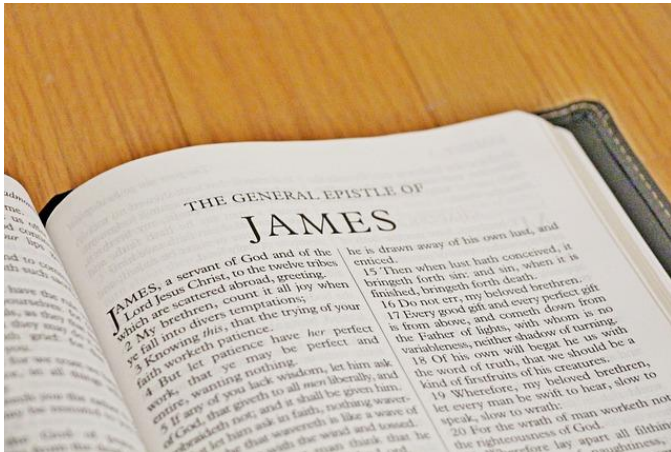


The Book of James Part 1: An Introduction to James

James 1:1



*James 1:1
James, a slave of
God and of the
Lord Jesus
Christ, To the
twelve tribes
who are in the
Dispersion:
Greetings.*

calling in Christ. James is focused on highlighting that the ethic of the Judaism is not completely eradicated in light of the coming of Christ, rather, God still demands His people be known in the world through how they live their lives.

There is a reason that the first book written in the New Testament is not a book on history, or doctrine, or prophecy, but a book about living our faith practically. Because, from the moment you are saved, until the time you enter eternity, there is something that stands right in the middle of those two key events: your life. And as a Christian, how you live your life matters; it matters to God, to those around us, and to ourselves.

James is the equivalent of both a book on practical religion and ethical instruction. James offers for us in the church today wisdom for how to live out our faith powerfully and practically. A letter that brings to focus the way we ought to live as a Christian resulting in a faith that lacks nothing.

1) About the Author It is James, the brother of Jesus, called to the faith by a resurrected Christ, a leader in the church presiding over the largest congregation of his day, and zealous for the traditions of Judaism who wrote the book that shares his name. God choose James specifically to write this letter because of his experiences, background, and position in the church.

2) About the Audience James specifically addresses Jewish Christians living outside of Jerusalem. It was Jewish Christian's who comprised James's primary ministry in the church of Jerusalem, and it was to the Jews that James perceived as his

The Book of James Part 2: Perseverance in Trials

James 1:2-12



James 1:2-12
Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith brings about perseverance. 4 And let perseverance have its perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. 5

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith, doubting nothing, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. 9 But the brother of humble circumstances is to boast in his high position; 10 and the rich man is to boast in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. 11 For the sun rises with a scorching heat and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away. 12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

1) Why Do We Experience Trials? We experience trials in life primarily for one purpose. God uses trials to purify and strengthen every believer. This is a good and positive purpose. And trials, met with perseverance, produces maturity in the

faith. However, Satan seeks to work in temptations and trials for an opposite purpose: to weaken us. This is why James calls trials a "testing of our faith." We can either pass the test and achieve God's good purpose, or fail the test and achieve Satan's evil purpose.

2) The Characteristics of Trials James tells us there are three traits we can expect concerning trials. They are certain to come, they can be sudden, and they are varied. Because of this, the book of James is a call to every believer to prepare right now for the trials we have today, and the trials that will come tomorrow. There is no simple solution for preparing for trials, rather this is the purpose of our sanctification in the faith. The more we grow in righteousness, the better equipped we become to handle our trials rightly. We can endure our trials if we holdfast to the Word of God as our right response in the trial, and when we do, we will pass the test with perseverance.

James encourages us to view our trials in life not from a position of self pity, rather, from a perspective of joy. Because God's purposes can be fulfilled in the very trial you might find yourself in this morning. But we have a choice in how we respond to our trials. If we choose righteousness in the face of our pain and suffering, we will be strengthened in our faith. However, if we fail the test, we are weakened in our faith. Let us resolve to keep our focus on the good purposes of God, even in our trials, so that we can one day be found standing firm in a faith that lacks nothing.

The Book of James Part 3: Perseverance in Trials

James 1:2-12



James 1:2-12
Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith brings about perseverance. 4 And let perseverance have its perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. 5

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith, doubting nothing, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. 9 But the brother of humble circumstances is to boast in his high position; 10 and the rich man is to boast in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. 11 For the sun rises with a scorching heat and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away. 12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

1) The Purpose and Nature of Trials We experience trials in life primarily because God seeks to purify and strengthen every believer. However, Satan will exploit our trials to pervert and weaken the believer. The difference is how we respond in our trials. If we pass the

testing of our faith, then God's purposes are achieved and we persevere. But if we fail the test, our faith remains incomplete and lacking.

2) What it Means to Persevere With every trial, temptation, and testing of faith that comes our way, the right response is one that produces perseverance. Perseverance means we endure the trial, and not only endure, we remain steadfast and faithful to the way we ought to behave, or react, or respond in light of Christ and God's Word. The key to perseverance is knowing what God's word would have you to do in response to trials, and then faithfully putting God's word into action.

3) Three Reasons Why We Do Not Persevere James offers three reasons why the believer may fail the testing of faith that comes about through trials: we lack wisdom, we lack faith, or we lack humility. Wisdom means that we know what to do, and we do it. When we lack the right knowledge, or when we lack the will to put that knowledge into action, we lack practical wisdom. Also, often times we don't put God's word into action because we either don't believe it will work, or we don't trust that righteousness will persevere; this is a lack of faith. Finally, pride will always result in a failure of the testing of our faith. Pride says "I don't need to know what God's word says, I'll just do it my way" or, "I know what God's word says, but I don't need to do it because I know better." But the one who is humble, has a reason to boast, because they are prepared for the testing of their faith.

