

The General Epistle of James

The Who of James

- A. The identity of James in the N.T. and the author of this epistle is one of the more difficult N.T. dilemmas.
- B. We know the Author is the Holy Spirit, but God chose special men to write the words in their style.
- C. There are three apostles named *James* in the New Testament, if we compare scripture submissively.
 - 1. James the son of Zebedee and James the son of Alphaeus were of the original twelve apostles.
 - 2. But Paul identified another James that he declared to be a brother of Jesus, and it is on the basis of this appellation and related scriptures that we understand three apostles with this name (Gal 1:19).
 - 3. The Lord Jesus Christ had literal brothers and sisters (Psalm 69:8; Matthew 12:46-50; 13:53-58).
 - 4. Sure enough, the Lord did have four brothers, including James and Judas; and likely in order of age, they were James, Joses, Simon, and Judas (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3).
 - 5. James and Judas were popular names, because they were the Greek forms of Jacob and Judah.
 - 6. There is no necessity to modify *brother* in Gal 1:19, other than to defend Mary's perpetual virginity; therefore, we choose to honor the word *brother* and the related scriptures to exalt a third James.
 - 7. His *brethren* are always with Mary (Matt 12:46-47; Mark 3:31; Luke 8:19; John 2:12; Acts 1:14).
 - 8. There are lame popish explanations of stepbrothers, cousins, and even sisters with the same name.
 - 9. After the twelve were chosen, the Lord's brethren, including James, did not believe (John 7:5); but some or all of the brothers of Jesus were later converted (John 7:1-10; Acts 1:14; I Cor 9:5).
 - 10. But before Pentecost we find the brothers of Jesus closely connected to, but distinguished from, the eleven, which also had brothers James and Judas (Acts 1:13-14 cp Matt 13:55 cp Jude 1:1).
 - 11. Regarding the right to have a wife, Paul separated Christ's brothers again from the apostles, indicating that they had very lofty positions or reputations in the early church (I Cor 9:5).
 - 12. James, like Barnabas, was also an apostle of Jesus Christ (Acts 14:4,14; I Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19).
- D. We find James in an important role writing this epistle, and Jude the brother of James later (Jude 1:1).
 - 1. If the author is the leading James of Jerusalem, he was the perfect man to write Jewish readers.
 - 2. We choose to believe this important James to be the Lord's literal brother by virtue of Gal 1:19 and 2:9.
 - 3. Is the descriptive phrase, "the Lord's brother," restricting the James of 1:19, or introducing James of 2:9?
 - 4. Due to the nature of this Bible dilemma, you cannot prove either use of Galatians with absolute certainty, because even a brother named Judas applies to both of them (Jude 1:1 cp Acts 1:13 and Matthew 13:55).
 - 5. James was an important leader, if not senior pastor, of the church in Jerusalem by several marks.
 - 6. Jesus appeared specially to James, apart from the apostles, which was likely His brother, and which might have provoked his conversion, for the son of Alphaeus had no special status (I Cor 15:7; Mark 15:40).
 - 7. When Peter was safely rescued from prison, he wanted the news carried to James (Acts 12:17).
 - 8. He settled the council of Jerusalem by his sentence after hearing other apostles (Acts 15:13-21).
 - 9. When Paul visited Jerusalem after his conversion, he visited with Peter and James (Gal 1:18-19).
 - 10. When Paul visited Jerusalem 14 years later, he lists this James as first among pillars (Gal 2:9,12).
 - 11. When Paul returned to Jerusalem for the last time, he followed James' directions (Acts 21:17-26).
 - 12. He clearly had a ministry to the circumcision, who would have received his correction (Gal 2:9).
 - 13. Remaining in Jerusalem beyond the other apostles would have clearly bolstered his reputation.
 - 14. Since his blood relationship to the Lord is stated, it must have been weighty (Gal 1:19; I Cor 9:5).
- E. What can we conclude with certainty about the penman of this epistle without forcing a human opinion?
 - 1. Jesus had literal brothers and sisters by Mary – not stepbrothers or cousins; at least some were converted; they were of importance in the early church; at least one named James was an apostle.
 - 2. We cannot prove the connection of Gal 1:19 to 2:9; the specific identity of the author of this epistle; nor the specific identity of the penman of Jude, since he is only identified as the brother of James.
 - 3. We may assume that the Lord's brother wrote the epistle by an introductory connection of Gal 1:19 to Gal 2:9 and by an assumption that the important James of Jerusalem is the penman.

The Whom of James

- A. Since the ministry of James was to Jews, we should not be surprised his epistle was to Jews (Gal 2:9).
 - 1. We find Peter, another minister of the circumcision, writing to the same audience (I Peter 1:1).
- B. Thankfully, we are clearly told it was written to Jews scattered throughout the world (1:1).
 - 1. Ten tribes were scattered by the Assyrians in approximately 635 B.C. (II Kings 18:9-12).
 - 2. Two tribes were scattered by the Babylonians in approximately 522 B.C. (Daniel 1:1).
 - 3. Though a small band returned to Jerusalem, many remained behind in Babylon and Persia.
 - 4. These are seen in the Jews at Pentecost and in Peter's location (Acts 2:5-11; I Peter 5:13).
 - 5. There were Jews throughout the Roman world with synagogues (Acts 6:9; 17:2; I Peter 1:1).
- C. Thankfully, we are clearly told they were converts to Christianity and the New Testament faith.
 - 1. They had been born again as surely as James had been and by the same means as James (1:18).
 - 2. They are described as brethren having the faith – doctrine or gospel – of Jesus Christ (2:1).
 - 3. They are exhorted to convert one another back to the truth in case of any heresy (5:19-20).
 - 4. This is further confirmed by a conspicuous silence about the gospel essentials of Jesus Christ.
- D. Jewish believers could have easily overreacted to neglect holiness in embracing faith and grace.
 - 1. The book's thrust is obedience and holy living in contrast to merely believing on Jesus Christ.
 - 2. Peter and Jude warned of Jews turning God's grace into lasciviousness (II Peter 2:19; Jude 1:4).
 - 3. A common charge against grace has been the license to sin (Rom 6:1-2,15; Gal 5:13; I Pet 2:16).
 - 4. They may have heard Paul's emphasis on faith against legalism and thrown out the baby!

The Why of James

- A. The very practical nature of the book indicates their practical weakness, rather than doctrinal error.
- B. Consider the many warnings of only a form of godliness (1:26-27; 2:1,14; 3:10; 4:4; 5:1,12,19-20).
- C. Throughout, the readers are exhorted to godly living in many areas of life beyond mere faith in God.
- D. By condemning a faith-only concept of justification, this epistle fits our generation's excesses wisely.
- E. Much of Romans and Galatians are to combat Jewish legalism, but James Jewish antinomianism.

