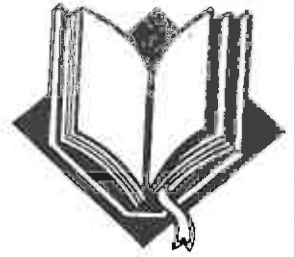


Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Teaching Ministries of Dartmouth Bible Church

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts 02747



Series: Studies in James
Scripture: James 1: 1-4

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 1 Oct. 18, 1992

YOUR PERSPECTIVE AND ATTITUDE IN TRIALS

Introduction One of the words which has worked its way into folks' vocabulary since the 1960's is the word *bummer*... Now, without getting into what that word originally meant, now it's basically a word we use to describe anything unpleasant which we might experience. Going to the Registry and having to wait in line is a "bummer." Getting sick is a "bummer." Having more bills than you've got money in the checkbook--you say, "Oh man, what a bummer."

Now I'm sure all of you understand that becoming a Christian does not *immunize* a person against a few "bummers" along the way. In fact, once a person DOES really become a Christian, they are almost guaranteed a whole NEW set of bummers that might happen. Jesus said that Christians shouldn't be surprised when they run into persecution because, He said, the world is going to hate Jesus' followers--especially the ones who really look like Him--just as it did Him. Non-Christians do not earn the wrath of the world, nor need they worry too much about the wiles of the devil. They are already in his hands. But Christians, when they really get going for Christ, well, now they've got more than the usual bummers to deal with.

The believers that were around during Jesus' day, and during those days right after He went back to heaven were no strangers to severe trial. They weren't just hassling with lines at the Registry, or balancing a checkbook, or the flu, or the occasional marital misunderstanding. They were being chased, thrown in jail (no "due process" of law needed often), losing their means of making a living and providing for their families, seeing their families split up, and not infrequently simply being executed for their allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth. What those ancient brethren of ours experienced was more akin to the Nazi Holocaust, only it didn't just last for 10 years; it lasted, coming in waves, from almost the DAY of Jesus' ascension, until the fourth century!

Now JAMES' letter to the general Christian community of the ancient world is a highly practical letter, and that is why I have chosen that we should spend some time hearing what he had to say. It isn't a book with a lot of technical theological information in it--you have to go *elsewhere* in the N.T. for that. But even so, it is hard to imagine this "James" not being astute in his own right when it might come to defending the faith in terms of its radically new theology. But James was, evidently, a humble man. We can get a glimpse of this by how he refers to himself in 1:1, as a *bond-servant* or *slave* of God. The "James" who wrote this "epistle" is one of FOUR "James's" in the N.T. We think it is probably James, the half-brother of Jesus Himself, and later the leading apostle of the Jerusalem church. But you will notice that he does not *identify* himself by either of those stations! He is simply James, a

bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is enough for him. The truly called minister of God DOES find that identity enough, because the true minister is first and foremost a SERVANT. Here in DBC, it is not your calling to serve me: it is my calling to serve YOU. That means that it is part of my job-description not to complain about not receiving this recognition or that parking space or this entitlement or that privilege. Ministers today have largely forgotten the most basic feature of what it means to be called, in favor of a more *professional* and modernized concept of the ministry.

I also do not want us to gloss over too quickly the title that James DOES ascribe to Jesus. It has three parts, and to the original readers of this letter--mostly believers, maybe a few unbelievers and seekers too--who were Jewish in origin, these three parts spoke volumes! James considers himself a purchased servant of, first,

the LORD Jesus Christ. That is our Savior's authority and it speaks of His *deity*. Second, James refers to the Savior as JESUS, his given human name--the very same Jesus that James grew up with in Nazareth. And third, the Savior is the Lord Jesus CHRIST. That speaks of His being the very *Messiah* for whom Israel had been waiting so long. So you see, James gives the Savior a title that is pregnant with powerful meaning in the minds of those first people to read this.

The First HOW-TO Message in the Book

As I said, this is a very practical book. Boy, are you going to see how practical! It is bluntly practical. It is strikingly practical and convicting. This book makes it clear in no uncertain terms *exactly* what real Christianity is supposed to look like. A real Christian is not a person who just talks the talk. He acts it, whether he can *talk* about it eloquently or not.

I think we are entering a time when folks are growing tired of all the sophisticated Christian-talk we have today. We've got more sophisticated ways of talking ABOUT Christianity today than the church has ever had before. But the thing that matters--dear ones: the ONLY thing that matters is how we ACT OUT the faith; how we LIVE IT OUT in the daily choices we make...choices like

how I speak to other people,
how I automatically treat other people,
how much I am willing to rely on God for in my life.

James is going to tell us that being a "hearer" of the word is easy. All you have to do is have ears. But it is the person who DOES the Word that he hears that pleases the Savior. It is the person who makes daily choices and decisions based upon what He knows the will of God to be.

Now verses 2-4 really form a single thought. The thought is this:

WHEN YOU RUN INTO A TRIAL, HAVE A BROAD VIEW OF THAT TRIAL

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When you find yourself in a bummer, don't be like the unbeliever who has no hope and must grit it out in the bummer as best he can. Realize that in *your* trial there is purpose. I doubt if James ever got to read Paul's letter to the Romans, but if he had the chance, I'm sure he would have fixed on the 28th verse of chapter 8:

God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Verses 2 to 4 were telling the "twelve dispersed tribes" (an allusion to all Jewish Christians, and ultimately all Christians), that when they were in trouble, to see the joy in it! In trouble, the Christian is experiencing spiritual growth. It's not that we're supposed to LIKE the trials we face. No early believer was HAPPY about being arrested, having their families split up, being burned at the stake. But a true believer in Christ is not DEVASTATED by his trials.

Now you may have sensed that the early believers' trials and ours are somewhat different. Some preachers would tell you, "Well, we're no different than them--our depression, our dysfunction, our maladjustments, our credit card debts, our computer shut-downs are just modern versions of first-century persecution, impoverishment." Well, let me clue you in: NO THEY'RE NOT. We know *nothing* about the kind of trials that many Christians have to face and face BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITH. Most of the time when you and I suffer it has little or nothing to do with our faith. It's other causes. Yes--I think American Christians, with all our big huge churches and neat sound systems and concerts, and millions of books and tapes, etc.--we're wimps! But it may be in God's plan that we have *yet to enter the arena*, dear ones. Despite the number of people in this country who claim to be born again, it is becoming more and more "politically incorrect" to stand up, stand up for Jesus.

James said to *Consider it all pure joy*. That speaks of the attitude that CHOOSE to have about a trial I find myself in. I'm supposed to CHOOSE to view the trial as PURE JOY. Pretty weird... Most of the time I seem to choose to view the trial as a bummer, like somehow I don't deserve this hassle. Like, "Who does God think He is anyway, letting me get into this mess."

Job could have said that. And even when you get to the end of the whole 42 chapters of the Book of Job, all you read is the rather stark and blunt ending, *And Job died an old man and full of days*. Even at the end of his long life Job still didn't have all the answers as to WHY did he have to suffer as he did? Maybe he knows *now* but the message of the Book of Job isn't

HOLD ON LONG ENOUGH AND GOD WILL EXPLAIN IT TO YOU

The message of the Book of Job is:

GOD DESERVES TO BE TRUSTED AND BELIEVED, DESPITE THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING...

Now, I think ~~our~~ trials fall into basically two categories, see what you think:

1. Inconveniences.
2. Survival.

Basically a great many of the things we struggle with--events in our lives that we find trying--are inconveniences. Perhaps MAJOR inconveniences, but that is what we resent. If I am struggling with a grown child who isn't turning out the way I would like, it is MY HOPES that are taking a hit. It isn't that my kid's choices are keeping the oatmeal off my table and I'm dying of starvation.

If I am unhappy in my church because it is less than I want it to be; if I am not doing quite like I think I should on my job, these are not survival issues, they are CONVENIENCE issues, basically. And I do believe that God cares about our day-to-day lives. Jesus told His disciples that the Father cares about a single sparrow that falls to the ground, and therefore cares far more about us. But it is WE who get all bent out of shape if we have to suffer. And let's be honest, isn't some of the suffering we experience *our doing*? Isn't it true that some of the things that people--even born-again believers--get depressed about and refuse to be joyful in spite of, aren't some of these things, things that WE have engineered? Sure they are. And God helps us out in those things too. We live under grace too, we're not just SAVED by grace. God is gracious to us even when we're in the bed that we have made; even when we're sowing what we have reaped.

Now James says that

ENDURANCE COMES BY HAVING OUR FAITH TESTED.

That makes sense. Endurance wouldn't come by having it easy all the time. Otherwise, how would my faith be able to withstand a "live-fire" trial? You and I have got to go through some stuff. We've got to go through some years of fighting the fight. I've got to learn, first of all, to DISCERN those trials that I've brought on myself and those that have come and just CAME.

Then James says that ENDURANCE eventually produces maturity. Dear ones, the church is supposed to be the place where you, as a Christian, become mature in your faith, in your walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm not sure what *else* the church is supposed to be, but it is supposed to be that! Are you becoming more mature here in DBC. Is this a place where you are facing up to your trials along with your brothers and sisters in faith--

some days the faith is kind of weak; "Hey, brothers and sisters, pray for me; strengthen me; listen to me; be patient with me--

...where you can say, "Hey, I've been growing in my walk with Jesus over the past year." Some of us are. Others of us--well, this is a nice little country church where the coffee's good and the preaching's fair, but you don't take the challenge too seriously... Some of you in this body, I am afraid, are *passionate* about insulating yourself against risks and stretching too much, spiritually. And if the squeeze gets put on you to consider doing something *radical* you punish the body by staying away for two months. No, dear ones, the church is a place where we learn to endure the trials we face, and sometimes the trials might be real severe. Some of you have faced some "class III" trials this year.

So hear's the deal: you decide, right now, that you're going to start looking at your "lot", your trials, whatever they are, as part of HOW GOD is building you into a more mature believer. You don't DENY that you have problems. You don't put on this fakey, smiley face; this falsely spiritual act and say, "Praise the Lord, I'm happy..." You admit you're in a bummer and then you face it and allow the Holy Spirit to give you joy anyway!

I think its in our songs that we can really allow some joy. Let's close with a single course of "Amazing Grace,"

*Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come,
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will
lead me home...*

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52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts 02747



Series: Studies in James
Scripture: James 1: 5-8

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 2 Oct. 25, 1992

ASK, BELIEVING

Keeping Your Boat Afloat During Rough Seas

Introduction I learned on my honeymoon that the primary objective when you are out in a boat alone, is to keep the boat afloat. On the last morning of our honeymoon, I took the fishing boat out for a little cruise. Sears Gamefisher, Mercury 9.8 hp motor; no big deal. Until I got a little (as my Dad used to say *smartalecky*) and took a sharp turn to starboard--too sharp! The boat started doing a 360 and filling with water. I was hanging on to the motor lever--which also was the throttle--and the more I tried to pull myself upright, the fast the boat went round and round in circles. Finally, with the motor underwater itself--Mercurys run an amazingly long time *underwater*--it quit and I pulled myself up to the front of the boat, the only part of the boat still above the waterline. Since this was my new father-in-law's motor and my new brother-in-law's boat, my life immediately flashed before my eyes. But with a lot of bailing, for over an hour, and not a small amount of praying, I got the boat (motor too) back to the dock at where we were staying. I learned that the primary objective in boating is to keep the boat afloat. When you find yourself in a real trial, a real bummer, a real tribulation, your primary objective is to keep your boat afloat. That is what our passage today in James 1 is about. Today's passage deals with HOW TO cry out to God in the midst of tribulation. The particular tribulation that James has in mind, apparently, deals with one's financial picture.

Now in a lot of matters, including personal finances, we are subject to a way of thinking--many of us were raised with this way of thinking--which I think, hinders HOW QUICKLY we ask things from God. Many of us have subconsciously adopted the belief that "God helps those who help themselves." Where I observe this is when a believer, a person who has truly met the Savior, says that they don't generally pray for themselves. As if God does not generally answer requests for personal needs, at least not unless you are completely destitute physically. Well, what this does is wipe out a great deal of opportunity for us to receive from the hand of a loving God. We seem bent on *disqualifying* ourselves from receiving things from God FOR ME. We say, "I'll pray all day for someone else, but I'm not comfortable praying for myself." How does that make God feel, dear ones?

Now "St. Jim" has encouraged us by telling us that our trials, our "tribulations", our "bummers" are part of God's plan to make us stronger believers. They are not pleasant at the time--no one says they should be. Consider with me something the writer to the Hebrews wrote:

Hebrews 6:11,12 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Hebrews 12:11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

This is what James said about the kind of perspective and attitude we need to adopt about suffering. Consider it DISCIPLINE from the hand of a loving God who wants to make us tougher and stronger, and the only way to do that is to allow us to go through some stuff--some *hard* stuff.

CRYING OUT FOR WISDOM Now he talks about how to cry out to God when you're in the middle of a trial. He says that IF ANYONE FINDS THEMSELVES SHORT ON WISDOM, which I think means *mired in confusion* about the trial, just ask of God. The promise here is that GOD WILL GIVE IT TO YOU. The promise is not necessarily that He will just immediately remove the trial and transport you to "happy land." But He WILL give you the wisdom you need to weather the storm.

First, though, a person needs to recognize their NEED for wisdom! This is no small hurdle for some, even for some Christians. Some are so prideful or stubborn that they rarely admit their need for wisdom.

I have a pastor friend in Connecticut who once told me he had never once been depressed in 12 years of ministry. I told him he was either lying or crazy, or both. (He didn't appreciate that but neither did I believe his claim...)

When you or I find ourselves in a real, *bona fide* trial, we need to NOT say, "Hey, I'm made of tough stock; I don't need anyone's help." Dear ones, you think that way and you are a fool. Everyone needs GOD'S wisdom in a trial. We need first to flee to God and ASK Him for understanding and courage and clear-thinking.

