into motion, arouse, an intensely serious state of mind, something important”) **that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.”**

When it comes to getting answers to prayer, God gives us the example of Elijah to learn from. There are things we need to know about this man (notice the Bible states **“Elijah was a man . . .”** – he was not an angel or a cherubim!)

Elijah was a human being!

Elijah struggled with strong emotions!

He faced the trials of life in the same flesh you and I do.

Elijah was just like us!

Except –

Elijah did not allow the fleshly moods and emotions to stop him from proving the power of God was available if he prayed.

And pray he did!

Elijah prayed earnestly! Elijah believed God was no respecter of persons – He would hear and answer the heartfelt cry of a righteous man. (And God was his righteousness!) Elijah believed he could bring change to the sinful, idolatrous state of his nation by seeking earnestly the face of the Living God – his God.

So he prayed earnestly. It was not a “oncer” prayer where he prayed once and no more. Elijah prayed and kept on praying the same prayer – to many, a ridiculous prayer. That prayer was that **“there be no rain on the earth until I say so”** (1 Kings 17:1). Elijah kept on praying that prayer for three years and more. And for three and a half years there was no rain!

PRAYER TAKES CONTROL:

Through effectual fervent prayer, that righteous man rose to be the controlling influence of the nation. At the beginning, when he made his announcement about there being no rain **“but according to my word,”** he would have been the butt of jokes and mocking. But, as time went on, a drought came, the farmers were being squeezed of their production, the incomes of the people suffered, the government came under increasing pressure through loss of revenue, etc. – **all because one righteous man** (just like you and me) prayed effectually and earnestly. His prayer brought a nation to its knees! Crippled its economy!

His prayers caused the parliament of the day to change legislation. It became a criminal offence to withhold information regarding the whereabouts of Elijah (1 Kings 18:10-12). But no one could find him – why? Because God had hidden him (1 Kings 17:3). When God tells you where to hide no one will ever find you!

THE MAN ELIJAH:

Elijah’s prayer shows us it is God’s will for us to pray effectually, fervently and earnestly about matters affecting not only individuals, but nations. Such a simple request – but what devastating affects for Ahab and his idol worshippers!

“**RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTS A NATION**” (Proverbs 14:34):

Elijah is an example that it can be done. **Righteousness and righteous people praying can prevail over the forces of evil.**

Through the same kind of praying we can change the course of history to the glory of God. What a triumph for God and Christianity!

No rain for three and a half years! Think how that would affect your life today. Without water we cannot survive!

But the story did not finish there.

Verse 18: “And he (Elijah) prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”

After three years of praying there be no rain, Elijah changes his prayer and says, **“Now, Lord, let it rain!”** God said it was time for change; time for Elijah to show

himself again; time for the purposes of God to be revealed; time for judgment to be poured upon the false prophets (1 Kings 18). So, Elijah prayed earnestly for it to rain.

And it rained! Very quickly, from clear blue skies, the clouds came and the rain fell so hard that the roads were blocked by floodwaters (1 Kings 18:44-45). The earth responded and was revived to a new fruitfulness.

No wonder James takes time to teach us on how to pray in this Chapter!

Let us learn the lessons well, pray earnestly according to the will of God and He will use us to accomplish great things in our generation – even though we feel weak in ourselves. Remember Elijah!

I hope this Lesson has inspired you afresh in the area of prayer. God bless you.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How do you think Elijah rose above the fleshly emotions in his life?
2. How do you think he went about “praying earnestly”?
3. Can prayer control the elements and the affairs of nations today?
4. The God of Elijah is your God today - what kind of future does that promise you?
5. What is God saying to you right now?

Part Nine:

After many hours of Bible study which has taken us right through the Book of James, we find ourselves at the final Lesson. In many ways it is a little disappointing, as this book is just so full of good, practical teachings. But it is not quite over yet . . .

Verse 19: “**Brethren** (“brother or generally near kinsman; then, in plural, a vital community based on identity of origin, i.e. life; then, out of this community of life springs also the necessary idea of a community of love” – Bullinger’s – which is what Christianity is all about – we are brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ; brethren), **if any of you do err** (“to make to wander, cause to err, lead astray, especially used of doctrinal error, or religious deceit” – Bullinger’s) **from the truth** (“as the revealed reality lying at the base of Christian doctrine; the true teaching of the Gospel without any perversions”), **and one convert** (“to turn about”) **him**”;

Verse 20: “**Let him know** (“to perceive, observe, obtain a knowledge of or insight into” – Bullinger’s), **that he who converts** (“turns about”) **the sinner** (“the one who has erred from the divine law” – Bullinger’s) **from the error** (“wandering”) **of his way shall save** (“to make sound, preserve safe from danger, loss, or destruction. In a Christian sense, to save from death and judgment – as the consequences of sin – and to bring in all positive blessing in the place of condemnation” – Bullinger’s) **a soul from death** (“the sentence and punishment of God against sin, not merely an occurrence, but a state, the state of man as condemned through sin” – Bullinger’s), **and shall hide** (“to cover over so that no trace of it can be seen”) **a multitude** (“a great number”) **of sins.**”

Summing up his Epistle, James tells us **the whole purpose of it is to keep us walking in the truth of God's Word.** If we err from the truth, sin starts taking over and causing a reverse process to commence. If that reverse process is not halted, and we die in that condition, our sin will separate us eternally from God.