The What of James

- A. It is a powerful exhortation and warning to practical holiness from the very beginning to the very end.
 - 1. There is only one verse of salutation, identification, or greeting anywhere ... the very first verse.
 - 2. Otherwise, the epistle continues unabated in style and intensity to the very last words of teaching.
 - 3. This leader and minister of the Jews brought his full weight to bear for personal righteousness.
- B. Note that there is no mention of blood, gospel, eternal life, the Holy Spirit, redemption, forgiveness, cross, sacrifice, atonement, reconciliation, peace with God, Christ's death or resurrection, etc., etc.
 - 1. There are only two indirect references to Jesus Christ by name, but thirteen to God (1:1; 2:1).
 - 2. There is only one reference to the grace, but it is only practical grace for practical living (4:6).
 - 3. Yet there are seven references to law, and James exalts the royal law of loving neighbor (2:8).

The When of James

- A. It was written before Jerusalem's destruction, for he speaks of imminent judgment in the near future (5:1-9).
- B. It was written during the time of reformation, for he refers to an apostolic sign gift in the early church of miraculous healing by anointing with oil and prayer (5:14-15; Mark 6:13; I Tim 5:23; II Tim 4:20).

The Where of James

- A. James is always in Jerusalem when we find him in the N.T., so we shall assume he wrote from there.
- B. Those locally knew his views from public teaching, so he wrote this epistle to the dispersed Jews.

The Outline of James 1

- 1 Salutation and greeting (1:1).
- 2 Purpose of trials (1:2-4).
- 3 Offer of wisdom (1:5-8).
- 4 Vanity of riches (1:9-11).
- 5 Enduring temptation (1:12-17).
- 6 Born to righteousness (1:18-21).
- 7 Doers of the word (1:22-25).
- 8 Pure religion (1:26-27).

Meditative Readings

I Sam 30:1-6	II Cor 4:8-18	II Cor 12:1-10	I Kings 3:5-15
I Samuel 2:1-10	Luke 16:19-31	Genesis 22:1-12	Psalms 107:21-31
Acts 5:24-42	Genesis 39:7-12	II Samuel 11:1-5	II Sam 13:1-29
John 3:1-8	John 5:21-30	Ephesians 2:1-10	Isaiah 58:1-8
Ezekiel 33:27-33	Titus 2:11-15		

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

- A. See the introduction above for a review of the three men named James in the New Testament.
- B. See the introduction above for a review of the twelve tribes of Israel and their scattered state.
- C. Every God-called minister is a servant of God and Jesus Christ without any regard for self.
 1. Consider how our Lord's oldest sibling, though once unbelieving, became His servant!
 2. They did not take the office for themselves, but they were chosen for it by God (Heb 5:4).
 3. They have no personal ambition but to glorify God (John 3:30; Phil 1:20; I Peter 5:3).

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

- A. He addresses them kindly as *brethren*, not as Jews, but as Christians, to assist his warnings.
- B. We must *count* it all joy, for the flesh would never consider pain to be worth celebrating!
 1. This is strange advice that the world does not understand, and they cannot attain to it!
 2. No natural man could or would ever believe or teach that difficulties are precious events.
 3. Therefore, it is a duty to consider the benefits and appreciate the means chosen for them.
 4. Note how Job first viewed the terrible news that poured in upon him (Job 1:20-22; 2:10).
- C. We should receive difficulties in our lives with *all joy*, for they are the means to perfection!
 1. The degree of joy about any thing should be in proportion to the value of that given thing.
 2. What is more valuable than complete perfection? What could possibly bring more joy?
 3. James will list benefits of (a) patience, (b) perfection, (c) wisdom, and (d) crown of life.
 4. Is joy possible facing afflictions, difficulties, suffering, or trouble? See Matthew 5:10-12.
 5. God tempted Abraham with Isaac, but this holy man of faith rose up early in the morning and faced the temptation head on with strong faith (Genesis 22:1-3; Hebrews 11:17-19).
 6. Paul learned until he gloried in difficulties that God would not remove (II Corinthians 12:9)!
 7. And he taught the Romans to glory in their tribulations, just like James here (Romans 5:3).
 8. Before finishing the epistle, James will describe happiness by enduring tribulation (5:11).

- D. We *fall* into different and various temptations only by the sovereign grace and love of God through His providence, for we would certainly not choose these afflictions ourselves.
 1. There are difficulties waiting for us in the pathway of life, which we would not choose.
 2. If a sparrow cannot fall without our Father, we can trust Him fully (Matthew 10:29-31)!
 3. God does not seduce us to sin (1:13-16), but he definitely tempts us as here (Genesis 22:1).
- E. The *temptations* here are afflictions, suffering, and troubles that try faith and build patience.
 1. Temptations that are seductions to sin are clearly dealt with later in the chapter (1:12-17).
 2. Falling into seductions to sin is not something we should count all joy in any way at all.
 3. We do not want patience with temptations to sin ... we want to learn hatred and rejection!
- F. What are *divers* – different or various – *temptations*? We see financial problems or scares, health fears or troubles, business difficulties, employment issues, family conflict with in-laws or children, marital stress, enemies in or out of the church, disappointments, confusion at dilemmas, persecution, infirmities, bereavement, reproaches, necessities, distresses, etc.
 1. The larger context shows that these Jews were suffering persecution (2:6) and strife (4:1).
 2. Every reader can identify at least one of these in his life, if not many more than one.
- G. God knows how to try your faith better than you can imagine, for He knows you better than you know you, and He would not be so foolish as to try one man with another's temptation!
- H. But He will never tempt you beyond your ability to withstand it; as a good father pities his children, so the Lord pities His children (I Cor 10:13; Psalm 103:13-14; II Cor 12:7-10).
- I. Can you see the testing and reward of Joseph, David, Daniel, and Esther? Count it all joy!
- J. We must understand chastening and testing as His love and faithfulness toward us (Psalm 119:67,71,75; Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 5:12-13; I Corinthians 11:32; Jeremiah 31:18-20).
- K. It should still be our prayer to be delivered from temptations, as He taught us (Matt 6:13).

3 *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*

- A. The choice to value difficulties and count them all joy is based on *knowing* this right here.
 1. Your Father has not merely asked you to get excited about pain without explaining why!
 2. There is a very good reason why we should count divers temptations as a reason for joy.
 3. Rather than endure trials and temptations by natural means, we must rejoice with faith.
 4. The natural man is a survivor (or so he thinks), but his means are not God's wisdom here.
- B. God allows temptations to prove, refine, test, and *try your faith* to perfection, just as gold is proven, refined, tested, and tried to reach a level of purity for greater value (I Peter 1:6-7).
 1. What is faith? It is the belief and trust in God's existence and His rewarding (Heb 11:6).
 2. What is trying faith? Bringing about circumstances that require effort to keep believing!
 3. How great is your faith and sincere your religion? Or are you just a fair weather saint?
 4. Abraham's great faith was revealed by his actions with Isaac (2:21-23; Gen 22:11-12).
 5. Pleasure and prosperity do not test faith efficiently, for believing is easier with riches!
 6. Pain and adversity are much better at testing faith, for doubts then begin to flood the soul.
 7. Difficulties and troubles test the level of our faith and increase it for the next trial.
- C. What is *patience*? It is enduring afflictions and troubles without losing faith or hope in God.
 1. If we cheat ahead in James' epistle, we find him using "endurance" for patience (1:12).
 2. There is a natural tendency to resent difficulties and suffering with a temptation to quit.
 3. Patience cannot be acquired through prosperity, but rather adversity, so be prepared for it.
 4. Faith tried by afflictions produces patience, experience, and leads to hope (Rom 5:3-5).
 5. The Christian is never ashamed for glorying in tribulations, because God truly loves him, the Holy Spirit declares it to him, and it shall soon be manifested (Rom 5:5; 8:15-16,19).