Notice that James says two things about the nature of God in vs. 5. He states that God gives liberally to all men. God *delights* in giving. That's why it is just plain stupid (I can think of no better word) to say, "I rarely ask for anything for myself." God is generous; it is His very nature to give; that is why He GAVE His only Son--because He loved the world." Dear ones do not forget that your God, the God of the Bible, gives liberally to ALL MEN. He has an affection and concern for ALL of His creation.

2nd, James says that God gives without reproach. The Greek word used here is interesting. It refers to the ancient habit of loaning money to someone and throwing it in their face. Someone might consent to help someone else out financially, but as they're handing over the money, they include a few choice and stinging remarks, like: *Here we go again...* or *This is the last time!* James says that when God gives, He doesn't ever give like that. He gives *without reproach*.

But God is No "Softy"

On the other hand, even though God gives freely and liberally, he has no patience with someone putting his hand out half way! James says that we must BELIEVE.

Again, please turn back a few pages in Hebrews to Hebrews 11:6:

...without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

God wants us to ask many things of Him, not the least of which is wisdom to deal with a trial. He invites us to ask, He has guaranteed in His word that He will grant that wisdom (and there will be the accompanying JOY); but He DEMANDS that we believe Him in this promise. James makes it clear that if we are double-minded, as he says, and unstable in our confidence that He will answer the request, we DISQUALIFY ourselves from getting what we so desperately need during a trial.

Its not that God gets mean. He does not. But a lack of faith in Him is the greatest insult. It is the thing that disables your walk with Him the fastest. He is there in heaven, fully BEING God, and exercising His will through eternity. And we come along and hold our hand out half-way, telling him, "I'm not sure you're going to do what you've said you're going to do, God."

To think that God is playing games with us--first in allowing us to go through certain trials, and then playing hide and seek with us while we're in them; to think that way about God breaks His heart.

Being immature and unstable in the faith is no way to be--that is what I'm saying.

On the other hand, I think we can be honest with God like the man whose son was possessed by a spirit and brought the boy to Jesus for deliverance: the man said that He DID believe in Jesus, but that the unbelieving part of him needed help. It was a noble outcry. Many believers have quoted that man, and often. We DO have confidence, but like Peter walking on the water, we start to slip under the waves sometimes. Then is when you cry out,

"Help me then, in every tribulation, so to trust Thy promises, O Lord; that I lose not faith's sweet consolation, offered me within your holy word."

Dear ones, BELIEVING in what ^{God} has said He will do is an act of your will. It is an act of obedience, and THAT is a choice you make, even when you're depressed or confused or tired and worn out from a trial. This is how you keep your boat afloat; it's how you stay on top of the water. There is no deep theology in this; there's nothing complicated about it. You either believe in the things He has promised, or you do not. YOU make the decision whether you are going to cling to those promises--

one of which is to grant you just the wisdom you need, and to grant it over and over again, as often as you need it

--whether you are going to rely on Him in the situation. And there are so many promises in the Scripture which apply to us. There are some that do not and we need to be smart in the Scriptures to understand which are for us and which are not.

But your trials are spiritual exercises, ultimately. They have not happened to you randomly. God is bigger than all the trials of every person on the planet over all time. They do not intimidate Him, and they do not overwhelm Him.

Now what is it that you need divine wisdom about today? Some of you are not in a trial right now, and we praise God with you. We draw strength from your stability and your joy and prosperity. Others of you have trials you are facing. Can God give you the understanding and discernment; the courage and the confidence to meet it? Will He give it to you?

If you are a Christian, the answer is an unequivocal YES.
If you are not a Christian yet, you have a greater need than wisdom. You need the forgiveness of God for your sins and the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit. And He will not withhold that from you either if you will invite Him into your heart to be YOUR Lord and Savior.

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Series: Studies in James
Scripture: James 1:9-12

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 3 November 8, 1992

True Enrichment

Introduction Before we moved to New Bedford, I must confess that we had never heard of Hetty Green. But since living here, it has been interesting to become acquainted with the "witch of Wall Street." It's not as easy book to find, but if you ever have the opportunity to read the book *The Day They Shook the Plum Tree* give that book a "read." It's the story of Hetty Green, in her day the wealthiest woman in the country, and her son, "the Colonel."

I must say that from what history records about Hetty Green, she was basically a contemptible person--not the kind of person you would have enjoyed working for or even knowing. She is the epitome of Jesus' statement, *No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [money] (Matthew 6:24).* I have never yet heard of someone who served money like that woman. Hetty Green died on July 3rd, 1916, a miserable woman. Yes, she had amassed quite a financial empire but as James 1:11 testifies, *For the sun rises with a scorching wind, 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.*

Now, you may not know anyone of the financial status of a Hetty Green. I do not. But I have known in the past and do know now a number of relatively wealthy folks. Some are happy Christians in addition to being financially well-off. Others are just as frustrated and unhappy with life as people of less income.

Today we want to deal with the matter of how to live a truly enriched life. I'm calling this message *True Enrichment*. The apostle James exhorted his

readers to ACCEPT LIFE as it came, "as the cards are dealt"--and to see their trials as *transitory*. This is the idea we want to work on today.

It is the same idea as Paul wrote to the Philippians (4:11), *I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.*

It is the same idea that Jesus spoke about when He was giving the sermon on the mount (Matthew 6:31-34).

It is what the psalmist was talking about when he wrote in Psalm 46:10, *Be still, and know that I am God* (which, incidentally, is part of that Psalm Luther was meditating on when he wrote *A Mighty Fortress...*)

James surely knew a great many of the brethren in Jerusalem who would fit his description in verse 9, chapter 1 of his letter. But honestly, isn't there a certain kind of "richness" in having a simple "portfolio?"

Income	\$1,000
Expenses	
Tithe	\$100
Rent	300
Food & clothing	100
Utilities	100
Car & Gas	100
Savings	100
Insurances	100
Other	<u>100</u>
	1,000

This kind of a simple income/expense situation would be pretty nice, maybe. At least it would be a modern equivalent for the *humble circumstances* that James saw most of his brothers and sisters in Christ living with. There is some joy in not having to be consumed by financial worry. There is some joy in having a simple, all be it humble financial picture.

So many want more and more and more. Well, judging by the people I have known whom I would consider wealthy, MORE brings more distraction, more anxiety, more responsibility and less time available for other things. But James isn't just saying "be content, and BOAST in being UNwealthy." No, he is saying BOAST IN THE TEMPORARINESS of your humble circumstances. There is nothing intrinsically noble in NOT having much (*despite* Gandhi's

credo); any more than there is anything intrinsically *evil* in having a lot (Paul did *not* say *Money is the root of all evil* as a lot of people quote him. He wrote *the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows* (I Tim. 6:10)...

But we can **BOAST** in **KNOWING** that the tough financial circumstances we're in, for the Christian, are just temporary. Really, **ALL** trials we must weather are just temporary. And financial ones are only going to last a little while.

Financial worries are funny, though. It's not like numbers can hurt us, you know? It is the fear of what *might* happen if there aren't enough numbers. We fear **NOT** having what we think we need. At times like that we need to focus on what Jesus said, *your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things...*(Matt. 6:32b). The question is, do you know that **HE** knows?

If I am struggling with doing without something that I think I really need, I need to focus on Paul's words to the Corinthians, *...I am well content with weaknesses, and insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties for Christ's sake; FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG* (2 Cor. 12:10).

Now people say to me sometimes, and they are often right, "Pastor, you don't know what I'm going through--you do not appreciate the depth of struggle I am facing." You are right, if you feel that way. I do not. But whether I or anyone else can really fully understand your lack, your doing-without...doesn't matter that much. **GOD** is the one who needs to understand and He is the one who needs to fill up your lack, because He is the one who has promised to meet all our needs.

Now, verse 10 is kind of strange at first glance. How is it that James can say to the person who is rich, that he's supposed to find some kind of joy in a scenario where he loses his shirt? This is the very thing that the rich person lies awake at night figuring ways to avoid it! This is what he went to all those seminars to learn how to avoid it. This is why he **GOT** that accounting degree. And now James comes around and says *let the rich man boast in his humiliation*. Well, basically, with a Kingdom-of-God kind of outlook, the rich and the poor need to live in the same manner with the same priorities for

living. The poor person needs to **BOAST** in the high position they will enjoy in the coming Kingdom of God. The rich person needs to **BOAST** in the lesson he is learning (hopefully) that money really means little and, as James illustrates in verse 11, will fade away soon enough. Having a nice financial portfolio is like the Autumn, folks--from a biblical perspective. It blazes in glory, only to die. This is the perspective on money from heaven.

I think of some professional athletes we have read about who were considered "super stars" ten or fifteen years ago. And you say to yourself, whatever happened to so-and-so? And then you find out that even though they made some very "big bucks", they threw it away on gambling or on drugs or something, and now they're nobody special. It's sad, sure it's sad... But those people have learned *one* big lesson: money flies away and it has a way of disappearing. So, if it's going to evaporate "best I not have too much to grieve over."

Finally, in verse 12, James pronounces a "beatitude." You remember the beatitudes, right? In the sermon on the mount, Jesus said *blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt.5:3). A "beatitude" is a pronouncement of blessing. And here James pronounces that the kind of person he describes in verse 12 is very blessed, whether he fully feels it at the time or not. This world, this year (1992), this town, this country are not all there are. The world and the devil tell us, "Yes they are--you only go 'round once in life" and all that. But these things are **NOT** all there is. The way we live in this world **DOES** have some bearing on the world and the life to come. Not in the reincarnation way, but in the economy of how God has planned things.

The believer who *perseveres* under trial has a high place in God's view. Not all believers **DO** persevere under trial. Otherwise there would have been no reason for James to say this... Some cave in. Some give up. Some are seduced away. John wrote that those who really do defect demonstrate that they never really *did* know the Lord to begin with (I John 2:19). But the believer who **DOES** persevere under trial will experience great reward. Folks, I shiver when I contemplate this verse. The finest biblical commentators and theologians that there are cannot fully explain what this will entail. The Apostle Paul comments best (himself quoting Scripture! [Isaiah 64:4; 65:17])

Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who

love Him (I Cor. 2:9)

Do you love Him? Do you *know* Him? Please don't get mad at me for asking. I'm not asking you to compare yourself with me or with anyone else. Just ask yourself, because the Scripture is asking you--and the LORD is asking you today, do you know Him and love Him? Listen to these very-words of God as He spoke through the prophet Jeremiah (9:23,24):

Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts, boast of this: that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness and justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things" declares the Lord.

Isaiah and Jeremiah and Paul and James are all promising that regardless of your "happiness-quotient" in this world; right today... Fabulous wonder and joy await those who are faithful to Christ in this world, who really love Him and are willing to suffer for Him--joy and wonder in the world to come.

I do not know exactly what the *crown of life* is, dear ones. But James says (verse 12) that after standing the test (*after he has been approved*) every believer will receive that crown--that victor's wreath. It is a *meritorious award*, the *medal of honor*.

Sometimes believers will entertain this thought: "I'll forfeit my rewards in heaven so that I can indulge the flesh a little here. Just getting there by the blood of Jesus will be enough." Dear ones, think not that any award of merit that the Lord offers is something worthless. Think not that it is something to lightly forfeit. Any good or blessing which God has reserved for those who *persevere under trial* is of inestimable value. If God offers it, it is worth anything--*anything* to win.

Let's renew our commitment to Him. Let's not let depression over what we don't have control our lives, sap us of our joy, rob us of glorying in His sufficiency. When you get right down to it, isn't being completely forgiven for your sins enough? Let's stand for a benediction:

To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy--to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Jude 24,25

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Teaching Ministries of Dartmouth Bible Church

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts 02747



Series: Studies in James
Scripture: James 1:13-18

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 4 November 15, 1992

God and Man 101

Introduction I know I have made this observation several times in recent months, but I really do believe that people are information-crazy today. We strive hard to learn more and more about all kinds of things. We want to know about computers; we want to know about nutrition. We want to know about electronics. We want to know about investing money... We want to know about *ourselves* (so we learn how to look inward and how to explore those deep caverns of the past...) But you know, really the most important and most valuable thing you can know about is the person of God. What is He like? I mean, what is He *really* like, not just what do people *think* He is like or what did your Dad or your Mom *say* He is like. What is He *really* like? The Bible says that God WANTS people to know *exactly* what He is like. He is not insecure at all for people to get to know Him and to get to know Him well. He desires this, greatly.

In this passage today, we're going to see 7 facts about God and 3 facts about man. I'm not sure yet what this will do for you, personally. I hope you will listen to the Holy Spirit as you see these attributes of God and man in James 1, and that He will give you the message He wants you to hear today. But the way I figure it, learning ABOUT God--and learning what Scripture says about man can only benefit us. Undertaking a basic study on God from a biblical perspective is something many people have never done. Sometimes even Christians, who have heard and believed the Gospel, still haven't taken the course "God and Man 101". Oh sure, there's lots of nice *theories* out there on how God is, and how man is. But when you get back to the Bible--and when you cross that bridge of accepting that the Bible is reliable and authoritative in what it says, then you begin to see how God *really* is.

This week I was made aware of a history class at the college where

one of the major themes is that Christianity has been the cause of much of the antisemitism in the world; that the New Testament, in fact, is a storehouse of anti-Jewish ideas. But I am always encouraged when I return to the plain truth of Scripture, Old or New Testament. When will people just get "back to the Bible" to help them see God as He really is? When will we return to the simple assertions contained in those writings which have clearly been inspired by God, to SEE Who God is and who we are? Many people today are unwilling to consider Scripture at face value, I know. And so I think that when WE seek to do that, it is a unique and special thing. We are blessed because of our *outlook* on Scripture. That is one of the blessings of being a Bible church.

GOD: the First Part of the Course In James 1: 13-18, this apostle states 7 facts about God and 3 about man. We are not going to make this message anything more than that. I want you to consider, or review these facts. I want you to look at them, to look at your own life, to look at them again and to see what the Spirit says to you today. Today, this is *God and Man 101*, a basic course in the nature of the true God and the true nature of man.