When we persevere in our trials, that means we have obtained wisdom, we have walked in faith, and we have reason to boast in our humility. God is seeking to do something in our lives this very morning by using a trial to transform our character. God's goal is to build up in our character a faith that lacks nothing so that each one of our lives is brought to its best end in Christ.

The Book of James Part 4: Victory Over Temptation and Sin

James 1:13-18



*James 1:13-18
Let no one say
when he is
tempted, "I am
being tempted
by God"; for
God cannot be
tempted by evil,
and He Himself
does not tempt*

anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully matured, it brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. 17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, and so that we could be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

1) God is Not The Author of Sin. God cannot be tempted and does not tempt anyone, because God is not the author of sin. Everything God created was "very good." But sin entered into the world and tarnished all of God's good created work. And just because God allowed temptation and sin to come about, does not mean God approves of or affirms temptation and sin in the life of anyone to this day. For the Christian, temptation should be avoided and not sought out, and sin should be repented of and not celebrated.

2) Breaking the Cycle of Sin. James describes a cycle of sin that starts with temptation, works through lust, then brings forth sin. And each person is right at the center of this cycle solely responsible for their actions. But Scripture tells us that we can break this cycle of sin in our lives.

1. We Are To Look For An Escape. God will never allow a Christian to be tempted beyond what they can bare. Rather, He will always provide an escape for us in our temptation. We are to be actively looking for that exit and we are to take it as a first priority.

2. We Are to Guard Our Mind. It is lust in the heart and mind that turns our temptation into sin. Our thought life needs to become the most heavily guarded aspect of our faith. Scripture tells us to keep our minds on heavenly things, to renew our minds continuously so that temptation cannot get a foothold in our mind and hold captive our thinking.

3. We Are To Confess Our Failure. Sin is bad, but it becomes far worse when we allow it to mature in our lives. God makes it very easy for us to seek forgiveness and purification. Not because He wants us to delight in our sin, but because He wants us to gain victory over the power of sin in our lives.

We are to be the "first fruit" of the harvest of God. Our preparation for this harvest starts now. We are in our peak growing season as the crop of God this very day. And James is telling us "not to be deceived", we are to seek victory over temptation and sin, because a fruit that is fully mature is the best fruit of the harvest. This fruit is the one who is fully mature, possessing a faith that lacks nothing.

The Book of James Part 5: Achieving God's Purpose for Your Life

James 1:18-21



*James 1:18-21
In the exercise
of His will He
brought us forth
by the word of
truth, so that
we would be a
kind of first
fruits among
His creatures.
19 Know this,*

my beloved brothers. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore, laying aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in gentleness receive the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

1) We Have a Purpose. It is God alone who saves the sinner. He chooses freely by His will to save us, He does all the work in saving us, and He achieves all of this through the gospel of Christ. Amidst all of God's work in our salvation, there is a purpose: that every believer grow to maturity. Our purpose in the faith is to become ripe for the great harvest of God that awaits us. This purpose brings a clear focus for our lives.

2) We Have a Problem. Even though we have a purpose in our faith, we also have a problem with our faith: when the word of God fails to inform our actions and our attitudes, then we

do not achieve the purpose of God. The centerpiece of our growth to maturity is the word of God. We are to be quick to hear the word, and slow or deliberate in allowing God's word to shape our actions (speech) and attitudes (anger). Because when our lives are out of sync with the word of God, then we do not achieve the righteousness of God.

3) We Have a Program. God has not left us without equipping us to achieve His purpose for our lives. He has given us His Word, His Spirit, and His Son, all of which are with, in, and for us to guide, lead, and teach us. The program of God is our sanctification in the faith. James reminds us that among all the equipping that God has done to help us achieve the righteousness of God, that we need to cooperate and participate actively in His program. We continuously lay aside our old ways from before Christ, and we receive our new ways that are in Christ. When we do this, the transformation of our character improves day by day, and year after year.

God designed us to function best when we have our minds focused on a purpose in life. With our purpose is work, things we can and should do to move towards our right end. When we find things in our life that are not working to build up our faith, then that is the first place we can get to work in God's program for our lives.

The Book of James Part 6: The Mirror in Our Lives

James 1:22-27



*James 1:22-27
But become
doers of the
word, and not
merely hearers
who delude
themselves. 23
For if anyone is
a hearer of the
word and not a
doer, he is like a*

*man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he
looked at himself and has gone away, he immediately forgot
what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at
the perfect law, the law of freedom, and abides by it, not
having become a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this
man will be blessed in what he does. 26 If anyone thinks
himself to be religious while not bridling his tongue but
deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. 27
Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this:
to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep
oneself unstained by the world.*

1) Our Delusion. When we announce to the world that we are Christians, but then we turn around and act just like the world, then James says that type of person is delusional. Because their profession of faith does not match their actions. This person is a hearer of the Word of God only and not a

doer of the Word of God. James adds that this type of person produces a religion that is worthless. Because, it does not benefit us in any meaningful way, it does not benefit others in any meaningful way, and it does not glorify God one bit. But there is a solution to the delusion: we put the Word of God into action in our lives.

2) Our Reflection. James uses the analogy of a mirror for us to see our reflection. When we look in the mirror, it reflects back the image of our face. But, when we look intently in the Scripture, it reflects back the image of our character. And the best way to put God's word into action starts with reflection. We reflect by clearly seeing how our actions impact others, then we take responsibility when we fall short, and we use God's Word as our mirror to correct our way. We will never know what our character looks like if we do not abide in God's Word and the world will never see the character of God in us if His Word is hidden by our lives.

3) Our Devotion. When we remove our delusion, and we clearly see our reflection, then we commit to our devotion. And James says the essence of our devotion in the faith is two fold: bring benefit to others (visit orphans and widows in their affliction) and be marked by holy living (keep oneself unstained by the world). When we do these two things, then what happens is that what could have once been a delusion of worthless religion, becomes pure and undefiled before God because our works benefit others and produce holiness in our lives.