- 6. Patience in suffering for faults is not real patience and does not impress God (I Pet 2:20).
- D. Temptations and trials only bring patience by God's grace and our perseverance: some men are overthrown by temptations and fall away or bring no fruit to perfection (Luke 8:13-14).
- E. Growth in grace to be more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ requires enduring afflictions.

4 *But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

- A. You *let patience have her perfect work* by joyfully allowing temptations to build your faith.
 - 1. If you resent temptations or respond to them in the flesh, you are not using them to grow.
 - 2. Temptations – adversity and difficulties – destroy and wreck most men, but not saints.
 - 3. We must guard against all complaining, despair, discouragement, envy, murmuring, rebellion, or resentment. We cannot blame God or despise the afflictions for our profit.
 - 4. By responding with faith and joy, patience will lead to experience and hope (Rom 5:3-5).
 - 5. The goal for saints is to learn all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness (Col 1:9-11).
 - 6. If we faint in the day of adversity, then both our faith and strength are small (Prov 24:10).
 - 7. Though Paul was cast down, he did not allow temptations to destroy him (II Cor 4:8-11).
- B. Our goal is to *be perfect and entire, wanting nothing*, which is Christian maturity like Christ.
 - 1. To be more like Jesus Christ requires us to bear up with adversity as perfectly as He did.
 - 2. Love actively proves eternal life; patience passively proves it (I John 3:14; I Thess 1:2-4).
 - 3. As part of being elect and fruitful saints, we must add patience to faith (II Peter 1:5-7).
 - 4. We possess our souls by holding fast our faith by patience in afflictions (Luke 21:19).
 - 5. If patience is the most difficult Christian grace (likely so), then we must let it develop!
 - 6. Since patience is clearly an important Christian grace, we do not want to be without it.
- C. Before ending, James will give other positive reasons for acquiring godly patience (5:10-11).

5 *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

- A. *Wisdom* here must be linked to temptations, but the offer is general enough for all wisdom.
 - 1. There is a clear need for wisdom to accept, endure, and learn from hard temptations (1:2).
 - 2. In fact, wisdom under stress and trial is often the most needed and important wisdom.
 - 3. Another contextual basis for introducing wisdom is perfect Christian character (1:4).
 - 4. We need wisdom for many things, especially in living in such a way as to please God; but the greatest demand for wisdom may be in responding joyfully to painful adversity.
 - 5. Wisdom is the power of right judgment – knowing God and His will in all situations, and this ability is tested to the extreme when we are facing distressing difficulties and trials.
- B. Grasp this text and do something with it! God offers wisdom like He gave to Solomon, which should immediately bring you to your knees to beg an outpouring of wisdom from God!
 - 1. All wisdom rests with God, so when He offers, it is incredible (Job 28:28; Col 2:3).
 - 2. If you do not understand *liberally*, it means generously (Pr 11:24; Mal 3:10; Luke 6:38).
 - 3. If you do not understand *upbraid*, it is to censure, criticize, or reproach (Mark 16:14).
- C. Take this sentence apart phrase by phrase to rejoice in the greatest opportunity of your life.
 - 1. What does it take to qualify for the offer? *A lack of wisdom!* Praise God, I qualify!
 - 2. What is required to get the offer? Simply *ask God* for it! Praise God, I can do that!
 - 3. How does the wisdom arrive? It comes as a *gift* from infinite Wisdom Himself! Glory!
 - 4. But can this offer truly be for me? Yes, indeed! It is for *all men*, you and all others!
 - 5. How generously does He give it? He gives it *liberally*, by His standard! There is plenty!

6. Will He resent or rebuke me? No! He wants you to come stupid and asking for a load!
7. Are you sure of this offer? Absolutely, yes! It is as certain as any other promise of God!
- D. What else can we consider in this promise to encourage our hearts and be mighty wise men?
 1. You cannot offend God by asking for too much, as Elisha's case shows (II Kings 2:9-12)!
 2. If you do not want wisdom for yourself, then how about for others (Prov 11:30; 24:26)!
- E. This promise is no more for the slothful than is this one, "Give us this day our daily bread."
 1. If you do not get off your backside and work, you will not have bread today (Pr 16:26)!
 2. If you spend without saving, you will not have bread tomorrow (Pr 13:23; 21:20; 30:25)!
 3. If you do not seek and take wisdom where God offers it, you will have none (Pr 1:24-31).
 4. It is a combination of asking and searching that results in finding wisdom (Prov 2:3-9).
 5. Lady Wisdom has set her table; will you come dine with her (Pr 1:20-23; 8:1-6; 9:1-5)?

6 *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

- A. God answers the prayers of those who believe without doubts (Matt 21:22; Mark 11:22-24).
 1. Godly men pray with holy lives and without anger ... and without doubting (I Tim 2:8)!
 2. God is only pleased by those who come believing He is and He answers (Hebrews 11:6).
 3. If you cannot do better, then believe, tell God so, and ask for more faith (Mark 9:23-24).
 4. We want to be like Abraham, who was strong in faith without staggering (Rom 4:18-22).
 5. When the Lord gave Peter a new job, He told him to do it without doubts (Acts 10:20).
- B. What causes you to *waver in your faith*, especially regarding wisdom, that cancels His offer?
 1. Above maybe any other request we could make, God has clearly promised wisdom to us!
 2. Can you read *lack* and *shall*? Can you read *liberally*? Can you read *upbraideth not*?
 3. Do you know you have not used all the means God has given you? Repent and confess it!
 4. Do you think that the offer and promise is only for others? Then you make God a liar!
 5. Do you think it is a Bible verse of conceptual doctrine or theory, rather than a real offer!
- C. God will send storms into your life: they may *move waves*, but they cannot move your faith!
 1. Waves are tossed to and fro, up and then down, one way one day and another way the next, but this is unacceptable for saints, who should have stability in God (Eph 4:14).
 2. The faith of saints is based on God's faithfulness! How can we waver (Heb 10:19-23)?
 3. Though things may go from bad to worse, we should be as bold as Jacob (Gen 32:24-32)!
 4. We must be the very opposite of the waters of the wicked (Is 57:20-21 cp Isaiah 26:3-4).