The first part of verse 13 takes us back to the problem of going through trials. James said that the Christian who *perseveres* under some trials is, from heaven's perspective, a blessed Christian. And part of going through trials of various type, is the temptations you face along the way. James says, *Let no one say, when he is tempted, 'I'm being tempted by God' for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.* "LET NO ONE SAY" he says... In other words, when you find yourself entertaining thoughts that your trial is God's fault, don't actually *decide* that it is God's fault.

FACT ABOUT GOD #1 Our God is not susceptible to evil. He cannot make a decision to mess up your life. It is not just that God *chooses* to avoid messing up your life--He *cannot* be seduced to do something evil to you. In His fatherhood of us, as the book of Hebrews tells us, He may allow events of divine discipline to occur--things that will make us tougher and more wise as His children. But these things are not evil; they are, in fact, good. And if we weather them in the Spirit, we will receive the *crown of life*. But as far as God Himself is concerned, no evil ever comes out of Him. People may *blame* God for evil, even Christians sometimes, but it is unfair.

I must remind us too, that some of the trials we endure are our own

making. How short our memory is though, when we forget that the longstanding pain I have to deal with is the result of some choice I made a long time ago. God didn't make me make that choice--I made the choice. We could think of a lot of examples of this; but what about the young man or woman who, in the passion of youth, run up a huge financial debt? And they have to spend years of frugal living *later* to get out of it. Then they may be tempted to say, "O Lord, why have you brought this evil upon me?" And God says, "I didn't bring that on you; you brought it on you."

FACT ABOUT GOD #2 Also in verse 13 James asserts that God does not tempt anyone. Now that may seem too basic for you, and I "apologize" for insulting you with such basic theology, if that is how you feel... It may seem as if it should go without saying that God doesn't entice or seduce anyone to do evil. But dear ones, that is the very thing that people can **THINK** *when they're in the midst of a trial*. "God--why are you tempting me?" But the real fact about God is that temptation to do evil never comes from Him. Temptation has a different source, according to this apostle. This brings us to **FACTS 1 and 2** about *man*.

What Man is Like: the Second Part of the Basic Course:

In verse 16, James exhorts his readers to **NOT BE DECEIVED**. That must mean that they, even as Christians (because he calls them his *beloved brethren*), are **DECEIVABLE**. People--even Christian people--can be fooled. Here the "fooler" isn't Satan; it is the person *himself*. A believer might be lulled into the belief that a weakness with sin he may have is someone else's fault.

On the contrary, says James, *each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust*. "Each one", dear ones. That means all of us. That means that my struggle with the flesh is *personal*, thank you very much... It means that when I fall into one kind of sin or another, I ultimately have only myself to blame.

Now, temptation itself is not sin. To have the sin put on a plate in front of me and for me to see it and feel a stirring to **DO** it, is not sin. Jesus was tempted, with an intensity of temptation far beyond anything I might be tempted by. The writer to the Hebrews said (4:15), *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin*.

But FACT #2 about how men are is that we are all--even Christians still--susceptible to an evil process, a process which the great Greek scholar A.T. Robertson called "the Abortion." We are all susceptible to self-abortion. We are *born bent to self-annihilation*. Were it not for the intervening grace of God which rescues men and women and children from this *inborn mechanism for spiritual abortion*, we would all end up in hell. Even after conversion to Christ, and really meeting Him, we are *still* capable of rolling downhill in a snowball of sin, a PROCESS which is evil and completely destructive. James lays it out this way in verse 15:

Lust (cravings for things which are not ours to have) entices (like drawing a fish out of hiding with bait) a person into Temptation. If the temptation is followed and not refused, the result is a "conception", the *embryo* of which is SIN. This is the first "birth" and "sin is the child of desire" (A.T. Robertson). Sin, in turn, matures and then gives birth to DEATH. It is like a child born dead, just like an abortion. When sin is born, death is involved like an embryonic parasite that feeds on sin. In other words, James is saying just what Paul wrote, when he said to the Romans that *the paycheck of sin is death*.

Now, these are some basic facts about man--ALL men. You will not get this perspective on life out "there..." But it is the true "scoop" on what people are really up against. There are numerous examples in people all around us. It is especially sad, and powerfully ironic if a Christian falls into a time of sin in his life. He becomes walking-death. And if a Christian thinks he is somehow *immune* from falling down this well, or that if he finds himself sinning--maybe because of some trial--that God is the one responsible for it, he has become deceived; fooled; misinformed; scrambled in his thinking...

It is so easy to become accustomed to sin around us, even inside of us, our *own* sin. We can become so accustomed to sin that we do not realize we are becoming spiritually ruined. In a certain laboratory experiment a frog was placed in water that was being heated very slowly, at the rate of .0036 of a degree Fahrenheit, per second. The frog made no move or attempt to jump away. But in two and a half hours, the frog was dead. The explanation of the experiment was that at any one point during it, the water showed such little contrast with that of a moment before that the frog was never attracted by it. It was

boiled to death without noticing it...

But I think we need to focus on the *goodness* of God for the rest of our time. We need to have a healthy respect for the power of sin, and to be smart about how it works and *can* still work in our lives. But James would have his readers FOCUS on God. Let's consider the other basic facts about God in the passage, and finish this course *God and Man 101*.

God, the Last Part of the Course In verse 17 James says that, on the contrary, God is the source of all good things. He is a gift-giving God and all His gifts are special and wonderful. Anything which comes from Satan, on the other hand, is evil and destructive. That is why we do not toy with anything which makes light of him or which plays at games with the spirit world or with things related to the spirit world. But with God, He loves us and desires only what is best for us. FACT #3 about God is that He is the source of all good things. FACT #4 is that He is the source of all light, which is another *high* and *marvelous* way of saying all things which are good and right. It is He who has created the sun and the moon and the planets and the stars, and the wonderful, twinkling light they give that we enjoy. The sun is not ONLY a massive, exploding ball of gases. It was PUT THERE by God. He "thought it up".

FACT #5 is that our God, in His essence, is UNCHANGEABLE. He does not learn; He does not improve; He does not grow. He always was; He is now; He will be forever GOD. There is *no variation* with Him. That means He is trustable, dependable, reliable. I can count on Him that though I change all the time, if He has bestowed His grace in my life, it will not wear out. He will not change His mind about loving me.

FACT #6 is a little harder to get a handle on: the text from James says that with God there is also *no shifting shadow*. This is a "word picture" with something like maybe a sundial in mind. As the sun would move across the sky the shadow would move around the sundial. But our God is not like this. He does not do good things for people one day, and bad another. God casts no shadow over the earth or into people's lives. No, He is the *Father of lights* and the giver of *every perfect gift*.

FACT #7 is a fitting way to end this little mini-course today, *God and Man 101*... God is the sovereign redeemer of the redeemed, as James demonstrates in verse 18.

Despite the trials we may face. Despite the power of temptation and the tragic *abortive* process that continued sin will bring, believers are the recipients of God's sovereign grace. The fact that I have been born-again (isn't there a lot of "obstetrical" talk in this passage?) is due to the fact that it is GOD who has spiritually *birthed* me. I didn't invent this thing in my heart and head called "saving faith." It was not some mythical concept, which people like to call "free will" by which I regenerated myself. It was *in the exercise of His will* (James says) that God *begat us to a living hope* (Peter says [I Pet. 1:3]). Yet another apostle (John 1:12,13) put it this way:

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name--who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And if that is not enough, do you remember another apostle's words (Romans 8:29,30)?

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined these He also called, these He also justified, and whom He justified these He also glorified.

Who is the active agent in each of these verses? Is it man? No, man is the acted-UPON-agent. Man is the receiver of grace and the one whom God has declared *ELIGIBLE to become a participant* in God's program. James and the first century Christians were the "first fruits", the first Christians, the first of a big family of redeemed people down the ages who would share the Gospel with generation after generation.

Yes, people are hungry for all kinds of neat information today... But what we really need is to know God better. I can't learn too much about Him. I cannot get too much of Him into my life. He is so good, the giver of every good gift--there's isn't anything worth having that He is not the source of it!

Are you getting to know Him better? Are you like the psalmist these days, *As the deer pants for the water, so my soul pants after Thee?* I challenge you and encourage you, and I beg you too--seek Him. Rest not with what knowledge you have of Him so far. Do not allow sin to have its course in your life. If there is sin you're courting today, forsake it. It will bring walking death. Better far, is the pursuit of the Lord. Can we not be a church where everyone is seeking the Savior; BUSY with the pursuit of trying harder and harder to see Him working in my life, making me more into a reflection of Jesus Christ?

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Teaching Ministries of Dartmouth Bible Church

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts 02747



Series: Studies in James
Scripture: James 1:19-22

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 5 November 22, 1992

Effects of the Implanted Word

Introduction In our elders' meeting this past week we were talking about how the Christian life must be an ever-increasing experience with grace. If it is not, somehow, then it is not the real Christian life. It may look religious and it may have a bunch of churchy activity along with it--but if a person's day to day Christianity isn't an enlarging encounter with God's grace, it isn't real Christian faith. What I mean by "grace", is this:

A feeling and conviction that I have become
a receiver of God's unmerited love and mercy

The Bible teaches us, of course, that it is by God's unmerited favor and by His *initiative* that a person can even BECOME a real Christian. You may like to think that you were the author of your faith; but the Scripture says that God is the author of it, out of a loving motivation to rescue you from sin. But after a person *becomes* a Christian, he or she must then CONTINUE the experience with God's grace. More and more, as the months since your conversion turn into years, you feel and really *awaken* to how loving and forgiving and merciful and giving our God actually is. Along the way there will be *influences*; powers; teachings maybe; other church members maybe; which will tend to get you away from the sense that God loves you deeply. (James was concerned that certain trials and temptations would divert his readers away from a warm and vibrant walk with the *Father of lights*). So, as Bob and Lou and I were having some deep fellowship on Wednesday this week, discussing the grace of God and its continuing effects on us, I want to remind you first of all here today that the Christian life MUST be a swelling feeling of God's love and mercy in your life. If you do not have that feeling--over say any given one-year period of your life--you are missing the whole deal!

God's Word: the Major Tool of the Grace-Life Now with that observation as backdrop, let's look at some things James says will come along with your salvation by grace. He thinks that a big part of the grace-life has to do with how the Word of life changes us from the inside- out. James' teaching here is NOT: *Go do these things and then you will earn God's grace and the right to call yourself a saved person.* No, rather, it is this: when you become a Christian, somehow the Word of God became an "implant" in your life (verse 21). It became like a seed that was PLANTED in our hearts when we were born-again. James may have had two other places in the Bible in mind here: in Mark 4 Jesus told the parable of the sower--a believer has the opportunity and the responsibility to provide the right climate for the growth of God's Word in his life. James also may have been thinking back to the OT where the prophet Jeremiah, speaking for God, said that the time was coming when God Himself would *put His law into people's minds and write it on their hearts* (Jeremiah 31:33).

Now as a believer, walking daily in God's grace, cultivating the feeling and sense of God's mercy to him, as that believer allows the Holy Spirit to make the Word of God grow inside of his heart and mind, it will begin to produce certain *effects* in the believer's behavior. Again I say--even though James 1:19 has an imperative mood to it (DO THIS!), the thought is not DO THIS and then you will earn the right to be a Christian. The idea is that a Christian WILL surrender himself, gradually, to the effects that the Word of God is supposed to have. The effect that the Word of God is going to have in your life, if you allow it to, is to *change* your relationships with people.

Three Effects of God's Word in Us: Verse 19 deals with how we are around other people. A Word-of-God- infected person is, slowly, going to be becoming a good listener, an unhasty talker, and a patient and kind-spirited. A saved person--and I think this is one of the signs you can see in a person who really has met Christ--is going to hunger for the Word to begin to take effect in his heart and mind, and then it will "trickle down" to his tongue and his willingness to listen and into his spirit.

Now, James puts no time limit on this. Nowhere does he (or any other apostle) suggest that this will happen within, say, the first 24 months of being a Christian. No, James says, "Now that you read this, start allowing the Word to change you NOW." When you look at how sanctification works in the Bible, I think it is paradoxical. Biblical sanctification reflects two realities: 1) do it now! 2) It takes a long time. Now, if those two realities about how you're

trying to grow in grace seem contradictory, I say, "amen." But they are both true. When you hear the Word of God--from a preacher, as you read it, a verse you have memorized that the Holy Spirit brings to mind; *however...*--God wants you to decide to obey it then and there. But He understands that some issues are going to take a long time for the Word of God to really produce fruit in that area. Both realities are true, though it is a paradox.

I think we need to fully understand all this to appreciate James' words in this passage. Now, verse 20 is an interesting commentary on life which I think many honest people would wonder about at first glance...

Sure, the anger of man achieves God's righteousness. If I get mad enough at my child, my wife, my neighbor, my church, they will HAVE TO start doing God's will.

Paul, the apostle, told the Roman believers (12:17-21) to let the Lord take care of evening things up. What *we* need to do, is to just worry about ourselves--that is, to worry about what kind of shape *my* spirit is in. God's will for ME--especially when someone's done something to make me angry, is to overcome the evil with good, to not pay back evil for evil. I know this is hard. But it is not impossible! And it IS clearly the kind of effect that the Holy Spirit is working inside me, by using His Word in my mind and heart.

Well, James says "give it up." Your being enraged about how someone else is behaving might *feel good* to you, but it won't effect real sanctification in that person; inside; where they need it to happen. Fear, as a motivator, is something we can become skillful at implanting in someone else. But it racks up no points with God, and it is HIM being pleased and honored that's all that really matters in the end!

Now, these three EFFECTS of having the Word of God growing inside me, apply to EVERYONE (*But let everyone...*). Can you imagine what kind of a church we can have if EVERYONE were to really allow the Spirit to apply these words from James in their lives today? What would be the effect in our families? What would be the effect in the church's life? Man, I tell you I wonder if we could *stand* it!