The Book of James Part 7: Our Virtues in the Faith: Impartiality

James 2:1-9



James 2:1-9 My brothers, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. 2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in bright clothes, and there also

comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, 3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the bright clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," 4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brothers: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and they themselves drag you into court? 7 Do they not blaspheme the good name by which you have been called? 8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors.

1) An Impartial Faith is Our Virtue. Being impartial means that we do not hold an attitude of personal favoritism. James says our actions and motivations should not be driven by arbitrary

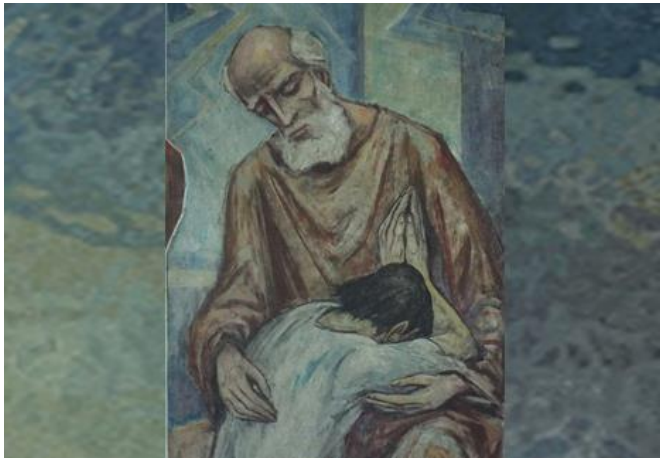
categories that differentiate one person from another. A culture may place values on different people based on who they are, how they look like, where they are from, or what they do, but God's word is telling us that Christians should view every person with the exact same value before God, and treat each one the same. Because God's word has authority over what culture says, and every person bears the image of God.

2) An Impartial Faith Values Righteousness Above All. It is from an attitude of impartiality that both God and man can honor, bless, and exalt others, but, the only measure we are to use to "make distinctions" among mankind is righteousness. Because God's sole measure by which He draws a distinction among every single person is righteousness. From every tribe and tongue and people and nation, it is always about righteousness. Being impartial as a Christian does not mean that we make no distinctions at all about people, it means we hold every person equal in value before God as those who are made in His image, but then we use righteousness as the sole measure for what we value and who we honor and hold in the highest positions in our lives.

3) An Impartial Faith Flows from Love. Love should always guide how we treat other people regardless of who they are. James says that this is The Royal Law because it comes straight from the King Himself. Love will achieve everything God requires of His people. A loving attitude of the heart that brings forth maturity in the faith, a faith that lacks nothing, is one that is impartial, that values righteousness above all things, and never forgets every person is made in the image of God.

The Book of James Part 8: Our Virtues in the Faith: Mercy (Part 1)

James 2:10-13



*James 2:10-13
For whoever
keeps the whole
law and yet
stumbles in one
point, he has
become guilty of
all. 11 For He
who said, "Do
not commit
adultery," also*

said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom. 13 For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement.

1) The Law of Freedom. Often times the best way to truly appreciate something good, it helps to have a point of contrast to compare it to. We know a meal is really good because we can compare it to meals that we have had in the past. James uses the same approach as his set up to teach us about mercy and forgiveness as a virtue of our faith. James sets the Law of Moses in stark contrast to the Law of Freedom. The Law of Freedom is the New Covenant of grace through faith in Jesus.

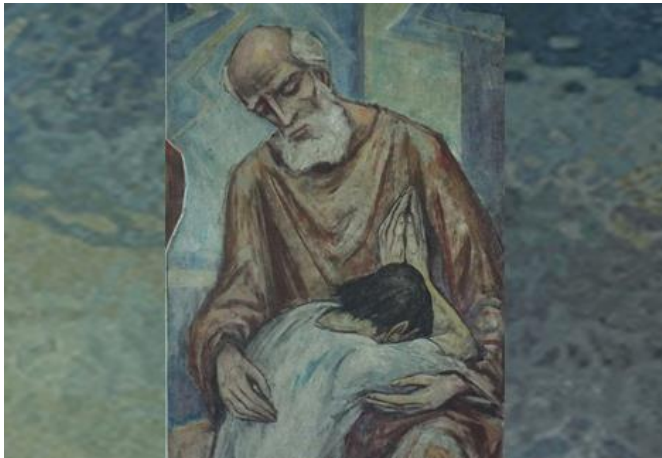
James reminds us that under the Law of Moses nobody could live the Law perfectly. In fact, if one were to even try, as soon as they sinned one time then they would be guilty before God of violating the entire Law. By the time Jesus appeared in the world, the Law had become a heavy burden of religion for the people who could barely endure its rigorous requirements.

In contrast to this crushing burden of rule following, Jesus came and offered rest for the weary and freedom from the Law. The Law of Freedom becomes the new covenant in Christ where God extends full forgiveness in perfect mercy for all who believe. No longer is judgement from the Law looming over the heads of God's people, but now God's mercy triumphs over judgment. Had there never been the Law, then it would be hard for us to fully appreciate the depth of God's mercy and forgiveness in Christ.

2) Mercy is Our Virtue in the Faith. In light of the profound and perfect mercy and forgiveness every Christian enjoys from God, James encourages us to extend mercy and forgiveness in our lives just as God has done for us. Mercy triumphs over judgement. Not just in God's dealings with humanity, but so also in our dealings with each other.

The Book of James Part 9: Our Virtues in the Faith: Mercy (Part 2)

James 2:10-13



*James 2:10-13
For whoever
keeps the whole
law and yet
stumbles in one
point, he has
become guilty of
all. 11 For He
who said, "Do
not commit
adultery," also*

said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom. 13 For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement.

1) Unforgiveness Negatively Effects Us Physically. When Jesus tells us to practice forgiveness, He has a very practical reason in mind. Because an unforgiving heart will leave us an emotional and physical wreck if left unaddressed.