7 *For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

- A. The ruling is final and harsh – when the God of heaven offers, He expects us to have faith.
 1. The basis by which we please God is clear – belief in Him and His goodness (Heb 11:6).
 2. Those who pretend to a life of faith, but lack the conviction, shall be scoffed at by God.
- B. James teaches three obstacles to receiving, beginning with the obstacle of doubts right here.
 3. We have not, because we ask not; rather than seek from God, we wish it otherwise (4:2).
 4. We ask and have not, because we ask to consume things upon our wicked lusts (4:3).
 5. We ask and have not, because we ask with doubts, instead of full faith in God (1:6-7).

8 *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

- A. The double minded condition here should be understood primarily in light of doubts or faith.
- B. While it is true that double minded men playing with sin are unstable in all their ways, that is not the emphasis of this text, if we remain true to the Author's line of reasoning (4:8).

- C. It is a shame to see brothers flung from high to low by their doubts and fears, for faith in God and His promises is the solid foundation on which to build a stable life that cannot be moved.
- D. Instability is that condition just before a fall, and the man doubting in faith is about to fall!

9 *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:*

- A. It is common for a man to face temptation by his station in life or the economic measure of it.
 - 1. The poor may presume poverty is a judgment and let it breed bitterness, envy, or greed.
 - 2. The rich may presume riches are God's approval and let it breed pride, selfwill, or greed.
 - 3. Wise Agur argued that poverty and riches bring their own form of temptation (Pr 30:7-9).
 - 4. The Lord has made poor and rich, and they must joyfully measure themselves in Christ.
- B. James here addressed the poor elect of God, the saints of Jesus Christ, as shown by *brother*.
 - 6. The saints of Christ have always been primarily of the poor of the world (I Cor 1:26-29).
 - 7. Only an elect and converted poor man can understand or obey the command to joy here.
- C. The brother of *low degree* is defined financially by the contrast in context to the rich (1:10).
- D. We must rightly divide two senses to explain a brother of low degree also being *exalted*!
 - 1. We reject exceptional cases of poor becoming rich for a general rule of temptation, for the case is too rare, and the verb tenses describe both conditions as true simultaneously!
 - 2. Since the future tense is not used for the exaltation, we do not look at heaven primarily.
 - 3. If low degree is to be down, and exalted is to be up, then how can the down man be up!
 - 4. If economics is the issue, and it is; then how can a poor man be exalted at the same time?
 - 5. While his finances may put him low on the human scale, God's grace puts him at the top!
- F. Here we have another formula *to rejoice* by measuring ourselves by holy and wise standards.
 - 1. A man poor in things of this world can be rich in faith that makes great before God (2:5).
 - 2. Poor Lazarus was far better off than then rich man faring sumptuously. Rejoice, ye poor!
 - 3. A poor saint is a child of God, a friend of the King, and a joint-heir with Christ of God!
 - 4. There are no economic differences in God's family, in that the poor is of equal standing with Solomon, when it comes to spiritual blessings (I Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28; Eph 6:8).
 - 5. You can joyfully be a slave in this world, knowing you are Christ's freeman (I Cor 7:22).
 - 6. If you were never educated very well, you know things the wise cannot see (Matt 13:17).
 - 7. If you live in a little shack here, you have a place being prepared in heaven (John 14:1-3).
 - 8. If your father left you nothing, you have an eternal inheritance from God (Eph 1:11-14).

10 *But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.*

- A. We are dealing with *rich* saints of Jesus Christ, as shown by the use of *brother* above (1:9).
 - 1. Not many rich are called to eternal life – only some (Gen 13:2; Job 1:3; Acts 4:36-37).
 - 2. It is very hard for a rich man to humble himself to the gospel of Christ (Matt 19:23-24).
- B. We must rightly divide the sense to explain a rich brother being *made low* at the same time!
 - 1. The sense cannot be a reversal of fortune, because it is predicated on future passing away.
 - 2. Since the future tense is not used for becoming low, we do not look at heaven primarily.
 - 3. If economics is the issue, and it is; how can a rich man be made low at the same time?
 - 4. While his finances put him high on the human scale, God's grace puts him down low.
- C. Though not stated here, rich saints are to *rejoice* in their lowly status in Jesus Christ (1:9).
 - 1. It is a great temptation and trial for rich men to be able to submit to Christ and the saints.
 - 2. But rich saints understand the vanity of riches, unlike worldly counterparts (Ps 49:6-13).
 - 3. He is humbled by his profane sins, which require God's grace as much as any poor man.

4. He knows with utmost certainty that without Christ's blood he is as damned as any poor.
 5. Maybe for the first time he is utterly dependent on the mercy of Another high over him.
 6. Without free grace at the foot of the cross, the rich has no hope in this world or the next.
 7. You can joyfully be a master in this world, knowing you are Christ's servant (I Cor 7:22).
 8. Rich saints are to get down socially and be ready to give (Romans 12:16; I Tim 6:17-19).
 9. There are no economic differences in God's family, in that the poor is of equal standing with Solomon, when it comes to spiritual blessings (I Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28; Eph 6:8).
 10. There is in certain respects no difference between the rich and poor (Prov 22:2; 14:31), and every rich man should freely and humbly confess he was given all he has (I Cor 4:7).
 11. He can rejoice in having stable and eternal riches in glory, very unlike worldly wealth.
 12. He knows and obtains the true life of success – godliness with contentment (I Tim 6:6).
- D. The rich man's apparent advantage and luxury are very temporal in light of life and eternity.
1. The riches of this world are entirely subject to moths, mouths, rust, thieves, and taxes.
 2. Money is a defense and answereth all things, but it does not last long (Eccl 7:12; 10:19).
 3. Solomon taught financial prudence based on riches not lasting (Proverbs 23:4-5; 27:24).
 4. A rich brother brings nothing into this world, and he takes nothing to heaven (I Tim 6:7).

11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

- A. The nature of *grass and flowers* create a perfect analogy to the riches men may enjoy in life.
1. A rich man may fade away in this life as moths, mouths, rust, or thieves take away riches.
 2. And a rich man shall surely fade away in his luxurious ways when it is his time to die.
 3. The bright green grass, the pretty flowers, and their beautiful designs all consume away.
- B. This text is not describing rich men going to hell, but rich brothers losing their earthly glory.
1. It is a fault even of good men to trust in their riches to the detriment of their souls.
 2. The temptation of riches is partly endured by the divine knowledge of their dissipation.
- C. What are *the ways* of the rich man? Ease, luxury, pleasure, pomp, privilege, and protection.
1. But when he is on his deathbed, his riches cannot secure for him even another breath.
 2. And when he appears before God, his riches or success stories will not be remembered.
- D. Therefore, a rich brother should not trust in his riches, but be as humble as the poorest saint.