First, he says the person in whom God's Word is really taking root is going to "be becoming" a GOOD LISTENER...*quick to hear*. That doesn't

mean hearers *only*, at least insofar as God's Word is concerned. But with the quality of being a good listener. A Good listener of God's Word and a good listener of others. Jesus had a marvelous ability to listen to others. When He replied, it always evidenced that He had *heard* the other person first.

No one likes someone who just talks to hear themselves talk. People want to be heard. And when you are *quick to hear*, you are sending that person the message that, for the moment at least, they are important. Their opinion is important. Many times I have noticed that when someone is upset about something, more than anything they just want a proper hearing. Then they calm down immensely.

Second, James says to be *slow to speak*. The Christian who is hungry to hear the Word, who wants to really hear others, will not be quick to "jabber" their opinion all over the place. Phyllis Arruda was this way. Phil Griffin was this way. The person who is deeply *infected* with God's Word will have their tongue always having to catch up to their brains, instead of the reverse.

Third, James says to BE *slow to anger*. Nowhere in Scripture are we told to *never get angry*. Anger (I believe) is an emotion, a natural feeling and mental impetus that we experience when we feel violated, either ourselves, or vicariously for someone else. It is human. Unchecked, it also leads to destruction. In your family, on the job, in the church, believers are to be SLOW to anger; LONG-fused; pushable; patient; kind-spirited.

How to do this? When you feel the "dirtiness" welling up inside of you; the ugly response of anger and vengeance, ground it! Like a ground wire, *ground it!* James says *put it aside*. Instead, allow the Word to have its effect on you.

Now your boss may deserve justice. Your spouse, your Dad, your Mom, your brother, your sister, your pastor, may all, in your estimation, need a swift "pop in the chops" to wake them up. But not by you, dear ones. Not if you are a Christian. Let God's Word...which, after all, is the basis of your salvation...have its way in you. Allow it to control your reactions to people.

Now all this presupposes that the Word has been planted a little in your life. Non-Christians have not had this implanting yet. They may be full of Bible

knowledge, but until the living Word is planted in the heart it cannot begin to change a person from the inside-out, as this passage is really talking about

You and I need to do whatever we can, to do whatever it takes to get some of the Word into our lives! Reading it is good. Memorizing it is good. Listening to it on tape is good. Writing it out is good. The apostle says to receive it...Like receiving a spoonful of cough syrup. Let it do its thing. It will be good. If you're an angry person it will start to make you well. If you're a motor-mouth and find it hard to listen, it will start to make you well. If you're a self-sufficient kind of person (I mean in an unhealthy way), as you *humble yourself* the Word will start to liberate you from that.

And let us know that you need assistance getting God's Word down into your system. We'll help.

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Teaching Ministries of Dartmouth Bible Church

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts 02747



Series: Studies in James
Scripture: James 1:22-27

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 6 December 27, 1992

Guidelines for Authentic Christians

Introduction If there is one thing the world wants to see these days, it is authentic Christianity. False Christianity and phony Christianity, it has seen plenty of, don't you think? I really believe that a great many non-Christians would *like* to know someone they would consider an "authentic" Christian. They would like to NOT have to turn to the extremely rare "famous" Christian celebrity, a spiritual superstar, before they can get a look at what real Christianity looks like. I'm not saying these non-Christians I'm thinking of will necessarily *like* an authentic Christian when they meet him or her --but I think there are plenty of non-Christians out there who secretly or privately *want* to see what authentic Christianity really looks like.

The reason is that I think some non-Christians--maybe these are those who will eventually *end up* Christians themselves; they are *seeking*--they intuitively-know that there is something TO this Christianity stuff. They look at this church or that church; this individual professing Christian or maybe *that* one and decide, "No, I don't think that's it." But they *hunger* to meet someone who really seems to know Jesus Christ, someone who looks like Him; who acts like Him; who orders his or her life as Jesus would.

I think these people are out there because sometimes people say things TO US, about OUR precious faith, that stings us. One of you told me recently that a person close to you gave you this evaluation: "your faith has failed you." Someone close to me said a few years ago, "I understand what you believe, and I *don't* believe it." It stings us--but the point is THEY ARE WATCHING...

Now if you can relate to this tension I'm talking about--this feeling that there's folks out there who are watching *our* faith-experience, and wishing to see the real thing, let me take the quest for authentic Christianity a little further. We, ourselves, sometimes wonder, "is this Christian religion really 'real' inside of me?" We are being examined both by other people and by us, ourselves.

So, if you're concerned about the quest for seeing authentic Christianity let me tell you that it is not a new quest. The apostle James was concerned with the same thing. In today's passage from his letter, he speaks of the urgency that believer's live out their faith with a genuineness.

It isn't in the songs we sing. It isn't in the clothes we wear. It isn't even really in whether we go to church or know lots of orthodox theology. These are all issues we deal with--but none of these things is the real "litmus test" of whether our faith is real or not.

As I say, I sense that lots of people out there know that there is a God-shaped hole in their lives and they would want to fill it with Him. They are not willing to buy that just by becoming a church-goer that hole will be filled. And they're not sure that if and when they really find God they're going to mutate--or that they *want* to mutate into some kind of toxic religious creature, going around drooling Bible verses all over the place and acting generally obnoxious. They seem to sense that a true finder-of-Christ just isn't going to be weird or even *more* dysfunctional... But still there's that hole there, that they cannot deny.

Dear ones, people need to see the real thing. They might not *like* all that the real thing means, but they need to see it. And let me encourage you, because the real thing is definitely here. There are plenty of authentic Christians around, quietly living their faith and blessing their immediate "context" with power and knowledge of Jesus Christ. I could point out some, whom I think are like this, right here in our own church, but I won't because that then sort of *betrays* the point, doesn't it?

Last Time Last time we were in this letter of James together, we ended up in 1: 21 where James spoke of the work of allowing God's Word to invade your heart and therefore, your day-to-day living. He told his readers, *in humility receive the Word, implanted*. It sounds alot, there, like what a buddy of his wrote a number of years later:

*like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word,
that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if indeed you have tasted the
kindness of the Lord (I Peter 2: 2,3)*

When God's Word gets *into* you, it changes you. God says to you and to me, "Let My Word impact your life." Think about it: people who know little or nothing of what God has said, flounder in knowing what's right in this world and what is not right. They are completely susceptible to the whims and trends and, in fact, the decay of the world. Last year homosexuality was understandable. This year homosexuality is perfectly fine-- next year it might be the *preferred* relationship in society. People who know little or nothing of God's Word, or who have not been instructed in how to interpret it responsibly will flounder in their moral views. They will flounder in their understanding of all kinds of day-to-day issues and stresses.

Christians should not be this way, so the Scripture calls to us. We have the Word, and we readily believe it. But real, *authentic* Christianity is engaged in the process of *internalizing* it. Authentic Christianity doesn't just TALK about the faith. It DOES the faith. It allows the Word of God--*implanted*-- to bring about the changes in our affections, in our priorities, in our decision making, that the Holy Spirit is trying to bring about.

When the "Word, implanted" is taking root in me, I start to decide to not speak to people--my wife, my kids, my co-workers, my neighbors, with a carnal, knee-jerk reaction. My words slowly become more calculated and carefully chosen, as I read James 3, for instance, and see what God has said about the tremendous power of the tongue.

Doing, Not Just Hearing There's lots of people around who like good preaching. I've noticed this. There are lots of religious-minded folks who like a good sermon. Or, they like a good religious television program. Or, they like being part of a pleasant church.

Here's the challenge for you and I today: ***Be a doer of God's Word.*** It is a good thing to develop your ability to listen. Being a good listener is a blessing to other people, and a benefit to you, yourself. But when it comes to listening to the Word, it is futile to always be listening but never putting into practice what we hear.

I may listen to Dr. James Dobson's *Focus On The Family* radio broadcast all day and every day in the car. But if when I walk through the door at home and am selfish and crabby or critical or disinterested, then all that listening and going "Amen, Jim, amen" is worthless.

Now in verses 22-24 of James 1, he tells us that mere *listeners* are self-deluded. They see themselves as they truly are for a few minutes, but as soon as the sermon (or radio broadcast) is over, they go back to being the same old person they always were. Not being really interested in change, in letting the Word of God transform them, they foolishly *think* they're doing the cool, religious thing, but really they're not changing at all. The great tragedy is, that despite their delusions to the contrary, they aren't pleasing God at all, and they actually can forget their real need of God's grace (vs. 24).

The Changes That Come With DOING God's Word In verses 25-27 James talks about what kind of changes do happen in a person who is really working at doing the Word of God. This is authentic Christianity at work...

1. He sees the Word of God as *law*, but as a perfect law of *liberty*. He sees that what God says, is indeed law. It is Christ's law. Jesus expects us to obey His Word. But it isn't just like the old Law of the Old Testament, for it is a law of *liberty*. I do the Word; I obey Jesus; I try to make new decisions in a godly way NOT because I feel guilty, or because I grudgingly "go along with the program" but because since I've become a Christian, I am now actually *freed UP* to obey Him. In fact, I WANT to obey Him, for He is worthy of it, and there's nothing greater than *servng Him*, and just serving myself or my flesh is actually just a "dead end", its a bankrupt way to live, in fact, and I see that now! If I choose to observe copyright laws, let's say, I don't do it because I feel guilty if I don't so much, but because I want to be like Jesus, and His law says I'm not supposed to steal. Same thing with playing the lottery--I don't abstain from that because I want to be a killjoy kind of a person. I abstain because Jesus' Word says a disciple of His is not a theft and playing the lottery is robbery from people who cannot afford to be robbed. I don't go on a big, boisterous campaign about something like this, because it would betray the balance that the Holy Spirit is working to create in me, but I privately and quietly and prayerfully decide, "I don't want to do that any more..." It's the *perfect law of liberty* that's taking root in me--that's authentic Christianity. Its a quiet thing,

an intimate thing between He and me--and its real sanctification.

2. Authentic Christianity breeds a bridled tongue. James is going to come back to this in some more detail later, but for now he says bluntly that any person--regardless of his theology or what he *says* he believes--who is making no attempt to reign in the tongue, is effectively unsaved.

I wonder if it seems strange to you that God puts such heavy emphasis in His Word on the use of the tongue--that is, how we talk to one another? With so many big, cataclysmic issues in the world, you would think God would inspire James to concentrate on the need to manage the environment more responsibly, or the need to work to insure social justice, or the need to equalize opportunity for all minority groups and all classes of people. But while those things can surely be found as addressed in the Bible, James says a bigger thing is the matter "tongue-management." *What's the big deal, Jimmy?*

Well, the tongue lies at the root of so many issues in our lives. It impacts our family lives. It impacts our business lives. It impacts the church. It impacts relations between whole countries! Authentic disciples of Jesus, will focus and concentrate on *reigning* in the use of speech, on developing a *carefulness*, a *caution* about how we speak to one another--when we're tired, when we're stressed out, when we're angry--YES, at *these* times, because at *those* times is when its an issue. Anyone can control his or her speech when they're fresh, relaxed and happy!

3. Beyond developing sanctified speech, authentic Christianity DOES seek justice. Especially justice for two classes of people in the ancient world. "Orphans" and "widows" in distress need to be "visited."

In the ancient world there was no *DSS*. There was no "Red Cross" and no *Amnesty International*. Orphans and widows--people with either no parents at all or no husband at all.

The acid-test here is *does a person have mercy for the suffering?* Authentic Christianity, when its happening in a person, DOES. It doesn't turn a "deaf ear" to those who are suffering. It comes to the aid of the suffering.

The "disclaimer" here though--and I don't want to let us off the hook too far, because this passage is powerful and very blunt--I must not water this down. But the *controlling* principle on *applying* this passage is that the people James had *directly* in mind are those in his world who were truly helpless and whose *aloneness* was thrust upon them by death.

4. Lastly, authentic Christianity will make a CAUSE out of avoiding the pollution of the world. The world can be *very* polluting. I think one of the greatest "mechanisms" for getting polluted today is television. It is so easy, and it feels so good to just sit there, lovely beverage in-hand, and let the tube poison my attitudes, my affections, my loyalties, my politics, my time and even my theology. Authentic Christianity takes care with "what goes in..."

The blessing of authentic Christianity, James says, is what the psalmist said a thousand years before him, *this man shall be blessed in what he does--* the person who WORKS HARD AT DOING that part of God's Word that he *does* know and understand.

Mark Twain once said, *Its not the parts of the Bible that I do not understand that worry me--its the parts of the Bible that I do understand that worry me...*

The psalmist said this (read together Psalm 1)...

Dear ones, may we be a church of secretly-being sanctified Word-doers! May the Holy Spirit so burden each of us here--teens included--to SEEK Him and to hunger to hear His still, quiet voice in our lives, and to quietly PLACE HIS LAW into practice in our lives, and to do it permanently. That is authentic Christianity. That's the one thing the world so desperately needs from us. These are the things the Spirit is working to cultivate in our Monday-Saturday life!

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Teaching Ministries of Dartmouth Bible Church

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts 02747

Series: Studies in James
Scripture: James 2:1-13

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 7 January 3, 1993

Partiality, the Poor and the Pew

Introduction This Book of James is about authentic Christianity. That is the theme you should remember for this letter. James wanted to lay out just exactly what genuine Christianity should look like. And one thing it should definitely *not* look like, is snobby. Now here's how my dictionary defines the word "snob:" *one who is condescending or overbearing to others; or one who admires, imitates or cultivates social importance or exclusiveness*. James tells us, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that being snobby is completely contradictory to the faith. It is wrong, and of all places a Christian church should be the last place where *snobbiness* is found. And yet in his day as well as in ours, the church has not escaped snobbiness.

Now the problem with snobbiness, or *showing partiality* is that it starts as a subtle thing. I don't really think any Christians *start out* to be snobby, or to play favorites in the church. When a person first becomes a Christian they are in the humblest state of mind that they will ever be in their whole lives. When a person has first been saved, they have just realized their utterly sinful condition apart from Christ, and they've then FLED to Christ for salvation *from* their sin. They are as far from pride and arrogance at that point as they will ever be. But that humility doesn't always last. And after a while that new convert to Christianity gets acclimated to the church scene. They get used to being around other Christians--and if they're not careful they end up only spending their time *with* other Christians. They go from being a humble, gentle redeemed disciple of the Jesus, to being the self-respecting church member, with "standards" and "convictions." May God save us from becoming Pharisees, dear ones!