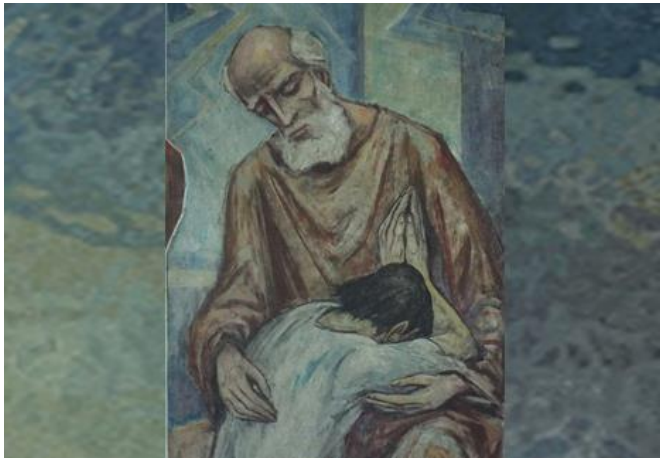
2) Unforgiveness Negatively Effects Us Spiritually. Jesus teaches that unforgiveness will restrict our fellowship with God and cause us to experience chastisement from God. Our daily walk of faith in the presence of God will be negatively impacted for the one who resists forgiveness in their lives.

3) Forgiveness Starts With God. If we are considering forgiving ourselves, forgiving others, or seeking forgiveness from others, all of these things are good and necessary, but in terms of sequence, all of these things need to be brought before the throne of God FIRST before we should proceed on our journey of forgiveness. Because God alone has sole authority to cover shame and remove guilt in the act of forgiveness. When people forgive it brings forth an emotional release and is the first step in reconciliation. When God forgives, it restores us to a right standing in His presence. Seek Him first.

4) Forgiveness Has Some Considerations. Thought God is perfect, we are not. That means we should consider two things before we begin our work of forgiveness. First, forgiving others does not mean we can always forget what they did. This means we may have to set new boundaries in our reconciled relationship to guard our healing. Second, we do not forget that God's providence is always at work, even in the bad things in our lives. We can forgive because even among the evil of others, God will bring forth good for those who love Him.

The Book of James Part 10: Our Virtues in the Faith: Mercy (Part 3)

James 2:10-13



*James 2:10-13
For whoever
keeps the whole
law and yet
stumbles in one
point, he has
become guilty of
all. 11 For He
who said, "Do
not commit
adultery," also*

said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom. 13 For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement.

1) Uncovering What Happened. The first thing we do to "uncover" what exactly happened leading up to the need for forgiveness, and this involves establishing guilt. Forgiveness fundamentally requires that one person has committed an offense against another. This answers the question: "who did what to who?" We need to be as objective as possible in making sure it is forgiveness that is needed and not something else.

Next, we "uncover" the negative consequences of the offender's actions in our life. The guilty party likely caused

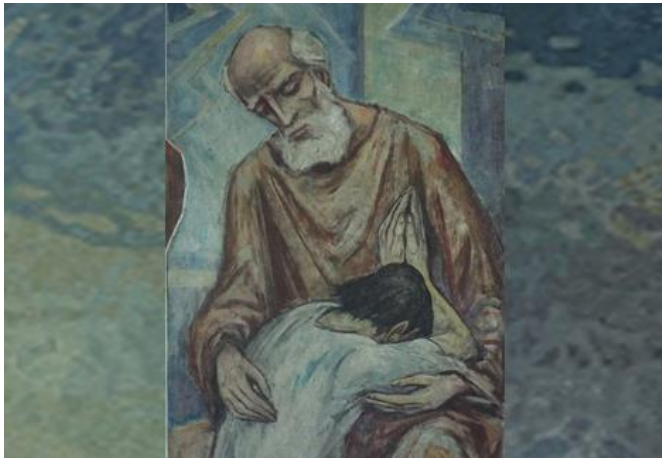
some level of emotional or physical harm as a result of abuse, injury, or neglect. And this harm produces negative consequences in our life like emotional pain, distress, suffering, and loss. In forgiveness, we are not forgiving the bad act, we are not saying "it's okay that you abused or injured me", what it does mean is that we are freeing the offending party from the emotional burden of the pain, distress, suffering, or loss that we experience, and instead of holding it against them with resentment, we extend to them mercy and love.

2) Deciding to Forgive. Yes, the Bible commands us to exercise forgiveness, but we have to make the decision to forgive as a matter of our own free will. Our decision to forgive might not come until we realize: whatever it is we are doing to cope or to heal as a result of the wrong done to us is not working. On one hand, we have our pain and suffering as a result of the injury. On the other hand, we have the hope of healing and restoration promised by Scripture. Right in the middle of this tension is a decision to forgive. This decision is not the act of forgiveness, but it is a resolve to begin, however slowly, the work required to forgive.

Today a decision can be made. First, to gain an ally in God for our journey by confessing our sin and asking His help. Second, that we are going to choose hope over suffering and begin the work of forgiveness, however slow and tentative that work might be at the start, but we are going to decide to forgive.

The Book of James Part 11: Our Virtues in the Faith: Mercy (Part 4)

James 2:10-13



*James 2:10-13
For whoever
keeps the whole
law and yet
stumbles in one
point, he has
become guilty of
all. 11 For He
who said, "Do
not commit
adultery," also*

said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom. 13 For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement.

1) Uncover What Happened. As we start our journey of forgiveness, the first thing we do is "uncover" what exactly happened leading up to the need for forgiveness. Uncovering is where we understand who hurt us, what they did, and how that is effecting our life.