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

- A. Temptations and trials have been viewed variously, and now the *blessing* is pronounced.
1. The Lord provides encouragement to endure temptations by stating a promised reward.
 2. If sure evidence of eternal life is obtained by enduring, then all joy can be mustered (1:2).
- B. *Endurance* is not a pleasant effort – it is continuing under pain – but it can be done joyfully.
1. The Christian life is a long distance race; it is certainly not a sprint for Sunday morning.
 2. Some of life's temptations are long lasting, and the combination of them all is life long.
 3. A true trial of anything must raise the heat to the breaking point to truly test its integrity.
- C. This verse is transitional about *temptation*, from afflictions (1:2) to inducements to sin (1:13).
1. The emphasis is moving from afflictions and difficulties to seductions of our own lusts.
 2. The Lord brings some temptations (Gen 22:1; I Cor 10:13), and some He does not (1:13).
- D. The trial of this man's faith is more than merely being *tried*, but rather of enduring the trial.
1. There is no esteem or value in being tried, but rather in the godly enduring of the trial.

2. When you are tried – by whatever means – you must see the future reward of eternal life.
- E. The reward for enduring temptations of all sorts is a crown of life – or eternal life itself.
 1. There is proof of eternal life in faithful and patient enduring of temptations (I Thess 1:3).
 2. A crown is a reward, and the reward is life, which is eternal life (I Cor 9:25; Rev 2:10).
 3. Paul used very similar language in describing a crown of righteousness (II Timothy 4:8).
 4. This long-term perspective is only known and practiced by spiritually minded Christians.
- F. God promised a crown of life to all *who love Him*, which is the basis for enduring temptation.
 1. Paul reasoned that Christ’s love should provoke our love to live for Him (II Cor 5:14-15).
 2. James will repeat the theme of the heavenly kingdom being for those loving Christ (2:5).
 3. Those who are called according to God’s purpose are those who love Him (Rom 8:28).
 4. Loving God is not the condition for eternal life, but rather the evidence of it (I John 4:19).

13 *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:*

- A. The difficulty of enduring temptation is our lust to sin, but God is not the source of our lusts.
 1. The ease of anger, bitterness, or impatience at temptations comes entirely from within us.
 2. The Lord is not behind our evil desires and propensities – they are from our sinful hearts.
 3. If temptations are hard for you, it is due entirely to your own innate profane wickedness.
 4. God’s goodness in the past, in present ease, and in future rewards should help endurance.
 5. The holy God has only been good to you; do not blame Him for your love of wickedness.
 6. Why does He even send circumstantial temptations? Perfect you in godliness and hope!
- B. Lest any saint err in his judgment and assign blame to God, He denies tempting any to evil.
 1. God cannot be blamed for your love of sin; He does not love it; and He does not cause it.
 2. This verse must be rightly divided, because God certainly tempted Abraham (Gen 22:1).
 3. The definition of temptation we have moved to is enticement of lusts to sin (1:14-15).
 4. Skeptics love this verse in light of Gen 22:1, for they maliciously assume a contradiction.
 5. God tempts us by bringing circumstances to prove or try us (II Chr 32:31; I Cor 10:13).
 7. God does not tempt by putting lust for evil in us; we already have more than enough.
 8. God arranged the circumstances of Mrs. Potiphar and Bathsheba, but He infused no evil.
 9. The Lord allowed Satan to tempt David and Job, but each man was responsible to obey.
- C. God cannot be tempted by lusts to sin, but He can be tempted to judge (Deut 6:16; Ps 78:41).
- D. God does not tempt any to lust for sin, but He orders situations to try your faith vs. lusts.

14 *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

- A. Every man is tempted in the sense of enticement to sin by his own lusts from his own heart, which are the depraved desires for sin that we have by virtue of our first birth to sinful parents (Jer 17:9).
- B. God cannot be blamed for this aspect or stage of temptation at all, for He is holy far above our lusts.
- C. It is desire for sin in our own hearts that draws us away from faith, godliness, holiness, and patience.
- D. Once the desire for sin sets its sight on a sin, it is enticed and delighted with the prospect for that sin.
- E. Two rules: keep your heart with all diligence (Pr 4:23), and avoid any sinful situations (Rom 13:14).

15 *Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

- A. Once lusts are enticed and delighted with the prospect and idea of sin, they wait for the opportunity.
- B. Once sin has been committed, it brings forth death in all sort of different and painful ways.
 1. Adam died the day he ate the forbidden fruit, but died physically 930 years later (Gen 2:17; 5:5).

2. When we sin, we kill our fellowship, joy, and peace with God (I Timothy 5:6; James 5:19-20).
 3. When we sin, we can kill our reputations and influence with men (Eccl 10:1; Matt 5:13).
 4. When we sin, we can put civil laws in motion to kill us (Prov 16:14; Romans 13:4; I Pet 2:14).
 5. When we sin, we can put others in motion to kill us (Pr 6:32-35; I Sam 25:13; II Sam 13:22-29).
 6. When we sin, we kill relationships with those around us (Gen 3:7-8; 26:34-35; II Sam 13:15).
 7. When we sin, we kill our conscience to sin w/o hope of repentance (I Tim 4:2; II Tim 2:25-26).
 8. When we sin, we prove that physical death is our choice and we deserve to die (Rom 6:23).
 9. When we sin, we prove we deserve the second death (Revelation 20:11-15; 21:8; Acts 13:46).
 10. When we sin, we bring death nearer by God's judgment (Prov 8:36; Eccl 7:17; Ezek 18:4).
 11. When we sin, we kill hearts of those who loved us and taught us the truth (Pr 5:12-14; 17:25).
 12. When we sin, we kill our understanding of things by sin's deceitfulness (Jer 17:9; Heb 3:12-13).
 13. When we sin, we kill our knowledge of things by God's judgment (Ezek 14:7-11; I John 2:11).
 14. When we sin, we kill God's hearing of our prayers (Ps 66:18; Prov 15:8,29; 28:9; Isaiah 59:1-2).
 15. The devil is a destroyer, and we should always remember it (Rev 9:11; Matt 27:3-5; Acts 1:18).
- C. We die to fellowship, relationships, joy, life, etc., etc. And then we receive the second death!
- D. We should consider the case of Amnon with Tamar in all its sordid details as a perfect example of this horrible process of sin and its effects (II Cor 13:1-20).

16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.