But it is a subtle and gradual thing. And sometimes whole churches get snobby in this way. They get full of themselves. And this is what James

evidently saw in some of even the earliest Christian assemblies. It should not be, James says. Now, let's begin to look at this passage today:

The Simple Command In verse 1 once again (as in vss. 2, 16 and 19 of Ch. 1) we see that he was speaking to Christians. He is not concerning himself with the snobbiness you might see in the world. He is looking right at the Christian churches. But, one who has faith in such a Lord as Jesus should not be guilty of acts of partiality or favoritism. A real Christian, in church or out of the church, is not going to give *preference* to people of rank, wealth, political power or influence. If our Governor were to visit our church on Sunday morning, would it be our "knee-jerk reaction" to say, *Come, sit here on the isle near the door* (the best seat in the house in this church!)? It's fine to honor people but not to the exclusion of others. That is what James says we should avoid.

We are supposed to reflect the living God, and with Him there are no classes of Christians. Just as there is no room in the heart of God for any kind of class-prejudice, there is no room in the church for that. When a Christian does something--anything--which communicates the message, "I AM MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU" it contradicts the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart and mind. And, if a Christian--for whatever motivation--does something which communicates the message "I THINK THIS PERSON OVER HERE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU" it contradicts the work of the Holy Spirit. Oh, I know the world is not going to go along with this, necessarily. There's lots of *elitist* settings out there where these kinds of messages ARE communicated.

The Rest of the Passage The rest of this whole passage is elaborating on this message: Authentic Christianity does not play favorites; it practices God's love and it seeks to *demonstrate* God's love.

In verse 3 James spells it out in terms of **PAYING SPECIAL ATTENTION** to one class of people over another. Specifically, he hits the scenario of the church members noticing how a newcomer is dressed, and then arranging the seating situation accordingly.

It was only a one-Sunday experience, but my most striking experience with how a church ought to treat people was in a church I visited in Chattanooga, Tennessee. It was not the kind of church which would attract people who real concerned about class-distinctions. It was called

New City Fellowship and met in an old, drafty "Y". There were about 100 adults in church that day, half black and half white. Some, I was told, were successful business people, some were college students, some were working class folk. But you certainly couldn't tell by looking at anyone or where anyone was sitting. Music for the morning was provided by a Christian recording artist named James Ward (I had a couple of his records). But he just sat there behind his keyboard, played worship music and was just one of the troops.

My friend Jack Arnold told me about his visit to an underground church in Romania about fifteen years ago. So concerned was that church with just pulling off *having church together* without getting arrested that there was no class distinction at all. They met together for singing, prayer and teaching, in a hot room with a dirt floor and for three hours straight, and it didn't seem to matter at all (Jack said) who was who and that he, an American visitor, had a doctor's degree or more this name-brand jacket or that.

James tells us in vs. 4 that if we make distinctions among ourselves it is the same thing as judging one another. He's pretty blunt about it, too. The "poor man" is dishonored unjustly, and the rich person is elevated, inappropriately. In verse 5 there is an interesting theological fact--I'm not completely sure all that it means, but it is interesting:

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?

First, notice--or, remember--that this world is not all there is. A kingdom is coming, a life after this one in which that life will have the character of enjoying an inheritance. It is not promised to everyone, but to those who love God in THIS life.

Second, a great many of the number on this planet who will in that life to come be enjoying that inheritance, will be drawn from the ranks of the poor from this life.

Third, notice that it is a sovereign God who makes the decisions about "who." God selects those whom He pleases to select. No one can say, "Hey God, you should have chosen THIS person--they were deserving."

Now, in the ancient world the rich were very, very rich and the poor were very, very poor. There was nothing resembling our "middle class." And as this new Christianity spread, the Christian assemblies would sometimes attract someone from the wealthy or noble or ruling class. And the general reaction would be to bow to that kind of person. It is still true sometimes today. We notice things like the kind of clothes a person wears or the kind of car they drive or their *address* and we make certain "private" decisions about them.

If we indulge that process, or if we tolerate it in the church, we grieve the Holy Spirit; we contradict the songs we are singing; we nullify the name of Jesus Christ in the community.

In the last part of this section of James 2, he reasons with them about how all of this question of attitudes and prejudice and the actions which come out of them, is a matter of the very LAW of God. Christians do not learn to be snobby from the Law of Moses or from the Law of Christ. They learn it from each other. In fact God's Law has *always* called God's people to be humble and gentle. Christians--redeemed as they are and freed from the condemnation of the Law--are to live as JUDGED people. We go through this life as people who have already been pronounced guilty and condemned. But we are judged (verse 12) by the law of LIBERTY. In fact, because of this, authentic Christians and authentic Christian churches are going to be so full of humility that it will hit you in the face when you walk into a bunch of them, James says...

Dear ones, what does a newcomer feel when they walk into DBC? How do we treat a newcomer? What impression do they get? Do they see us scrambling for the best seats? Do they see us staying in our little cliques? Does a person experience the living Christ being demonstrated BY us when they come here, or do they walk out just as lonely and uncared for as when they walked in? You tell me...
y walked

The Problem of Pretended-Faith

PART 1

Introduction Twice in my life I have been on television. Once was when we were living in Dallas and a bunch of us from our apartment complex occupied the rental office, protesting the sewer conditions. I was on the 6:30 news that night. The other time was when I was a very small boy. In Washington D.C. in the mid-50's there was a children's TV program with a Western motif called "The Pick Temple Show" (which was much like the national "Howdy Doody Show"). It was quite a thing for a little boy to win a contest and be able to appear on TV. My folks drove me into D.C. and we went to eat at O'Donnell's first--a big name restaurant--and then to walk, wide-eyed into the studio and be one of the kids on the show. TV was all live, of course, then, and it was during the commercial break that my bubble was burst for during the commercial break I learned, much horrified, that Pick Temple was, in fact, a creepy jerk. Off camera, he grabbed a butt, lit it up and sort of snorted to me, "Hey kid, so wuddya think of the show?" Then he yelled at another kid for picking his nose when the camera was on the kid, and then as soon as the commercial was over, FLASH! On went to smiley, happy face and off we went to finish the show. I can't recall much else about the show, but I did remember thinking, "Boy, what a creep." The next day, the "boyz'n'the 'hood" all came over and said, "Hey, Neil, that sure was cool seeing you on the show last night," and of course I didn't dispel their adulation. But I can remember feeling odd about the show from then on...

Pick Temple looked like one thing "on camera" but off, he was someone else. Maybe he was just a regular guy, but that is my earliest memory of experience with false pretense. There is a certain attractiveness to having a reputation for being a noble, high-virtued person and at the same time avoiding the cost and the energy to really *being* noble and high-virtued on the inside.

The facade of being one thing is easier to maintain, than the task of being the genuine article.

When the great English Egyptologist Howard Carter and his associates found the tomb of King Tut (Tutenkhamen), they opened up his casket and inside, found another. This second one was covered with gold leaf, and when they opened it up they found a third one. Inside the third casket was a fourth one, this one being *pure* gold. The pharaoh's body was inside the fourth, wrapped in gold cloth with a fabulous gold face mask. But when the body was finally unwrapped, it was all leathery and shriveled.

One further illustration: I have noticed in the *Star Trek* series (of which there are now three), a recurring type of character is the kind of character which looks like one thing, but that is a deception--it is really another. You see this idea in a lot of science fiction today, and Hollywood has made "Morphing" into one of its best special effects. But *Terminator II* did not invent morphing. *Star Trek* really did, and if you were to look for it you would see the deceptive *morphing* tactic on quite a few of the original *Star Trek* episodes. It is a concept taken from real life. It is almost a literary device--displaying that people are often not what they seem...

The Problem Stated Sometimes people--even believers--will try to cloak a life that looks like one thing, but is actually another. They will *morph*. A religious person might in reality be less than spiritually alive-for-God but *morphs* into "caskets of gold" to impress other people. But God can see right through it. This is the central problem that James detected creeping into the early church. James is not concerned with theological error so much, as the apostle Paul confronted. James was not led to write a Gospel record of Jesus' life the way Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were. James's calling was to address the question of *authentic Christianity*; to write a document for all Christians which would outline what PRACTICAL, daily genuine Christianity looks like. James was becoming aware of too many supposed Christians who delighted in *hearing* all the good stuff about Jesus, but were not changing their lives or seeking the Savior *themselves*, very much. James was incensed with his sensing that the result of being merely hearers and not doers is that we deceive ourselves into believing that we are something which we are not! And addressing this problem was HIS calling from God, at least insofar as the writing of his piece of the Bible is concerned. Today's passage is the core of his

letter...and aims at the simple fact that, from the divine viewpoint, FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD.

Now the passage begins in an argumentative fashion (2:14). If you look at it positively, it is this: Genuine Christianity always produces certain new changes and activities. But again, the reverse is the problem: anything else, is false Christianity, *regardless* of what a person may say or how sincere they may seem to be. *Any* religion which does not produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit is actually false religion. James says, *what use is it?* And beyond its practical uselessness is the frightening prospect that mouthy-religion just doesn't save a person at all. He will go to hell saying right theology, saying good songs, and believing full well that God does indeed exist--all of these, but he will still go to hell and pay for his own sins. Real Christianity--genuine *faith* shows itself with the irrefutable evidence of Holy Spirit produced good works.

Martin Luther struggled with this letter of James. If you know anything about Luther, you know that he began the whole Protestant Reformation on the principle that *the just shall live by faith*; that a person is saved, born-again, redeemed, regenerated by *faith alone (sola fide*, the Lutherans and Calvinists cried out). And he came upon this verse in James and it cut across all he had come to stand for. But dear ones, this passage is not contradicting the doctrine of justification by faith alone; it *compliments* it. A person is indeed saved; justified; born-again by faith alone. But faith which saves is NOT ALONE! It is always accompanied by real change--accompanied by new activities which bear the unmistakable signature of God's own precious and Holy Spirit!

But What ARE Good Works? Once again, James' first thought is towards believers. His illustration *if* that is a *brother or sister* needs clothing or food, and I as their Christian brother ignore it--even though I may give some kind of lip service to them--then I give serious question as to whether I've really *met the Lord* yet.

James has no problem questioning the genuineness of people's conversion testimonies. We should probably be careful about it; but then again this writing of his ended up being Scripture, too! He had the divinely given right to question folks' testimonies in general. He says, "You turn your back on another Christian and I wonder if you've really met Christ yet or not..."

In his mind, a person who has really met Christ--one who is acting as *judged by the law of liberty* (2:12)--will respond to the genuine need of another brother or sister. The focus of the illustration is important. James isn't saying that we are to become subservient, co-dependent slaves of one another's demands. But when a Christian has a genuine, life-oriented need, it is the duty of believers to meet it. Period. No strings attached; no pay-back schedule; no expectations. That's the way the Lord has dealt with *us all* in the Body of Christ, isn't it? So we should freely care for each other when we have a truly deprived one in our midst. That is true faith, in action. Without the action, the faith just may not be real.

Finally, the nature of saving faith itself is important. Do you have faith in Jesus Christ? I don't just mean do you agree that He existed, or that He *still* exists, even. James says in 2:19 that demons know all that. Intellectual assent is not saving faith. Saving faith is a surrendered dependance on Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Is that what lies in your heart? Is that what you have decided to do?

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Epistle of James
Scripture: James 3:1-13

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 10 February 28th, 1993

The Biblical Doctrine of Speech

Introduction For those of you who like a sermon where the point is given right up front, here it is: *learn to tame your tongue*. That's it. That's what I'm going to talk about today, taming the tongue. Now, ask yourself, "is this an issue for me?" Well, not to be a wisecracker, but if you have a tongue then this is an issue for you. Now, why is this an issue? Who cares how I talk? In light of more global concerns, why waste time worrying about a little ol' thing like how I talk to people. First, because the Bible has a lot to say on this subject and therefore we should sit up and take notice. Second, because I think it is a *far more* strategic and important issue than we give it credit for...

Now, I think that you will probably agree with everything we see today that James wrote about the tongue. The problem is not in how we *believe* about how we talk. This is not a doctrine which is hard to understand. But it is a doctrine that we struggle all our lives to put into practice. The Christian is to be different from the world. He is governed by other than just his own ethnic heritage, his own emotional urges, his own upbringing. The Christian gradually allows more and more of his life to become sanctified (as we say) by the Holy Spirit. This includes the use of the tongue.

The non-Christian generally knows little restraint in speaking. The list of verbal abuses is long: cursing, lying, deceit, sarcasm, name-calling, seduction and boasting, these are all things that should be purged from the Christian's speech. This is the message, dear ones--and even as we consider anew today this message, we admit that it is hard to control the tongue. In fact, it is one of the hardest things there is to do!

James' Theology of the Tongue In James 3:2,6 and 8 we read some doctrinal "pronouncements" that James simply makes about the tongue. The rest of this passage today, of vs. 1-12, is illustrating in various ways, these basic truths about the tongue with which we must come to grips.

In verse 2 James says that a person's speech is *central* in determining a person's character. There are lots of ways a person can sin, says James, but if you can get control of your tongue you are a long ways towards controlling other areas of your life too. This is amazing, in light of all the kinds of social programs out there today. I don't think I have seen one episode of "60 Minutes", "20-20", "Prime-Time", "Nova", "Frontline", or any other

investigative program which digs into the central role that the tongue plays in the human condition. But the Bible--Old or New Testament--says this is a real strategic battle ground for how a person's life goes. The Greek scholar A.T. Robertson wrote this:

It is really wonderful how a spirited, impetuous horse can be subdued by bit and bridle. The spirit does not go out of a horse, but his restless energy is under control and guidance. James doesn't mean that a man should be dumb and lifeless, without ambition and power but simply that his tongue...should be kept in control. *Practical & Social Aspects of Christianity*

In verse 6 we get another theological pronouncement by James about the nature of man's tongue. He doesn't think very highly of it, does he? He calls it a **fire**, and he says that it is **the very world of iniquity**. It's like the tongue is the hub of a wheel and if it bursts into flame the flame spreads out the spokes so that soon the whole wheel is on fire! The tongue can set fire to other, baser passions in the "wheel of life" we might say: like envy, or jealousy or faction or anger or lust or murder or slander. Things that lie inside of us can catch fire, so to speak, when the tongue puts words to it.