2) Decide to Forgive. The Bible tells us that forgiveness is a necessary virtue of our faith. However, it must be a choice as a matter of our own free will to work in our lives. The decision is not the act of forgiveness, rather, it is the decision is to begin, however slowly, the work required to

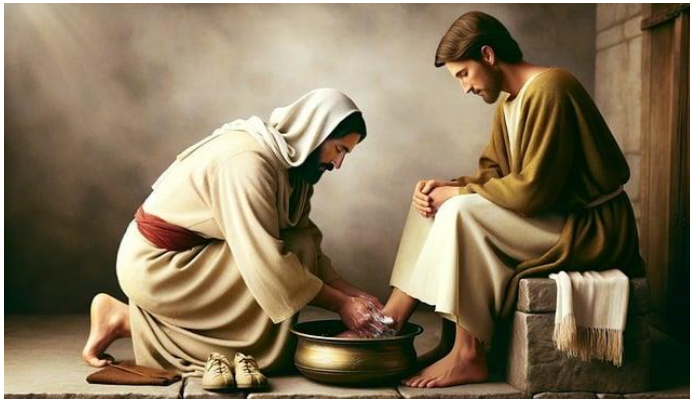
forgive. Our choice is to continue suffering or move forward in hope, trusting that God's word will deliver us from our sorrow.

3) Do the Work of Forgiveness. The life of Joseph models four steps in our work of forgiveness. First, we change how we think about our offender. They are fellow image bearers of God who have been corrupted by sin. Second, we change how we feel about our offender. Our new perspective can now bring forth feelings of compassion and mercy over that of resentment. Third, we bear our pain courageously. With strength and confidence we trust that God's way will bring forth healing and comfort even amongst our pain. Fourth, we give the gift of forgiveness. We withhold the resentment our offender deserves, and we put on an attitude of mercy and love towards them instead.

4. Deepen Your Understanding of What Happened. After we forgive, there will still be healing that needs to occur. Joseph demonstrated two ways he deepened his understanding of the evil done against him. First, he found a meaning in his suffering. God's providence is at work in our lives, even in our trials. Time and reflection will reveal that to us. Second, he found a purpose in his suffering. Joseph's purpose was to care for those who wronged him. Our purpose just might be to minister to those who are experiencing the exact same thing we have experienced, and guide and comfort them in their journey of forgiveness.

The Book of James Part 12: Our Virtues in the Faith: Service (Part 1)

James 2:14-26



*James 2:14-26
What use is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but he has not works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of*

daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead by itself. 18 But someone will say, "You have faith; and I have works. Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected. 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 And in the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

1) A Profitless Faith. James says that a faith which does not benefit us or others practically is profitless. But a faith that

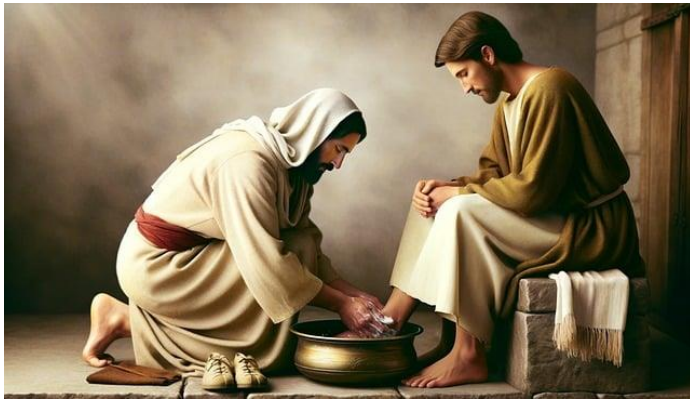
is accompanied by works of service to God and others is a faith that profits all. We do not get into heaven with our good works, but we do experience the full benefit of God's grace in our lives when our actions match the faith we profess to have.

2) Service as Our Virtue. James tells us that good works or virtuous service in the faith means that when we see a need, and we have the ability to meet that need, we are to do so. There is no list of acceptable service in the Bible. Rather, Christian service flows from a loving attitude of heart which drives our actions in life. That means our acts of service can be feeding the hungry or clothing the poor, but also seeing someone hurting and showing love, seeing someone discouraged and bringing them encouragement, seeing someone weary and showing them strength, or seeing someone suffering and showing them compassion.

The one who possesses service as a virtue will discover three things: that the receiver of our service benefits because their need is met; we benefit by doing it because it builds us up in the faith and lends credibility to our profession; and God benefits from it because He is glorified among man. It is by faith that we receive God's grace, and through service that we dispense His grace into the world.

The Book of James Part 13: Our Virtues in the Faith: Service (Part 2)

James 2:14-26



*James 2:14-26
What use is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but he has not works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of*

daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead by itself. 18 But someone will say, "You have faith; and I have works. Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected. 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 And in the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

1) A Profitless Faith. James says that a faith which does not benefit us or others practically is profitless. But a faith that is accompanied by works of service to God and others is a faith that profits all. We

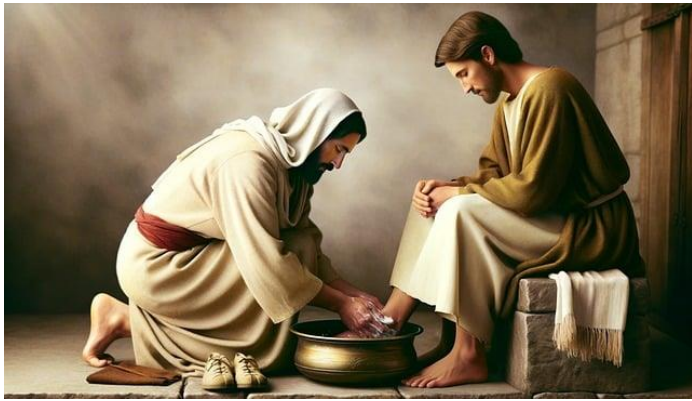
do not get into heaven with our good works, but we do experience the full benefit of God's grace in our lives when our actions match the faith we profess. A faith that serves profits the receiver of our action because their need is met, profits us because it builds us up in the faith and lends credibility to our witness, and profits God because He is glorified among man.

2) An Idle Faith. James tells us that we should not separate faith and works into two equally valid propositions. Rather, it should always be both. It is by faith that we enter into Christianity, but that is not the end, that is the beginning of our walk of service. James says a faith without works is an idle faith, it is stuck in our minds, it is a faith sitting on the shelf of our lives. We are being called to let that faith loose and to show the world we are an active member of God's team who serves others for the kingdom.