- A. This is theology – the science of God – at its best. God is not responsible for your sinning.
1. We are not fatalists like some applications of Islam, for God does not tempt us to sin.
 2. God may arrange circumstances for you to be pressed, but it is your lusts that revolt in sin.
 3. And God will never tempt you above what you are able to endure or escape (I Cor 10:13).
- B. We must never impugn the character or providence of God with any temptation to sinfulness.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

- A. God is good and holy, and every good thing we have is from Him, and He only does us good.
1. God made man upright – very good, but he has sought out many inventions (Eccl 7:29).
 2. God made Mrs. Potiphar a woman with libido – a good gift, but she perverted God's gift.
 3. God made Bathsheba a beautiful woman – a good gift, but David abused God's gift.
 4. Every spiritual blessing and grace we enjoy and use came down from the God of all grace.
 5. God is no more the Author of Sin than is the sun the cause of darkness by nightfall occurring when it withdraws from the world. God and the sun are light – darkness is their absence!
 6. Anything we have internally or externally that is good came from our Father in heaven.
- B. He is the Father of lights, as opposed to the darkness and ignorance of sin (I John 1:5).
- C. There is no variableness in Him at all in these matters, for He is always perfectly holy.
- D. The sun may vary from day to day and season to season, but not the light of heaven's Sun.

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

- A. James by the Holy Ghost begins a new lesson here – the fifth – of our regeneration to righteousness.
1. The previous lesson rejected God as the source of evil, but rather of all good and perfect gifts.
 2. Rather than tempt us with lusts in our soul, God regenerates us with a new soul to love holiness.
- B. There are about three positions that one can hold as to the doctrine of regeneration in this verse.

1. The *begetting* here is regeneration; the *word of truth* is the Bible; thus decisional regeneration, which is the most popular scheme promoted today for mass evangelism of a manmade variety.
 2. The *begetting* here is first gospel conversion; the *word of truth* is the Bible; so gospel initiation, which is what Paul described about his relationship to the Corinthians believers (I Cor 4:15).
 3. The *begetting* here is regeneration; the *word of truth* is Jesus Christ; thus sovereign regeneration, which is what the rest of the Bible teaches about the executive role of Christ in our new birth.
 4. We reject decisional regeneration for at least the seven proofs of unconditional salvation. [See link.](#)
 5. Both of the other options retain doctrinal integrity, but context points to sovereign regeneration.
- C. *Begetting* is the term used to describe our regeneration, new birth, or quickening to spiritual life.
1. **Beget.** To procreate, to generate; usually said of the father, but also of both parents (OED).
 2. This expression is used in association with being born again (I John 5:1; I Peter 1:3).
 3. God begets by creating a holy, righteous, and God-like nature in sinners (Eph 2:10; 4:24).
- D. This begetting follows immediately upon the description of God as a Giver of perfect gifts (1:17).
1. Regeneration is elsewhere described as the gift of God (Ephesians 2:4-9; Romans 6:23).
 2. Only the almighty power of God can give the gift of eternal life (John 17:2; Eph 1:19-20).
- E. This begetting, regeneration, or salvation, is according to *God's own will* (1:18).
1. This fact is most surely the case in our regeneration (John 3:8; 5:21; Titus 3:5; Romans 9:15).
 2. The will of dead sinners – nonexistent toward God – has no role (Ps 10:4; John 1:13; Rom 9:16).
 3. Our will in the new birth is no more active than was our will in our first birth – it was excluded.
- F. This begetting, regeneration, or salvation, is described as a *creation of God* (1:18).
1. Regeneration is described elsewhere in scripture as a creation (Eph 2:10; 4:24; Col 3:10).
 2. The Son of God created everything without any exceptions (Revelation 4:11; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16).
 3. God has never employed means outside Himself for creating (Hebrews 11:3; Psalm 33:6).
 4. It is further true that a creature is totally passive in its creation (Isaiah 45:9-10; I Cor 4:7).
- G. This begetting as a new creature was executed according to God's will by *Jesus Christ* (1:18).
1. God used Jesus Christ as an executor in the natural creation (Hebrews 1:1-2; Ephesians 3:9).
 2. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is surely the means of our new life in God (John 5:25-29; 17:2).
 3. The Spirit is definitely involved as well (John 3:8; Titus 3:5), but compare Gen 1:2 and John 1:3!
 4. The instrument God the Father used – “with” – in begetting these here was the word of truth.
- H. What is the *word of truth*? Can it be the Lord Jesus Christ, according to our argument so far?
1. One of Jesus Christ's principal names is, The Word of God (John 1:1,14; I John 1:1; Rev 19:13).
 2. The Word of God – Jesus Christ – is the Creator of all things both naturally and spiritually.
 3. Take comfort in this interpretation by the obvious same sense missed by most in Hebrews 4:12.
 4. What about the prepositional phrase, “of truth”? How about a similar one, “of life” (I John 1:1).
 5. The rules for capital letters had not been formalized (I Jn 1:1; Heb 4:12; Is 7:14; 9:6; Dan 3:25).
 6. Jesus Christ is the Word of Life and the Word of Truth (John 14:6 cp Revelation 19:11,13).
 7. The Bible and/or the gospel can be called the word of truth, but it does not fit here, for it does not work regeneration, and it profits no one without the will of that one involved (Eph 1:13).
 8. Peter used a very similar contrast of the living and written word in his writing (I Peter 1:23-25).
- I. What is being a *kind of firstfruits of His creatures*?
1. These Jewish believers were creatures of God by regeneration (Ephesians 2:10; 4:24; Col 3:10).
 2. Were these regenerate saints typical of God's children in comparison to all human creatures, or were these early Jewish saints some of the first of God's elect to be converted by the gospel?
 3. Firstfruits means the first of more to follow, taken from an important Levitical feast (Lev 23:10-14; Romans 16:5; I Corinthians 15:10,23; 16:15).
 4. We choose the latter interpretation (Acts 2:5-41; Romans 1:16; 8:23; 15:27; Eph 1:12-13).

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

- A. The *wherefore* of this text is drawing a conclusion, a consequence, from what has just been stated.
1. God's regenerating grace in the lives of Jewish firstfruits called for their righteous living, for we should respond by walking worthy of God unto all pleasing (Eph 4:1; Col 1:10; I Thess 2:12).
 2. Peter will call for their godly lives before Gentiles based on this preferential role (I Pet 2:9-12).
 3. The next chapters show these believers had problems with holy living (1:27; 2:19; 3:14-16; 4:4).
- B. God's design for these Jews was to be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures in living righteously.
1. While the three rules in this text are surely true generally, they are particularly true of the truth.
 2. These virtues are important in every part of life, but they are very important in religious duties.
 3. We should be ready meekly receive the written word for righteous living (1:20-21; Isaiah 66:2).
- C. To fulfill God's purpose in our regeneration, we should be *swift to hear* any instruction He sends us.
1. We certainly want to be swift to hear in all aspects of life, but the contextual use is toward truth.
 2. In all aspects of life, we want to hear before reacting, for haste makes waste (Pr 18:13; 29:19).
 3. Wise men desire to hear instruction and rebuke (Pr 1:5; 9:9; 12:1; 18:1; 22:17; I Thess 5:20).
 4. Remember the zeal of those in Ezra's day, when they stood to hear God's words (Neh 8:1-12).
 5. We should have the ready spirit to hear of Samuel and Cornelius (I Samuel 3:9; Acts 10:33).
 6. Our Lord Christ warned very pointedly about the importance of hearing correctly (Luke 8:18).
 7. The Bereans were called noble by receiving the word with all readiness of mind (Acts 17:11).
- D. To fulfill God's purpose in regeneration, we should be *slow to speak* against instruction He gives.
1. We surely want to be slow to speak in most aspects of life, but the contextual use is toward truth.
 2. We do not want to answer hastily, answer again, or sin in a multitude of words (Deut 27:16; Proverbs 9:7-8; 10:19; 15:28; 17:27-28; Eccl 10:12-14,20; Titus 2:9-10; James 1:26; 3:1-13).
 3. But we especially do not want to presume against God with haughty or rebellious speech (Exodus 22:28; Eccl 10:1-3; Is 29:20-21; Ezek 33:30; I Thess 5:20; Titus 1:16).
- E. To fulfill God's purpose in our regeneration, we should be *slow to wrath* against truth or reproof.
1. We want to avoid anger in all sinful ways, but we especially want to do so toward God and truth.
 2. Ruling your spirit and passions is a mark of righteousness and wisdom (Pr 16:32; 25:28). Glory!
 3. Anger and wrath, two of the violent passions, will take you headlong into sin (Pr 14:17,29; 15:18; 19:11; Acts 15:39; Eccl 7:9; Titus 1:7; James 3:17-18).