There was a young man in the middle ages who went to a monk, saying, "I've sinned by saying many slanderous things about someone, "What should I do now?" The monk told him to go around to every house in the town and lay a feather on each doorstep. So the man did this and then came back to the monk, wondering if there was anything else he should do. Said the monk, "Go back, now, and pick up each and every feather. The man replied, "I can't do that! By now the wind will have blown them all over town!" "Precisely," said the monk, "So has your slanderous word become impossible to retrieve."

In verse 8 James develops his "theology of the tongue" with one more observation: it is wild and untamable. This does not mean that a Christian is at the mercy of his own tendency to speak evil. In Christ, all things are possible, even the taming of the tongue--and again, I say: this is the point in today's message! Get control of your tongue.

Especially you who are teenagers, while you are young, sign on with what the Bible says. Learn to control how you speak, what you pass on, how you say what you say. Pray, pray, pray that the Lord will help you start to master how you speak to your parents, to your friends, and to your teachers.

Now, this "theology of the tongue" is not to say that *communication* is bad, nor that we should never speak about something which makes me angry or envious, etc. James does not mean to imply, I do not believe, that there is some basic virtue in silence, in being NON-communicative, in dogged privacy and isolation. It is not *communicating* that is evil, it is how it's done; how the tongue says it, and when. There are times to keep quiet and times to speak your peace...

Many Illustrations to Demonstrate the Point If you like illustrations, you ought to just *love* this passage for there are by my count, 11 illustrations here, all making the same point: don't underestimate the importance for a Christian to get control of his tongue. In fact, I can think of no passage of Scripture which crams so many illustrations into such a small space! You get the impression that James thinks this is important--*real* important. These illustrations are word-pictures taken from everyday life. Each one paints a picture and clearly communicates another image of how your speech demonstrates your character. The person who practices little or no restraint on his speech, who lets himself

go and just freely indulges any thought or feeling he may have--that is a person with little real character. Now here is a quick overview of these illustrations:

1. **The equestrian illustration:** in vs. 3 he says the tongue needs to be reigned in like a horse. The horse will just fly off out of control if it's not bridled.
2. **The nautical illustration:** in verse 4 he says the tongue is like the rudder of a ship. It is relatively small, but it determines where the ship will go.

During World War II the "baddest" battleship afloat was the German *Bismark*, the hulk of which has recently been found in about 6,000' feet of water off the coast of France. With one salvo the *Bismark* sank the British pride-of-the-fleet, the *HMS Hood*. And it was not a British salvo of naval shells which did *Bismark* in. It was a single torpedo that hit her rudder, and jammed it so that all *Bismark* could do was steam in a circle. It was her undoing for there she came under the mercy of the fleet that was pursuing her. So the Christian, if he or she can get control of the tongue, can win a decisive battle against sin.

3. In vss. 5 and 6 James likens the tongue to flame. As Smokey the Bear says, "Only you can prevent forest fires." All too true. It doesn't take anything more than a match or a cigarette butt or a small ember from a camp-fire to burn down thousands of acres of forest.
4. In vss. 7 and 8 James says the tongue is like the most ferocious wild animal on the planet. If all other animals were caged and there was that one uncapturable beast out there, that is how the tongue is.
5. James also uses what we call *irony* to demonstrate the power of speech. In vs. 5 he says the tongue is small but it boasts big things. It's just a match but it burns down a whole forest. In vs. 9 we praise the Lord with it and then turn around and curse our neighbor or our spouse or our parents or our bosses or our President or our Congressmen. In vs. 11 he asks, ***Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?*** And in vs. 12b ***Neither can salt water produce fresh...*** These are *aquatic* illustrations--a question for the water department people! NO, of course a spring doesn't have two spigots--one for good and one for bad water. But that's how our tongues are, by nature, dear ones. And we need to make it a high priority to get control of our speech.
6. And in vs. 12 there is the same kind of irony in an **agricultural illustration:** A fig tree doesn't produce olives, or vice versa... But the tongue can engage all kinds of hypocrisy and for us who say we know the Lord Jesus it ought not to be.

Applications From All This The first application is right in the beginning of the passage, and it gives a hint of a problem James evidently was seeing in the early church. Not everyone has the gift of teaching and not everyone should be a teacher. This does not mean that only ordained ministers should teach and it doesn't mean that teaching in a church is dangerous. We need people many people today who can and will effectively

communicate the Word of God, the *truth*. People need to hear it; they need to understand the truth so badly today.

But when a person contemplates starting to teach they need to do it soberly for teachers will be held accountable for what we teach. By definition, teaching implies a certain amount of *authority* and *influence*. Teachers make an impression on people and so those impressions, those ideas, those concepts, those attitudes and philosophies need to all be in line with the Word of God. Better to sit and not teach, than to misguide someone about how to believe and how to live. God takes teaching very seriously.

And if teaching is something you are now doing or would like to try, then you need to get training. We encourage every teacher here to view the entire video series, *The Seven Laws of the Teacher*. And if we ever get a little money so that we could afford it we would also like to provide the video series *The Seven Laws of the Learner* for our teacher-training too.

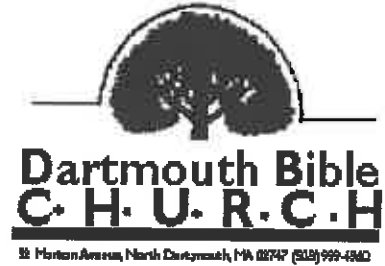
Another application for speech is to incorporate Colossians 4:6 into your life:
Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person. And here's Ephesians 4:29:
Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Dear ones, this leaves little room I am afraid for cynical speech or for sarcasm. As good as it may feel to indulge those things they ought not be part of our day-to-day lives. When we speak to one another in church or in a small group, and when we speak to one another in our homes (where our children learn the most about how to be people), we need to speak words which are positive and which build up. And if we must talk about a subject which deals with a dark subject, let's do it without sarcasm and without cynicism. And we also need to be careful with the sources of entertainment we choose because they are so often filled with speech which is anything *but* edifying.

The job for us is to learn to control our speech. I would not preach this message to non-Christians. They are at the mercy of the tongue and have no hope to bridle it. But of believers we can expect so much more. Let's make it our project, dear ones, to be ***quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger*** and thus to demonstrate the reality of Jesus Christ in our lives.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Epistle of James
Scripture: James 3:13-18

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 11 April 4th, 1993

The Wisdom From Above

Introduction In Revelation 19:11,12 the apostle John wrote that he *saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself.*

I wonder why we have no celebration in the "official church year" for the second coming of the Savior? We have celebrations for His announcement to the Magi, His Last Supper, His death, His resurrection and His ascension; but nothing for that event which actually is the most dramatic one, because the whole world shall be witness. You say, "Well, it hasn't happened yet," to which I reply, "So? Does that make it any less real?" And in fact, we do have a celebration of the Second Coming--its called the Christian Life! Because each day that we walk here on the planet is supposed to be "walked" in light of His second coming.

But on that first Palm Sunday, Jesus was not so impressive. There was no white charger. There were no flaming eyes or crowns on His head. When you read the various Gospel accounts, in fact, of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem it is really somewhat pitiful. He rides on a borrowed donkey--in fact, not even a full grown donkey but a little colt of a donkey. One might even call the scene "cute" and touching. The people were praising Him, it is true, and they quoted Psalm 118:26 and shouted *Hosanna, hosanna* (which means "Save us now!") But this man was pretty humble looking. He was unassuming. He had no armored soldiers. He had no financial portfolio. He had no ships or chariots. He had a few bedraggled looking followers and a crowd of down-trodden citizens and a bunch of children about Him. But that's it. Not much of a showing for the Holy One of Israel, eh???--the One who John would see again in a vision about 60 years later as the Coming Sovereign, the Alpha and Omega!

Imitating the Palm Sunday Jesus This leads us, on a strange path maybe, to the text we want to consider today. It's in the Book of James, 3:13-18. There are two kinds of wisdom in the world. One is from Satan, or at least is *like* Satan. It is from "down here" or, *earthly* as James designates it. The other kind of wisdom is *from above*. That's

interesting. James considered heaven UP, and so do we today. I don't fully know what that means, but at least heaven is BEYOND down here.

In this passage there are several commands for us to obey in how we live our lives, which *substantiate* or *verify* our claims to be true disciples of Christ. As we obey these commands, we verify our claims. If we disobey these commands we *contradict* our claims to truly know He Whose is called Faithful and True. Here's the commands:

- Demonstrate truly good works by performing them in gentleness (vs. 13).
- Disallow any room in your life for things like bitter jealousy and selfish ambition
 - ▶ *hard to get control of* ▶ *knee-jerk / so automatic*
- Duplicate the seven-fold character of Jesus (3:1,17).
- Decide to plant peace (vs. 18).

These are the WHAT-AM-I-SUPPOSED-TO-DO? issues in this passage. But the passage does more than just tell us some things we're supposed to do. It tells us *why*. *WHY* we're supposed to do these things, is so that we do not *lie against the truth* (vs. 14). You and I as Christians are to avoid anything in our lives which would *falsify* the truth which we claim. Few things detract from the Gospel and the theology of the world that we proclaim, like turning around and *betraying* it with arrogance, bitter jealousy or selfish ambition.

from the Bottom Up - View
"Below" Wisdom - Specifics Now all of this isn't just church-time stuff only, when you're around other believers. James is poking at how we behave in general and at how we model the faith in our own families; and at how we behave in the business community where you spend most of your waking hours--the kind of people we are, in general. And he is focused, in particular, on our speech; what we say. It isn't just IN CHURCH that we're supposed to sound like Christ. In fact OF ALL PLACES, it is *out in the world* where the "below" wisdom reigns, that we need to behave as Jesus would. Now let's consider the three *adjectives* James uses to describe the viewpoint of "below" wisdom, the perspective of the world. In general the attitude of the world is *earthly, natural* and *demonic* (vs. 15).

By *earthly* he means limited to the earth. It is the perspective which has only an earthly horizon and outlook, as opposed to a heavenly outlook. It sees only "what can I get out of this today?" or "how can I gain the advantage right now?" Jesus said to some of his critics, *You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world* (John 8:23).

By *natural* wisdom he means that which is from the "old man," or what Paul calls the "natural man." In our society being *natural* is an advantageous thing, a good thing (like *natural* foods, and *getting back to Nature* and all that). But in the New Testament, being *natural* is a thing that we're all poisoned with and we are working, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to rid ourselves of! The outlook of society around us is UNREGENERATE. It doesn't agree with the perspective of being born-again; indeed, any more it doesn't even believe that there is such a thing as regeneration. In Greek this is a difficult word to translate, and about the best way to describe it is to say that the wisdom of this world is UNSAVED, like the animals. They're born, they hunt, they

make babies and they die. That's about it; and that is how the outlook of this world is *natural*. We are seeing a Renaissance of the Natural today. The prevailing ethic is *If it's an urge, it is valid. Let's accommodate it.*

Demonic seems a little extreme doesn't it? The whole world isn't captivated by Satan is it? Come on--there's much of beauty and goodness in the world, isn't there? Well, when it comes to arrogance in attitude, bitterness and jealousy in relationships, and the pursuit of something because of selfish ambition, then when you see that in the world--or in the church--it is from Satan. It is his signature.

This is why churches need to disallow any ministry or minister who smells like this. It *invalidates* the truth of grace and of the Gospel. They just don't look like Jesus, and we need to be watchful of it.

Churches which accommodate or allow teachers, leaders or prominent members who are ruled by the flesh can expect trouble, James says in verse 16. Churches like this are not happy places to be!

"Above" (Jesus) Wisdom - Specifics Now on the other hand, the Christian community where the teachers, and those whom they teach, are cultivating *the wisdom from above*, those are places where you can just feel the presence of the Lord Jesus. They are *fair havens* from the hardness and self-centeredness of the world.

Now, verse 17 doesn't *mention* Jesus. But who do you think of when you read this verse? Who does this sound like? James describes the heavenly outlook (and the heavenly lifestyle) in a seven-fold manner: *pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.*

Let's take a minute and let those seven character-features wash through our minds. Think about them in the context of your life in this Body. Are you pursuing them in your relationships and ministry here? And think about them in the context of your family. Are you pursuing them in your parenting, in your relationship with your spouse, in your relationship with your parents?

The ethics of heaven mandate *chastity, cleanness, innocence.*

The ethics of heaven mandate *peace*, not strife or maneuvering for advantage.

The ethics of heaven mandate *gentleness* which means being patient and considerate.

The ethics of heaven mandate *a willingness to yield, being conciliatory.*

The ethics of heaven mandate *a quickness to extend mercy.*

The ethics of heaven mandate *spiritual fruitfulness.*

The ethics of heaven mandate *wholehearted adherence to the truth.*

The ethics of heaven mandate *straightforwardness and genuineness.*

An Application from the Context Ultimately, James has been saying in chapter three that the only ones who should teach in the Body of Christ should be the truly *wise and understanding* among us. Now, one may possess wisdom and not be able to teach, but James is putting before us the urgency that one should not teach if he does not

Top
Down
view

possess wisdom. And possessing wisdom, as the Bible means it, means *practicing* wisdom; it means a life which in general really looks like Jesus.