After making that first decision we then have to grow in the knowledge of what it means to be **FREE** from sin. Jesus said, ***"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*** In the Verses before that statement He told us how to know the truth and what the truth is. We know the truth by **BELIEVING ON JESUS** (John 8:31; Acts 16:31). The truth is **HIS WORD** – ***"If you continue in MY WORD, then are you My disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you FREE"*** (John 8:31-32).

"CONTINUE IN MY WORD"

True freedom for the Christian believer is continuing in God's Word. God's Word has an ongoing converting, cleansing effect upon us. But we must continue in it.

The Psalmist declared: ***"The law*** ("word, direction, teaching") ***of the Lord is perfect*** ("whole, complete"), ***converting*** ("refreshing" – Young's) ***the soul"*** (Psalm 19:7).

Jesus taught: ***"You are clean*** ("free from impurities, without blemish in its kind, spotless" – Bullinger's) ***through the Word which I have spoken to you"*** (John 15:3).

There is a saying which goes like this: "Either the Word of God will keep you from sinning, or sin will keep you from God's Word." How important it is that we keep walking according to the truth of God's Word (2 John 4).

IT IS POSSIBLE TO GO ASTRAY:

These last two Verses show us it is possible for Christians ***"to err from the truth."*** That is why we must be on guard to seek after "the truth that makes us free" and not "drift along" through life. Ongoing searching and studying of the Scriptures is part of being a disciple of Jesus. **Whenever we are corrected for being in error we should be grateful that someone was concerned enough to tell us rather than re-acting against them.**

We don't have to stay in error. We can take heed to loving advice from a fellow Christian and be restored. When we go astray into error ***"a multitude of sins"*** start to enter in to try and keep us away from finding once again the freedom in knowing Jesus.

KEEP SHARING THE TRUTH:

James want us to know there is a great work taking place when concerned Christians share their freedom, love and knowledge with others. One never knows when we will be in a position to be able to speak to someone who has "gone astray." We should always be **READY** to speak for our Lord! (See 1 Peter 3:15). When we lead backsliders and those in doctrinal error back to Jesus, the Bible tells us we are saving souls from death and hiding a multitude of sins.

The Book of James teaches us how to live in right relationship with God and people, and how to teach others to live in right relationship with God and people. In obeying God's Word we fulfil His desire towards us.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How would you know if someone had erred from the truth?
2. What happens spiritually when someone goes astray from the truth?
3. What happens when we convert someone back to Jesus and His Word?
4. What have you learned most from the Book of James?
5. Do you feel competent enough to be able to address someone in doctrinal error? If not, why not?
6. If your answer to Question 5 was “no,” what do you need to do to change your position?

FINAL WORD:

It has been a real privilege to have you spend time going through the very challenging, yet practical, Book of James with me. My prayer and desire is that you will have gained so much more from the Word of God. May your appetite have been whetted to want to spend more time in God's Word.

Let me encourage you to take others through this Manual; to spend valuable time in sharing and discussing together truths of God's Book.

If you're a leader in a small or large group of people, think of the possibilities and benefits of speaking together of the gems that are to be found in the Book of James. You will never regret working through a Manual like this on a Bible Book like James!

If this Manual has really helped and blessed you, why not take the time to write and let us know. We would love to hear from you . . .

For further studies, please feel free to write, phone or call:

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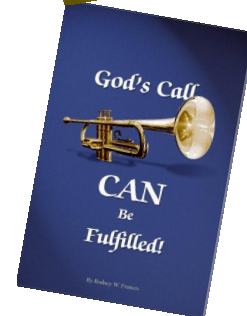
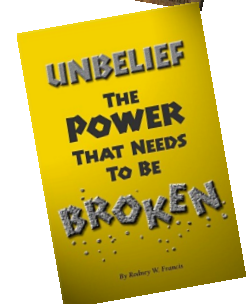
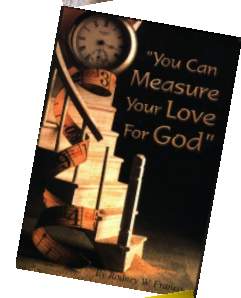
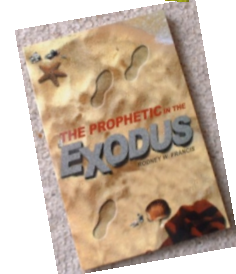
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- CURSES (By RODNEY FRANCIS, LEN BUTTNER & KERRY WRIGHT)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



RODNEY AND JEAN

Rodney W. Francis was converted in 1959 at 17 years of age, and sovereignly received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit in the midst of a herd of cows at 18 years of age. There he received the call of God to preach. Doors opened up for him to commence preaching a short time later, and he has been preaching ever since. He is the Founder/Director of The Gospel Faith Messenger, a many-faceted Christian Ministry that reaches out to multiplied thousands of people around the world through Gospel literature, books, manuals, E-Mail ministries, the World Wide Web, 3 Bible Correspondence Courses (free), Equipping Stations (Training of Prophetic Teams), International Training Schools, Prophetic Conferences, Personal Prophetic Ministry, Schools Of The Holy Spirit, Church Meetings, Counselling, Audio Cassettes, CD's, etc. For more than 47 years (commenced April 1964) this Ministry has impacted multiplied thousands of people in currently 108 nations. Today many are discovering their Spiritual Gifts and the joys of hearing and obeying the voice of God through the teachings of The GFM Teams.

Rodney and his wife, Jean, live by faith and the Ministry has a number of dedicated, voluntary workers that enable us to make the financial donations go almost 100% toward reaching people for Christ. Your ongoing prayer support of The GFM Ministry is greatly appreciated.

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