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

- A. A reason for being slow to wrath is its contrariness to the righteousness of God. Anger and wrath are blinding passions that cause loss of control far faster than wine or strong drink, and they lead to sin.
1. Ruling your spirit and passions is a mark of righteousness and wisdom (Pr 16:32; 25:28). Glory!
 2. Anger and wrath, two of the violent passions, will take you headlong into sin (Pr 14:17,29; 15:18; 19:11; Acts 15:39; Eccl 7:9; Titus 1:7; James 3:17-18).
- B. Anger must not include sin (Eph 4:26). Jesus taught unjustified anger was murder (Matt 5:21-26).
- C. Fools and scorners get angry wickedly at being rebuked (Proverbs 9:7-8; 15:10,12; Amos 5:10).
- D. Consider how the Jews reacted angrily to preaching by Jesus and Stephen (Luke 4:28-29; Acts 7:54).

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

- A. *Wherefore* expects more results from regeneration (1:18) and seeking God's righteousness (1:20).
1. Those addressed in this verse are those already born again as God's creatures by His will (1:18).

2. The exhortation to salvation in this verse must be a consequence to the salvation already defined.
 3. By begetting, God creates us and motivates us to walk in good works (Eph 2:10; Phil 2:13).
 4. In this new state we are to work out what God has worked in (Phil 2:12-13 cp James 1:20).
- B. To work the righteousness of God, you must live a holy life and receive God's word with meekness.
- C. There are things we must lay apart – or get rid of by putting distance between ourselves and it.
1. We set apart things to avoid – menstruating women under Moses (Lev 15:19; 18:19; Eze 22:10).
 2. We set apart things that are to be treated differently – as the animals for sacrifice (Exodus 13:12).
 3. If we carefully analyze words, this is stronger than putting off our sins (Eph 4:22; Col 3:8-9).
 4. Peter used similar wording in a similar context of holiness as necessary to learning (I Pet 2:1-3).
 5. To run the Christian race we must lay aside every weight and our most tempting sins (Heb 12:1).
 6. Only a pure mind is suitable and ready to receive the gospel of Jesus and delight in it (II Pet 3:1).
 7. How thoroughly have you laid apart all filthiness and naughtiness of the world i.e. music, friends, television, reading, thoughts, speech, hobbies, and so forth (II Cor 7:1)?
- D. We have three words we need to define to properly understand this first verse in our chosen passage.
- a. **Filthiness.** Moral corruption or pollution; obscenity, vileness, wickedness.
 - b. We must cleanse, or wash, our flesh and spirit, of all filthiness, for God to receive us (II Cor 7:1).
 - c. **Superfluity.** More than is needed, excessive; extravagance or immoderate indulgence.
 - d. We had our fill of sin in the past, when we went to excess; now we are different (I Pet 4:3-5).
 - e. Let us consider wisely here: is there some naughtiness not superfluous? No, it is all superfluous!
 - f. **Naughtiness.** Moral badness or wickedness; bad, wrong, blameworthy, improper; waywardness.
 - g. The transgressions of the wicked will take and destroy them in their own naughtiness (Pro 11:6).
 - h. Clearly stated here is the necessary prerequisite of holiness for fruitful hearing (John 7:17).
- E. There is something we are to receive with meekness – or accept in a humble way of submission.
- a. The action of receiving is reaching forth to take something that is available or offered for taking.
 - b. Doing it with meekness is rejecting any self-protection or resentment of negative consequences.
 - c. **Meekness.** Free from haughtiness and self-will; piously humble and submissive.
 - d. Here is the fulfillment of a precious proverb describing the beauty of an obedient ear (Pr 25:12).
- F. The engrafted word must be received with meekness as a corollary and extension of laying apart sin.
- a. **Engrafted.** To graft in; to insert. *transferred.* To set firmly in. *figurative.* To implant in the mind.
 - b. Which word is engrafted in us? The written word, the law of God, not the living Word of 1:18.
 - c. Paul told the Romans it was in them; he told the Hebrews it was in them (Rom 10:8; Heb 8:10).
 - d. The Old Testament addressed the ears; the New Testament is in the heart (II Corinthians 3:3-6).
 - e. This word is obviously the Scriptures, as written and preached by looking and hearing (1:22-25).
- G. This engrafted word can save our souls, if we receive it with meekness and do it, as our verses teach.
- a. The holy brethren addressed were already born again by the living Word of God (1:2,16,18,19).
 - b. We are born again here to work out our salvation that He worked in (Eph 2:10; Phil 2:12-13).
 - c. This salvation is strictly from error and sin, as James plainly tells us later in his epistle (5:19-20).
 - d. The salvation under consideration is the righteous manifestation of God's regenerate creatures.
 - e. And salvation from error and sin is most surely a salvation from death (Luke 15:24; I Tim 5:6).
 - f. Receiving is hearing and doing, and it reveals us as children of God (Luke 6:35 cp I John 3:10).

22 *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

- A. There is no profit in hearing only, as Paul blasts the Jews for pride by hearing (Romans 2:1 – 3:19).
- B. Having spent several verses preparing them to receive God's words, now he stresses obedience to it.
1. Jesus corrected the Jews' false idea of salvation by the mere possession of Scripture (John 5:39).
 2. The devil will give a man confidence in hearing, to keep him from doing, to neuter his religion.