3) A Profitable Faith. James gives us two examples of people in the faith who experienced profit in life from their service to God and others: Abraham and Rehab. In both cases, they were declared right by their fellow brothers and sisters for what they did. Our redemption is known by God and each one of us. But that reality is made known to the world when they see our faith in action. Abraham was blessed through his service to God, and Rehab was blessed through her service to Israel. Through Abraham's active faith, all the nations of the earth became blessed, and through Rehab's active faith, Israel became blessed among the nations. These examples declare to every Christian today that our lives matter. God has a plan and a purpose and is calling us to step forward in action and fulfill our role in the kingdom through service.

The Book of James Part 14: Our Virtues in the Faith: Service (Part 3)

James 2:21-26



*James 2:21-26
Was not
Abraham our
father justified
by works when
he offered up
Isaac his son
on the altar?
22 You see that*

faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected. 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 And in the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

A Profitable Faith That Serves. James gives us two examples of people in the faith who experienced profit in life from their service to God and others: Abraham and Rehab. In both cases, they were declared right by their fellow brothers and sisters for what they did. Our redemption is know by God and each one of us. But that reality is made known to the world when they see our faith in action.

Abraham was blessed through his service to God, and Rehab was blessed through her service to Israel. Through Abraham's active faith, all the nations of the earth became blessed, and through Rehab's active faith, Israel became blessed among the nations. These examples declare to every Christian today that our lives matter. God has a plan and a purpose and is calling us to step forward in action and fulfill our role in the kingdom through service.

Our works of service start with faithful acts of obedience to God. There is no better starting place for putting our faith into action than through works of devotion to God in obedience to His word. By this we are blessed in what we do and our faith is brought closer to the perfect and complete end that brings about maturity in our lives. The Christian comes into the kingdom by faith alone, and the Christian lives in the world with a faith that is not alone, but with a faith that serves God and serves others.

The Book of James Part 15: Our Virtues in the Faith: Taming the Tongue

James 3:1-12



James 3:1-12 Do not become teachers in large numbers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a

perfect man, able to bridle the entire body as well. 3 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. 4 Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot wills. 5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of unrighteousness; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our existence, and is set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessings and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a fountain pour forth from the same opening fresh and bitter water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can saltwater produce fresh.

1) A Picture of Perfection in Our Faith. James gives us the picture of perfection in the faith. It is the one who does not stumble in what they say. This person has bridled their tongue. The implication is that this virtue of the faith is probably the biggest area of struggle for the Christian. Yet, if we can accomplish this in our lives, it offers the greatest reward.

2) The Power and Potential of Our Tongue. Like the bridle on a horse or the rudder of a ship, our tongue has the power and potential to accomplish great things. However, just like the bridle and the rudder, there must be a control over what comes out of our mouth. The unbridled horse and the rudderless ship cannot be directed, and the untamed tongue will always run awry. James offers several solutions throughout his letter to enable the taming of our tongue: we hear from the Spirit and heed what He is saying; we ask of God and receive what He is giving; and read from the Word and do what it is commanding. This is the consistent pattern we are given for growing and maturing, for gaining self control and patience, for showing love and mercy, and for exercising our faith through service. All these things are given for the building up of every Christian and the body of Christ.

3) Our Problem to Overcome. Our problem is that our tongues are not neutral. If left untamed, the tongue will bring forth unrighteousness, defilement, evil, and poison in our lives and the lives of others. It gets worse. James says that no man is able to tame the tongue. But, for the Christian, we know someone personally who is more than a man. Jesus has the ability to tame our tongues. We have to invite Him in to accomplish what James describes as impossible for us. Jesus is the One that needs to be "directing" the course of our speech. Let today be the day that we invite Jesus in as the sovereign Lord over our very words and once for all tame this tongue of fire.

The Book of James Part 16: Our Virtues in the Faith: Wisdom

James 3:13-18



*James 3:13-18
Who among
you is wise and
understanding?
Let him show by
his good
conduct his
works in the
gentleness of
wisdom. 14 But
if you have
bitter jealousy
and selfish*

ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom is not coming down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruits, without doubting, without hypocrisy. 18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

1) Wisdom as our Virtue. James opened his letter in chapter one with wisdom as the principle virtue for persevering in trials and building up a faith that lacks nothing. It is in chapter three that James reminds us of two things concerning wisdom. First, just saying we are wise is not good enough, we have to demonstrate wisdom practically in our lives. Second, there is a simple test we can perform concerning wisdom in

our lives. If we have jealousy and pride in our hearts, that is a type of wisdom, but not from God.

2) The Two Kinds of Wisdom in our Lives. Every Christian has access to two sources of wisdom: from above and from the world. The wisdom from above has God as its source and is: pure, peaceable, considerate, submissive, merciful, fruitful, faithful, and sincere. The wisdom from the world has Satan as its source and is: jealous, proud, arrogant, untrustworthy, evil, and demonic. Whenever the wisdom of the world speaks, in every instance and on every issue, it is wrong! Yet, when God speaks, He always reveals the Truth which brings the right order in creation. To know which source of wisdom we have encountered, we are to examine all things in light of how God has ordered and revealed that ordering to us in Scripture.

3) Our Right Response in Wisdom. James concludes his teaching on wisdom with a message of peace. Though the world's wisdom is at enmity with God, the Christian is not called to fight this demonic institution. God will judge the world. The Christian is to demonstrate wisdom in the world by sowing righteousness with the gospel of Christ that brings peace between the sinner and God. Yet and the same time, if there are any among us who lacks wisdom, we are to ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given.

The Book of James Part 17/18: Our Virtues in the Faith: Drawing Near to God

James 4:1-10



*James 4:1-10
What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not*

have, so you murder. You are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility towards God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world sets himself as an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is oppose to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 7 Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and cry. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. Righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

James tells us that the very best thing any person can ever imagine experiencing in life is not found in pleasure and it is not found in possessions, but it is exclusively found in experiencing the grace of God in our lives. This "greater grace" comes only when we draw near to God.