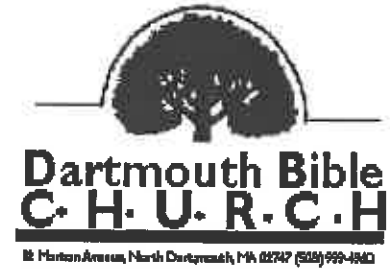
Being around another Christian should be a pleasant thing. And those who live closest to Jesus ought to be the leaders in a church, and for sure they ought to be the people who teach the doctrine and determine the vision and set the tone and develop the programs. The church is not a political entity. It is not a social club. It is not a place to gain influence. God intends it to be a place of being built up and encouraged.

If the sounds of heaven and the feel of heaven can be found nowhere else on the planet, they are supposed to be discernible among believers--when believers gather together for whatever reason--and in believers' families. The harvest of this heavenly lifestyle is a peacefulness in the body. And as we focus on being peace-makers, the Lord will honor that. He will bless the ministry here. He will dwell among us and shed His peace among us if we pursue it.

...we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20).

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Epistle of James
Scripture: James 4:1-10

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 12 April 25th, 1993

Dealing with "Christian" Worldliness

Introduction Once upon a time there was a small group of Christians who were meeting together for Bible study once a week. They were excited about Jesus Christ and they loved nothing more than to be with one another, study God's Word together, encourage one another and pray together. After meeting together for several months, they determined that the Lord was leading them to formalize their relationship and begin a local church. Over the next ten years they called a pastor, bought land, built a building, started a little school, purchased a van, then hired an associate pastor, then a youth minister. They grew as more and more people were attracted to their ministry which was centered on the Bible and on prayer. The members were happy and church life was a joy for them. But then one of the members became consumed with the desire to go to the mission field. As he shared his burden people listened and prayed, and some in the church felt that he was ready and surely called of God to "go" but others did not and in fact, were quite uneasy about it. They felt he was not ready, that he had some things to take care of at home first and that the church, while continuing to encourage and nurture him, should wait and see if his desire endured. But the disagreement grew, and it became personal. Pretty soon it was on everyone's mind and hardly a week passed when some kind of "fuel or other was thrown on the fire." It started slowly at first, but families started leaving the church and going elsewhere. The leadership was completely baffled. How could what was once such a happy fellowship become so distracted and hurting?

The scene I have described could be the story of any one of many churches around. It is not a hard thing to do, for a church to lose its focus on Jesus Christ and to begin to quarrel with itself. We sometimes think of worldliness as becoming too money-minded or giving in to fleshly lusts or

starting bingo nights in the church. But worldliness can also take the form of quarreling in a church and this happens all too often.

James must have seen it happening in his day because he essentially takes a whole chapter of his letter to deal with this kind of worldliness. The reason this happens is this: because we are at war *inwardly* we sometimes find ourselves at war *outwardly*. Individually we struggle with the desire for certain *pleasures* and that always has the potential to spill over into conflict in the Body. Now we might wish that this never happen, but it *does* dear ones and we are not immune from it here. James designates it *worldliness* and as he gives so much space to dealing with the problem, it should be a high priority for us to give attention to avoiding it.

The antidote for it, James is going to show, is for you and I to develop and maintain humility; real, Christian humility. Now humility is a tricky thing. It's like a slippery watermelon seed--once you get it under your finger and you think you have it, out it pops! It is an *elusive* thing and hard to keep. But in our passage today, James is saying it's the antidote for conflict or quarrels in the fellowship. Christ-like humility is the antidote for this kind of worldliness which can definitely pop up in Christian churches just as it does in the world.

A Feeling of Consternation... In verses 1 and 2 James acknowledges what I think his readers must have been feeling. How can this happen here, among God's people--we have the Word of God; we're forgiven in Christ for all our sins; we have spiritually gifted people and we're seeing people come to Christ through our ministry. There was a feeling of consternation, of confusion, of bewilderment. He says the reason is that folks had allowed their own *personal* pursuit of *pleasures* to dominate their behavior, right on into how they treated their fellow members of the fellowship. The source of conflict is that *individual hearts* had become consumed with pursuing things which were *personally gratifying*; things like ambition, the love of money and grabbing power in the church. *Individual* members had allowed their eyes to come OFF of Jesus Christ and to focus on *personal* longings. These people, though, apparently did not see it. And in verse 2 James is very *pointed* in his evaluation.

I don't know about you, but if somebody says to me, "You," I tend to immediately get uncomfortable. It is a very direct way to deal with someone when you aim your finger at them and say, "You did this..." It ought to be reserved for only the most serious infractions.

And yet James' readers were evidently guilty of serious sin, for he says their lusts have driven them to hatred and covetousness and even to kill to fulfill those lusts--and this among Christians! It is hard to imagine Christians actually committing murder among themselves, but it is surely not impossible I think--even if James only meant the "hatred" kind of murder (Matt. 5:21,22, I John 3:15).

In the end of verse 2 James redirects their attention to prayer. But not just *blind* prayer. He says we cannot just go to God and demand what we want like God is some kind of genie out of the bottle or heavenly Santa Claus. God weighs the motives of the things we ask for, be sure of it!

We do need to be asking things of God and believing Him for them. We need to do this a lot, because God is waiting to give to us. The Scripture says this over and over again. But when we make requests the requests need to be *biblical* prayer requests. And when we are sure we are asking for things that are intrinsically God-honoring, then we attach *faith* to the asking and wait on God to move as He wills.

Wasted Prayers In verses 3 through 6 James talks about wasted prayers. Prayers which go up with bad motives, with selfish motives do not fool God. This is not a hard passage to see what James is getting at. You get this gut-lust going inside of you, and yet you're a Christian. You get confused and so you figure, "I'll pray about this." So, you say to the Lord, "Lord Jesus, gimme." And you get silence back "on the line", "white noise..." And you cry out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? You're not answering my prayer!"

But it's because the dominant "lord" of your life at that moment is not the Lord Jesus, it's your *internal longings*. You want God to answer your prayer by providing the thing you're asking for, and the real reason is to feed the fire inside of you.

I must confess that I believe some pastors are less than *pristine* as they ask their people (and God) for building-project money. I think some pastors have mixed motivations about putting up new buildings. Part of their head says, "This is for you Jesus," but maybe part of their guts says (quietly), "this is for me..."

I remember being about 10 years old and I was visiting my grandparents in Nashville. It was summer and "Old Daddy," my grandfather, would sit up the street in Mr. Williams' yard with some of the old guys from

the neighborhood. Now I was into model cars--I loved to build them and *customize* them and paint them. And I remember going to Old Daddy and saying, "I sure could use a dollar, Old Daddy!" Now he was quick to give me nickels and dimes quite often, and once in a while a dollar. But that summer day I remember it well--he said to me, "No, Neil--you'll just go up to the store and spend it on another model car." And he was right!

God wants you and I to desire Him more than anything else. While it is OK to have ambition and drive to accomplish and to be productive and to feel good about ourselves and even to accumulate something here, none of this is supposed to knock Him off the throne of our lives. If we become too enamored with the world, or with the subject of *pleasure for ourselves* it stirs up God's feeling of holy jealousy. Becoming a friend of the world makes one an enemy of God. Now, this is pretty blunt but it is how God feels. He has given to believers His own precious Spirit. That is no small thing. And as such, our bodies--our selves becomes the "temple" of the Holy Spirit as Paul says. And therefore what we do "in the temple" *affects* He who indwells the temple. He would like to fill us with love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. But if we shove Him aside with selfish ambition, lustful grabbing or maneuvering for more money or power, this grieves the Spirit and provoke's the Father.

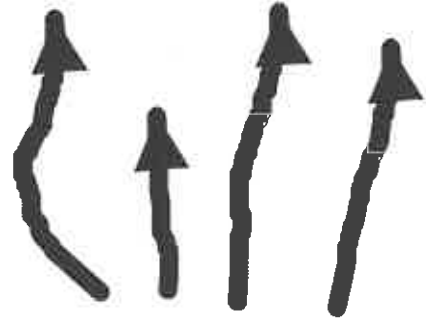
Believers need to realize that being part of a church quarrel is not small^a matter to God. It is serious and He does not take it lightly.

I pray that we in our fellowship would keep pleasing the Spirit of Jesus inside of us the most important priority we have. May He keep our eyes focused on Him. May He help us to humble ourselves and to not take ourselves too seriously. May He fill us with the fruit of meekness even as Jesus Himself overflowed with it.

PROBLEM:

Quarrelling

REASON?



**personal
lusts/longings**

A jagged, irregular line drawing that resembles a stylized mountain range or a series of peaks and valleys.

SOLUTION:

humility

What Am I Supposed To Do?

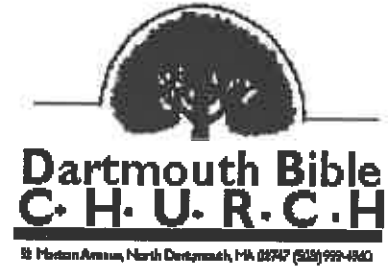
- ***DEMONSTRATE*** the faith by gentleness
- ***DISALLOW*** jealousy & selfish ambition
- ***DUPLICATE*** the 7-fold character of Jesus
- ***DECIDE*** to plant peace

"wisdom" options

pure	jealousy
peaceable	selfish ambition
gentle	earthly
reasonable	natural
full of mercy and good fruits	<u>demonic</u>
unwavering	disorder
hypocrisy- free	anything goes

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Epistle of James
Scripture: James 4:6-10

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 13 May 16th, 1993

Breaking Away from the First Adam

Introduction With today's mindset of *if it feels good, do it*, it may rub us wrong a bit to come face to face with a Bible directive to *Be miserable*. But that is exactly what we read in James 4:9a. It seems strange that we, who are supposed to be continually overflowing with joy should be told to allow our *joy to be turned to gloom*. But that's what we read in James' letter. Dr. Dallas Willard, philosophy professor at USC recently observed this:

There are only two values recognized in our culture as unquestionable: freedom and happiness. Those are the nice words for it. That translates into impulse and pleasure--doing what you want to, liberation from all restraints that you don't agree to. *Citizen magazine*, 5/17/93, p. 14

As we get back into the Book of James today, remember that the big thing he wanted to communicate was, "what does *authentic* Christianity look like?" And frankly, the book takes a blunt look at some of the *failures* of the early church to BE authentically Christian all the time. But James' motivation wasn't to condemn people--his motivation was to *correct* their attitude; to *confront* them to be sure--and folks don't always like being confronted. But he wanted them to BE on the right track, and so in today's section we're going to look at a number of short, direct, and profound (I think) DIRECTIVES to Christians about how to *break away from* the personal lusts and hungers and longings which can be very controlling--which, ultimately, are at the root of quarrels that can happen in churches.

Tie-In to the First Part of the Chapter In the last section James started to hint that the reason there was quarreling and in-fighting in some of the churches was because people were indulging their *own* personal desires and lusts. It was sexual sometimes (vs. 4) but by the idea of lust goes beyond just sinful sexual desire--it can mean the drive to achieve power or influence; the compulsion to get more and more money and so forth. When a person loses their focus on Christ, they become a slave really of something *else*. A lust is ANY drive to *have* something which (we think) will fulfill us, rescue us or give us that ever-elusive "next level" of pleasure--it is the need

to gratify, rather than the need to gratify our Redeemer, and it can come to *captivate* and control, whereupon it dethrones the Lord from the throne of a Christian's life. It becomes the most important master of his life. He may carry on a semblance of Christianity, but if truth be known the thing he or she *really* serves, is that lust. When those lusts begin to control a significant portion of a church body, then you get friction; you get conflict; you get in-fighting.

You get the notion that this was a BIG problem in the "target audience" of James' letter. It is not some second-rate or *minor* issue. It was the BIG issue and the major focus of James' effort to teach them about Christian holiness.

Let me encourage you folks, this morning, dear ones. We may not print this in our church brochure or mention it in a newspaper ad for our church--but I think we are blessed by being pretty free of this at the moment. We are not immune from this, of course, but we seem to have in this church basically *modest* and *unassuming* people. It is something for which we can praise the Lord and give thanks. It is something to be happy about and to enjoy!

The Six Directives In verses 7-10 James says there are about six things that these believers needed to concentrate on. And let's keep in mind the context, because these are the kind of short, pithy sayings that we tend to think of as isolated one-liners. They all are chained together, directed at the overall problem of keeping our unity in the Body.

1. (Verse 7a) The whole thing about living FOR God, *being* a Christian, *doing* this thing we call the Christian life (as opposed to a life out there in the world) is in the submitting to God. He calls us to *surrender* our "rights" to Him. He calls us to NOT be proud or self-sufficient, but to humble *ourselves* and to voluntarily place ourselves under His authority.

In the military, there is a little ceremony often practiced in all branches of the service--called "change of command." The new commanding officer receives title and command of the unit from the previous commander; the out-going officer says to the new C.O., "I stand relieved" and the unit is now under the authority and the responsibility of the new C.O.

In an airplane when the pilot and co-pilot hand off control of the aircraft to each other, they intentionally inform the other flyer, as they release the controls, "You have the airplane." They surrender control of the aircraft--in a very necessary and deliberate way--to the other person's control and authority. This is the idea of James 4:7a. We intentionally release control of our pride, our own perceived *needs* (the fulfillment of

which we tend to think is mandatory!) to the Lord Himself, Who, by the way has promised already, time and time again, to MEET our needs and to bless us IF we will let HIM be the airplane commander or the C.O.

2. (verse 7b) God wants us to say, "yes" to Him. It is one thing to *discover* God's will for your life and another then, to say "yes" to it. What is the thing God is saying to you today? I'm sure there is some matter you have been pondering... Say "yes" to Him in it.

Part of saying "yes" to the Lord is to say "no" to the devil. There *is* a devil, you know... James does not waste time debating as to whether a devil exists or not. He assumes it. Satan's purpose is to deceive, to lie and cultivate a network of lies, and ultimately to destroy. He is pulling people--even believers--and trying to entice them in all kinds of things to say "no" to God and to say "yes" to him. James armors us here this great promise, *resist the devil and he will flee from you*. We resist Him with the Word of God and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

This is one reason why I appreciate the AWANA program so much for our kids. They are being so well equipped with the Word of God which will be their best weapon against Satan in years to come!