3. The deception is believing that hearing is evidence of life and will save a man from error and sin.
 4. Note the parable of the sower: three types of ground heard and rejoiced, but they were fruitless.
 5. It is nothing to receive God or His Word by faith without works, as James will prove (2:14-26).
- C. Your lack of doing, lack of fruit, and lack of works does not deceive God or good men, just yourself.
1. Hearing without doing is deception as to evidence of salvation (1:22,26 cp 2:14-26; Rom 2:13).
 2. It is a lie that you can attend church, hear preaching, and even be convicted, without obeying.
 3. The Jews took confidence in the lying words that God's temple would save them (Jer 7:1-15).

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:*

- A. Those who hear the Word of God without obeying are like a man beholding his face in a mirror.
1. While they may not have had glass mirrors as we today, they polished metals to reflect like glass.
 2. Being in the presence of the preaching of God's word is like looking at your face in a mirror.
 3. The first part of improving appearance is done – you see blemishes and things needing repair.
- B. Bible preaching is to identify and expose error and sin of any sort in the lives of every single hearer.
1. Paul made war – to cast down all imaginations and thoughts contrary to God (II Cor 10:3-6).
 2. Showing God's people their sins is work of the ministry (Is 58:1). It is a game to some (Is 58:2).
- C. Nine times each week, not counting personal exhortations and correspondence, you are shown spots.
- D. Consider for illustration the blemishes (errors and sins) identified this past week on your gospel face.

24 *For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.*

- A. The man who hears without doing is like a man seeing his blemishes but going away and forgetting.
1. Rather than washing his face, combing his hair, brushing his teeth, etc., he blows out the door!
 2. He rushes off to an important interview or sales calls in his pajamas and his unruly hair on end!
- B. The three grounds of our Lord's parable of the sower ascribed fruitlessness to lack of attention and preparation, little strength to withstand opposition, and seducing worldly attractions (Luke 8:4-18).
- C. Though he heard and saw his sins identified and exposed by preaching, he leaves with false security.
1. This is self-deception: that though he comes far short of God's word, he will somehow survive.
 2. He forgets he has some serious problems, which will cause him disgrace and shame eventually.

25 *But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*

- A. Continuing his practical analogy of looking in a mirror, James described a blessed doer of the Word.
1. He used the word "looketh" as part of the analogy, but it refers to reading and hearing the gospel.
 2. He used "continueth" as remaining at the mirror of God's word long enough to correct faults.
 3. Continuing in this place is opposite forgetting – being convicted for a moment but without fruit.
 4. It is continuing – a theme we must raise again – that marks true disciples (John 8:31; Heb 12:1).
- B. The perfect law of liberty is none other than the inspired Scriptures, conveying the glorious gospel.
- C. The New Testament is a law, but in contrast to the Old Testament, it is a law of liberty (Gal 5:1).
- D. This man shall be blessed in his deed – this approach and result of hearing preaching will be blessed, just as the man who delights and meditates in God's law will prosper in everything (Psalm 1:1-6).
- E. The man will have God's blessings of strength, assurance, salvation, and the peaceful life of saints, and He will know that He is accepted and approved by God His Father.

26 *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

- A. James has three tests of true religion and the fruitfulness of being doers of God's word: here is one.
- B. James quickly went after sins of the tongue, which is a main feature of his epistle (1:19; 3:2-12).
- C. How does a man seem to be religious? He attends church, brings a Bible, and hears the preaching.
- D. How does a man seem to be religious? He spouts doctrine, is willing to pray, and condemns others.
- E. All the public forms of worship can be diluted to nothing without practical godliness (I Cor 13:1-3).
- F. The same deceit described earlier (1:22) is here again – a man measuring salvation by false criteria.
 - 1. The externals and rituals of religion are worthless without the requisite godliness (Is 58:1-14).
 - 2. It is vain religion – a form of godliness without power – to worship without works (II Tim 3:5).
 - 3. Men say, “You do not know my heart.” But we do know the heart by what comes out of the lips!
- G. Here is temperance – self-discipline and self-denial – in using your tongue: a common Bible theme.
 - 1. A bridle is the leather headgear for a horse that holds the bit and can control the large animal.
 - 2. A man taught by Jesus Christ will diligently rule his vocal cords and tongue to God's glory.
 - 3. To think you are pleasing God while displeasing men by your speech is to believe your own lie!

27 *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

- A. Here is pure religion – it is not hearing, reading, or quoting – it is maintaining charity and purity.
- B. Appropriate name-dropping is helpful: James reminds us our religion is before God our Father.
- C. Our goal is to work out our salvation to be the blameless and harmless sons of God (Phil 2:12-16).
- D. Visiting the fatherless and widows in their difficulties and helping them is the pure religion of Jesus.
 - 1. The prophet Isaiah gave a glorious definition of pure religion and its rewards (Isaiah 58:1-14).
 - 2. Real charity is work – it is serving others where there is little or no return (Luke 14:12-14).
 - 3. Lip service is no religion at all. Christianity calls for our time, effort, and money (I Jn 3:16-19).
 - 4. What is your servant reading? How diligently do you seek to work at real service opportunities?
- E. Keeping yourself unspotted from the world – not even allowing a spot – is the pure religion of Jesus.
 - 1. We are not be conformed to this world at all (Ps 1:1-6; Rom 12:1-2; James 4:4; I John 2:15-17).
 - 2. We are to be transformed as new creatures of God (Rom 12:1-2; II Cor 5:17; 7:1; Eph 4:22-24).
 - 3. It is very easy to justify a few small spots, but the great God observes them all to our detriment.
 - 4. It is a wicked spirit that questions and worries how close they can get to sin rather than how far!
 - 5. How are you doing with thoughts, music, friends, television, clothing, reading, jesting, etc., etc.?
- F. These two tests include all aspects and matters of Christian charity and personal piety and holiness.

Conclusion:

- 1. There are seven lessons concisely and forcefully presented in this wonderful chapter for your growth in grace.
- 2. To whom much is given, much is required; therefore it is your incumbent duty to pay heed to these lessons.
- 3. We are deceived and profane hypocrites, if we hear the precious word of God without obeying it carefully.
- 4. There can be no comfort in mere hearing, for Jesus warned, “Take heed therefore *how* ye hear,” (Luke 8:18).
- 5. Take heed to hear each presentation of God's word to your soul each week and purge any spots revealed by it.

For Further Study:

- 1. The sermon outline, “[Enduring Affliction](#),” which expositis Luke 21:19 about possessing your souls by patience.
- 2. The sermon outline, “[Saved By the Word](#),” which expositis James 1:18 and 21 regarding two senses of “word.”
- 3. The sermon outline, “[Doers of the Word](#),” which expositis and applies the need to do what you hear (1:21-25).
- 4. The sermon outline, “[Parable of the Sower](#),” describes the four ways men hear and respond to the gospel.
- 5. The sermon outline, “[Playing with Sin](#),” provides further reminding about avoiding any spots of the world.
- 6. The sermon outline, “[Perfecting Holiness](#),” uses II Corinthians 7:1 to show the importance of staying unspotted.
- 7. The sermon outline, “[When Things Seem Hopeless](#),” reviews the reasons and responses to negative events in life.