1) Our Flesh Can Keep Us Distant from God. When we quarrel and fight, lust and envy, or seek pleasure and possessions as our chief aim in life, then our sin nature in ruling over us rather than God. But James says there is a solution to this problem if we cleanse our hands, purify our hearts, and mourn over our sin. Because if we ask of God, He will forgive us and to purify us of all unrighteousness.

2) The World Can Keep Us Distant from God. Friendship with the world means we spend most of our time pursuing pleasure, wealth, and self, rather than God in whom we find our true satisfaction and security. James tells us that if the world is creating a problem in our life, then we need a dramatic change; a change in focus, in priorities, and the in pursuits of our lives. We can draw near to God, and be kept from the trappings of the world by "turning" from the world and to God as the exclusive source of our desires and object of our affection.

3) The Devil Can Keep us Distant from God. The devil is stronger, smarter, more powerful, and is better equipped than any of us. We are never called to fight him, but we are called to resist him. We resist the devil by not giving him an opportunity, by staying on guard, and by standing firm in the armor of God. The devil cannot tolerate being resisted and will move on to easier prey.

In all these things there is a great promise. That if we are to humble ourselves before God, He will exalt us. The lower we get, the higher He lifts us up. Humility in our lives is the perfect antidote to the pride that fuels our flesh, the world, and the devils wares. Humility will restore us to the nearness that God desires with each one of us.

The Book of James Part 19: Our Virtues in the Faith: Slander and Judgement

James 4:11-12



James 4:11-12 Do not slander one another, brothers. He who slanders a brother or judges his brother,

slanders the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you who judge your neighbor?

1) Slander is Destructive. James says, "do not slander one another." This behavior involves anytime we speak negatively about another person. Slander has one purpose: to tear people down. There are at least three sources for why we slander: envy, pride, and malice. We have to work to eliminate slander in our lives by replacing it with something else. Paul tells us that instead of slander, we offer kindness and grace from a tender-heart towards one another. We must learn to compliment, encourage, and praise others to develop our character in such a way that slander never appears.

2) Judging Others is Dangerous. James cautions use against judging others. Where James lacks a robust teaching on this

subject, Jesus speaks fully to it in Matthey chapter 7. When addressing the subject of judging others, Jesus provides three points for our consideration. First, we are prohibited from passing judgement against another person from a heart of hypocrisy. The problem with hypocritical judgement is that it never has restoration of our brother or sister in Christ as its aim. Rather, it only seeks to satisfy our own self- righteousness. Second, we are called to confront sin in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

However, we must do so in a way that is pure and loving with restoration as the chief aim. Likewise, we are all obligated to receive correction from one another and respond in repentance. Third, we do not pass judgement on the world. The sinner does not need correction from the Christian. The sinner needs transformation from the gospel. Our message to the world is not that they need to reform their behavior. Our message to the world is that they need to turn to Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

Slander and hypocritical judgement in the body of Christ will guarantee disunity and fighting within the church. But the one who speaks well of others and corrects sin in love does much to build and strengthen the body of Christ.

The Book of James Part 20: Our Virtues in the Faith: Living a God Centered Life

James 4:13-17



James 4:13-17
Come now,
you who say,
"Today or
tomorrow we
will go to such
and such a
city, and spend
a year there
and engage in
business and

make a profit." 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to the one who knows to do the right thing and does not do it, to him it is sin.

1) Having A Deficient Perspective. When we make plans for the future, expecting a sure outcome, and leave God out of our consideration, that becomes a boasting arrogance. Our perspective on life and the future is wholly deficient when we fail to acknowledge that God has the final say concerning what becomes of our lives. A deficient perspective assumes automatically that God is going to get in step with our own big ideas, but that is not how God works. He does not adapt His will and His purposes for our life to what we think they ought

to be. Rather, He expects us to adapt our will and our pursuits in life to His plan and His purposes.

2) Gaining A Divine Outlook. We can repair our deficient perspective and eliminate any boasting arrogance by gaining a divine outlook on life. According to James, a divine outlook in life means that we live and do the will of God today and in the future. The Bible offers five points of consideration that the Christian can follow to best guide our planning for the future in such a way that we are moving forward on a God centered path: we commit our work to the Lord; we exercise diligence in our planning; we seek wise counsel; we pursue good over evil; and we hold loose to our plans concerning the future.

James does not tell us that planning for the future is bad, but that there is a right and a wrong way to do it. Living a God centered life means we hold to a divine outlook on our present and our future, that we guard against a boasting arrogance about what will happen in our lives, and that we know and do the right thing at every turn. God has a good plan for each one of our lives, but we might not be experiencing the full benefit of what He wills to accomplish through us because we are arrogantly holding to our own misguided plans for the future. When we learn that it God who leads and it is we who follow Him, then we will stop fighting against God's will and start flourishing within God's will for our life.

The Book of James Part 21: Our Virtues in the Faith: The Love of Money

James 5:1-6



*James 5:1-6
Come now,
you rich, cry,
howling over
your miseries
which are
coming upon
you. 2 Your
riches have
rotted and
your
garments*

have become moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and your silver have rusted, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. You have stored up such treasure in the last days! 4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields – that which has been withheld by you – cries out against you; and outcries of those who did the harvesting have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts. 5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and lived in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered the righteous man; he does not resist you.

James is one of several different messengers of God who all share a common revelation: that the love of money leads to disaster. Solomon, Jesus, and Paul all join James in affirming that the one who pursues riches as the source of their security, hope, and purpose in life will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. James describes three different outcomes the ungodly rich can expect in life.

1) Condemnation. The one who sets his heart upon accumulating wealth and not being rich towards God will only experience condemnation in the last days and not exaltation. Because material things cannot save anyone and in the end, will simply be eaten by moths and destroyed by rust. Our wealth alone will only bring a testimony before God that we lived a self-centered life.

2) Corruption. The pursuit of riches over righteousness leads to a corruption of character. This type of person will practice evil against the very people who help them build their wealth. Those who work for an honest wage will be shamelessly exploited. The pursuit of riches will also lead to a relentless attitude of self-indulgence. This corruption of character will never bring satisfaction, contentment, or peace in life no matter how much wealth is gained.

3) Cruelty. The lover of money will become a cruel person. Greed will drive a heart bent on persecuting the righteous ones of God. This will come in the form of condemning and even murdering the innocent in life. Nothing is sacred and there are no limits to the injustices brought forth by the one who lusts after wealth.

The Bible offers one solution for the lover of money: to seek God first, be rich towards Him, and store up treasures in heaven. Jesus is the only source of security, hope, and purpose in life. He alone can bear witness about us before God in the last days that we have a place in His eternal kingdom. Our place in eternity is purchase not by silver or gold, but by the blood of Christ shed for all who believe in Him.

The Book of James Part 22: Our Virtues in the Faith: Patience

James 5:7-11



*James 5:7-11
Therefore be
patient, brothers,
until the coming
of the Lord.
Behold, the
farmer waits for
the precious fruit
of the soil, being
patient about it,
until it receives*

the early and late rains. 8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not groan, brothers, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. 10 As an example, brothers, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we count those blessed who persevere. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

As James reaches the end of his teaching concerning what it means to be a Christian, he underscores everything that he has discussed with this final virtue, that of patience.

1) Our Present Call. Patience in the life of the Christians starts today. We are to be patient in every situation, and in every day of our life, until the Lord returns. Patience as demonstrated in the Bible is an active endurance to opposition. We demonstrate patience when we actively

endure opposition in life. Because we cannot control the things around us, but we can control how we respond to them. Our default response to frustration in life ought to be patience.

2) Our Future Expectation. There is coming a day when every Christian will stand before the Lord and He will render a verdict on our lives as to how well we walked in the faith. James says one of the quickest ways to fall short before the Lord is to be found as one who groans against others rather than one who shows patience to others. It should be the heart's desire of every servant of the Lord to hear those beautiful words from Jesus some day, "well done my good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your master." The best way to position ourselves for such a rich and joyful hearing is to be the one who is known in this life as patient.

3) Our Past Examples. The entire Old Testament is filled with numerous examples of prophets from God who actively endured opposition in life. These men learned to become masters at patience in life. The Scripture serves as proof and a testimony from the past that if we do today what God calls us to do, that He will be faithful to bless us and show us compassion and mercy in the future. The key hallmark of a life finished strong among the faithful in the past is that of a life lived with patience and perseverance no matter what frustrations and oppositions appeared.

The Book of James Part 23: Our Virtues in the Faith: Prayer

James 5:13-18



James 5:13-18 Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the

church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the earth produced its fruit.

1) Our Season for Prayer. James offers that our season for prayer is all the time. Whether we are suffering, cheerful, or sick, we turn to God in prayer. In our suffering, we offer supplication towards God asking for relief in prayer. In our delighting we offer thanksgiving to God praising Him with our prayer. In our sickness we seek intercession from others

towards God for healing through prayer. Whatever the reason, our season for prayer is in all occasions

2) Our Reason for Prayer. James tells us the simple reason for why we should pray: it accomplishes much! James offers several specific benefits as a result of prayer: salvation, restoration, forgiveness, and healing. There isn't a problem or an issue in life that cannot be solved by God through prayer. James offers two characteristics to effective prayer: faith and righteousness. Our prayer strengthens our faith because it demands we completely trust in God. Our prayer leads us to righteousness because it demands we approach God first through our confession and purification. Our prayers can build our faith, our prayers can purify our lives, and our prayers can bring forth healing in the body of the sick among us. These are some pretty good reasons to strengthen our prayer lives.

3) Our Power in Prayer. James closes his section on prayer with an example from the past: Elijah. James' point is that the most powerful thing anyone of us can do in life is pray. For Elijah to do what he did, he needed God. To shut off and then turn back on the rain, that is an impossible thing for any person to do, but not for God. It is through our prayers that we have direct access to God. When we get God involved, whether in our suffering, in our cheer, or in our illness, we are now talking to the One who has all the power, with no limits, who can achieve the impossible in our lives today if we just turn to Him in prayer.

The Book of James Part 24: Our Virtues in the Faith: Vigilance

James 5:19-20



James 5:19-20 My brothers, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner

from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

1) Our Vigilance in Personal Faith. James closes his letter with a proposition that some in the church can stray from the truth. We call this backsliding in a modern sense. The verb used implies some might be led astray from the truth in which they first believed. This can result in a compromise of what we believe about key doctrines of the faith or how we behave concerning habitual sin in our lives. Either way, we must be vigilant to guard our hearts and minds so that we do not find ourselves in opposition to the truth of God. Those that do stray from the truth must be willing to receive correction concerning the error of their ways so that they can be restored to the right relationship with God.

2) Our Vigilance in Cooperate Faith. Everyone in the church has an obligation to be vigilant about the care and condition of their brothers and sisters in Christ. If anyone of us sees a brother or sister in the church stray from the truth of God, it is our mandate to reprove that sin in their lives with the aim of restoring the one who strays back to fellowship within the body of Christ. Our call is to turn them back to the truth. We do this in love and all tenderness but with a firm resolve to guard the truth of God without compromise.

3) The Fruit of Our Vigilance. In the parable of the soils, Jesus reveals that there will be some in the church that might look and act like born again believers, only to later discover that their profession of faith was superficial or reluctant. In these cases, those same people will also stray from the truth. They may even abandon the faith all together. These are the cases that James speaks to, that when we are vigilant in cooperate faith, and we lead these ones to the knowledge of truth, that salvation and forgiveness in their lives is the fruit of our vigilance. Our efforts to restore the ones who stray just might be the very thing that brings the work of salvation to completion in their lives.