And this is not a promise that a non-believer can claim or expect to work. Only the true believer and child of God can enjoy this kind of assurance. And it is simple: TAKE YOUR STAND in his face. Take sides. It isn't possible to remain neutral. and the devil will split. Period.

If you think that is too simple--"it can't be that easy to dismiss Satan's temptations or accusations!!?"--remember that this directive is sandwiched between two directives about God.

3. (verse 8a) While we submit to the Lord's will in a matter and obey His will; while I consciously agree with Him and choose to obey Him in a thing, I also need to *draw near to Him*. There is no substitute for YOU having a warm, vital, consistent "quiet time." I think this is one of the most basic factors in whether you have much joy in your life, and much personal *sensing* of God's power. Do you have a warm, vital, consistent quiet time? If you do, then you are drawing near to God, and you know from personal experience--you don't need me to tell you--God is drawing near to you. If you do not, and I fear that most of you here (even in a *Bible* church) do not, you will only occasionally or rarely sense God's nearness. You are much more susceptible to Satan's devices and his temptations, and you are more susceptible to your own lusts. Dear ones, if you choose to forfeit your quiet time, who loses?

On the other hand, I love the doctrine of God's *nearness*. It is a neat thing to study in Scripture because it comes up so much. God's appearances to Moses and the prophets are exciting. Jesus said that the Father Himself was bringing Himself near in every way through His Son. Paul told the pagan philosophers on Mars Hill that God is not far from any of us. How *different* this is from what modern "smart guys" like to believe. They--and much of our society now, too--have God "away" and so we (the "Cat") can play. But in reality God is right here; *right* here!

There is a promise here to. God is responsive to us. If we seek Him, He will reveal Himself to us. This isn't a promise just for certain Christians. It is a promise for *all* Christians. Now, do you want the nearness of God in your life? Draw near to Him. Get alone with Him in prayer and Bible reading. You don't know how to do that? Find out. Do anything you have to, in order to learn how to invite the presence of God. It is a "jewel" worth giving up everything you have to obtain! We can train you pretty easily in this! I myself, Pastor Lou, Bob Whitlow, Laura, Chris, and a number of others here will get together with you regularly and work with you in this. There is nothing more pressing dear ones, nothing more exciting and nothing more worth your time, effort and attention.

4. (verse 8b) Here James sounds sort of like an Old Testament prophet--he is calling for God's people to *repent* of their mistakes; mistakes in how they perceived themselves (number one!), and in how they would deal with each other and treat each other.

We are to be humble with each other, not shoving each other out of the way.
We are to be humble with one another, not slobbering over what the other guy has.
We are to be humble with each other, considering the *other* person as more important than me or *my* needs for the moment.

When we get away from this--and into the "self" thing, we need the prophet to come along and call us back. We need to *cleanse our hands*. to clean ourselves of the dirty thing itself. And we need to *purify our hearts* too. Clean hands without a pure heart is of little value to the Lord. We should not be acting holy on the one hand and secretly dirtying up ourselves on the inside of our hearts and minds. James' readers were failing at this and so he calls them *double-minded*.

5. (verse 9) This is a rather unusual kind of exhortation to see it in the New Testament. Generally the NT calls us to joy and rejoicing. But here James says things like *Be miserable...mourn...weep*. This is because the depth of sin

they had fallen to in their churches was despicable. And only real repentance was the cure.

Part of real repentance is having a godly *sorrow*, a *grief* over sin in our lives. We tend to shun this because, even as Christians, we are so focused on healing and unlearning unhealthy concepts of guilt and fear that maybe we learned as children. But there is a proper kind of sorrow that we need sometimes. If you blow it and injure another brother or sister in Christ, you need to *grieve* that injury that you did to them. It may involve tears of repentance. There IS a time to laugh, sure. We shouldn't be going around mourning all the time. But there is a time to mourn too--not just when some great aunt dies either. When you sin. If you do something hurtful to another believer. Then, you need to humble yourself in the presence of the Lord.

*"In a culture of self-interest, where is the repentance for sins?"
-Shelley*

6. (verse 10) You know, we sing this verse so easily, don't we? I hope we do not sing it *too* easily. I hope we do not sing it glibly and too automatically. It's a nice tune, to be sure... But this is a serious verse. It is a deep, reflective verse. It takes us back again to the nearness of God. When we humble ourselves, submit to what HE has said on a matter--admit my guilt; resist Satan's whispers; mourn my sinfulness, THEN He will lift us up. he does not leave us in mourning. His presence will bring joy again, but I DO need to humble myself.

Dear ones, have you humbled yourself in His presence about anything in recent weeks? How about months? Are you running on automatic and just sort going along in the church life as if that WAS the Christian life?

I don't think this kind of humbling ourselves in His presence takes place in a church service. It takes place in the solitude of your own life--between you and Him, where you are very alert and aware of exactly who He is, what He has said and who you are. And He will lift you up. He will help you to break away from the old nature; from the "*first Adam*".

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Epistle of James
Scripture: James 4:11-18

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 14 May 23rd, 1993

Pleasing God, Avoiding Arrogance

Introduction There used to be a chain of roadside stops throughout certain parts of the country called *Stuckey's*. My folks and I used to travel quite a bit and I remember stopping at *Stuckey's* from time to time. I remember one item they used to push pretty big: GENUINE pecan pies. I don't remember the folks ever purchasing one, but I do remember the displays, the smells, and what I thought was a *curious* advertisement: "genuine" pecan pies. Now, being as one of the places we travelled to a lot when I was a kid, was Nashville, I felt I knew what a "genuine" pecan pie looked like, smelled like and tasted like. But I wasn't sure what a *false* pecan pie was?? But *Stuckey's* made "genuine" pecan pies their banner item, in the days when I was on the road, anyway...

As Christians, I hope of the GENUINE type, our reputation is important too. Probably the best advertisement there is for GENUINE Christianity is in the degree of real humility we possess. At least that seems to be the theme of this part of the Letter of James to the early Christians. I believe that if ever there was a time when Christians needed the Letter of James, it is *now*. Like an Old Testament prophet, speaking to God's people so plainly and clearly and bluntly, James calls to you and I to make *authentic Christianity* the only kind of Christianity we know. There is much *false* Christianity out there. There is much *weak* Christianity out there, which focuses only on the Word of God as a side-light. There is even much *toxic* Christianity out there which is doing damage to people and to the faith and to the name of Christ. James calls out to all the Christian churches around the world, to the church in America, to the family of evangelical churches here in our area, to us as a church here, to you and to me as individual Christians. He calls us to *humble ourselves in the presence of the Lord* and if we do, that the Lord will esteem us, reward us and be proud of us!

The Greatest Advertisement For Authentic Christianity Now, maybe the best way there is to demonstrate and evidence real faith in Christ is to just be

like Him and to pursue the *becoming* like Him. That means that we will be humble people.

Up to this point we have glossed over vs. 6 of this chapter--let's look at it now: God demands of us whole-hearted surrender and service. He is not too interested in us just *carving* a piece of our schedules out for Him--He wants my *whole* commitment to Him. But He pours out the wealth of His love on us, too! And He gives us *grace far more* than we know. As James says, **He gives a greater grace** and He gives a "greater grace" to those who are humble, who have a lowliness of spirit about them, who *aren't* just out for themselves, who have little personal agenda...

The prince in God's kingdom and at His court, is not the man who wears the trappings of earthly rank and station, but the one who caught the spirit of Jesus and sought to good to all as he found opportunity... -- A. T. Robertson
Practical and Social Aspects of Christianity, 1915

I think the most Christ-like people are those that, after you've talked with them, you feel like *you've* been ministered to. You know--the kind of people who draw *you* out, who don't just talk, talk, talk about THEMSELVES and *their* situation. This is the kind of person who gets *you* talking about *yourself*, and who seems truly and genuinely interested in *you*. And they don't do it in some kind of patronizing way that would make you feel suspicious. They are disarming by nature and just *really seem interested in YOU*. That is a humble Christian--that is a Christ-like Christian.

By the way--one more thing on this verse 6... Martin Luther, the great Reformer, really struggled with the Book of James. He saw so much of *works* in this letter, and he was coming out of a total works kind of system, that he struggled to see that this letter was even inspired of the Holy Spirit. And if you kind of recoil from this letter too, for the same reason, remember this verse 6; for there is **grace** in this letter too! And James says the Christian who makes a CAUSE out of developing real humility receives a **greater grace**. And this is the best advertisement there is for the genuine article!

Advertising Christ By Avoiding Arrogance Now, a big part of being like Jesus is to avoid being arrogant. And as I see it, there are *three forms of arrogance* that we can work on rooting out of our lives, on avoiding. The first is in verses 11 and 12. It is arrogance of a real bad kind to sit in judgment of another Christian. Now this is a big category--I think James is talking about when a Christian develops a critical, negative attitude about someone else and makes certain blatant pronouncements about that person, as if they were the Pope, speaking *ex cathedra*. And there are Christians--maybe even whole churches of Christians--that act like God has invited them to join Him on the throne; to join sort of a heavenly Supreme Court and be a co-judge along with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, dear ones, it isn't going to happen. The Lord is the one and only Lawgiver, and He is the only one who is *omniscient* and knows the whole story on anyone. Part of the pitfall of becoming judgmental of another person at all, let alone of a brother or sister in Christ, is that we rarely if *ever* have the whole story. This makes it a tricky and perilous thing to be a pastor or an elder because you are often called upon to render *opinions* about other people.

Now I have no hesitation to "make the call" about another person's doctrine or teaching, or that of another ministry. That is an *objective* thing and relatively easy to discern. You just listen carefully to what they're saying or writing, and check the match with God's Word. But I *do hesitate* to "make a call" about another person's *motivations*; at least I TRY to be real careful about this. I cannot read another person's heart too well, usually. And it takes real discernment and careful sensitivity to make a fair evaluation. And if that other person or ministry just isn't real skilled at communication, then I could very easily get the wrong idea...

The Lord wants me to avoid being critical and negative and judgmental "like the plague," (or maybe we should start saying, "like AIDS.") This is arrogance and no matter what *other* good qualities I may have, if I'm arrogant, it really sabotages my testimony and my reputation.

The SECOND form of arrogance the Lord calls us to root out, is an arrogance in *personal planning and outlook*. Christian humility will carry over into our business practices too. It was evidently part of James' audience's arrogance to make bold, bragging PLANS about their future. They were apparently big on forecasting and projections about doing great things. But individual Christians--and churches too, of course--need to always have the "PLAN B" perspective. We can be hopeful and excited about plans for success, but if things don't really work out exactly like we thought, then we need to be willing and ready to see what DID work out as just as much a part of God's gracious plan for us, too--like "PLAN B." We *plan* for PLAN A, and if it happens like that, great! But if it doesn't, let's not say "Oh, God has abandoned us--woe is us!!!" Verse 15 is the place that old cliché comes from, "Lord willing..." It may be a cliché, but it is biblical. It's the attitude God wants us to have. The humility of Jesus Christ, of having been *rescued* by Him from the "first Adam", is to penetrate right on into how I plan my life for the coming year and how I plan my business. "I will make these plans, but THOU, O LORD, must bless them and continue to faithfully lead me and guide me if I am to see success. may my heart not wander from Thee; may it be close to Thee and then I will be successful."

The THIRD form of arrogance that we are to avoid is the assumption that the only kind of sin I am capable of, is a sin of *commission*--actually going and actively DOING something which God's law forbids. It is arrogant to sit back and smugly

think, "Well, I didn't DO anything bad, nasty, immoral, cruel or violent today--I'm doing pretty *fine!*" Verse 17 safeguards us from thinking that way, doesn't it? It is just as sinful to NOT do something you *know* is right, and hold back from doing it. You see, God is not mocked. He looks at the heart and says, "Is it mine?" He is gently prodding me to not only *not* do what is wrong, but to fill my life up with *doing* what is good. This is all James was saying back in chapter 2 when he wrote, ***I will show you my faith BY my works*** (2:18b).

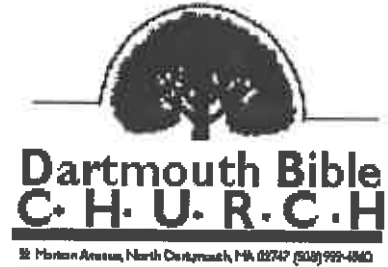
Dear ones, there is much work to do. If you are busy doing whatever work God has given you to do in the kingdom, you won't have the time to become arrogant. I think it is good to be busy and sometimes I think that churches (and individuals) which have become critical and negative, or smug, just have too much time on their hands! They need to be busy with the business of the kingdom. We need to be getting *tired out* doing the good stuff. What good stuff are you busy at? I hope the Lord will protect us from arrogance, make us pleasing and a delight to Himself by granting us a sweet, humble spirit of willingness to be used of Him, and of submission to HIS Lordship in our lives.

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DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Epistle of James
Scripture: James 5:1-12

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 15 June 6th, 1993

Being Patient for the Second Coming

Part 1

Introduction If there is one thing most everyone's interested in, it is money. Let's play through a little mental exercise together... Let's say that your income as a family (or as a single) for this year will be \$20,000--that's it. Total income for the family, all sources of income considered. Chances are, that at that level of income your strategy for *use of* the 20,000 is fairly simple. Let's assume you tithe that 20, and you give a little more to other ministries that come up once in a while; so that's maybe 12% or 13% of the 20 thousand. Probably a fourth of it or so will buy you a place to live for the year. Maybe half goes to food, clothing and transportation costs for the year, leaving you now 12% or 13% left for insurance, entertainment, household products and, oh yeah, taxes. \$20,000 for the year only can go so far and so your budget is pretty simple and straightforward.

Now, let's add one little "0" to your income--let's say your income for the year, for your family (or single) will be \$200,000 instead... Same family; same town. What would your budget look like? I think it would probably include things like investments, trips, security systems, hobbies and interests and most likely a lot more and higher quality physical possessions. Basically, the financial portfolio of the family who makes \$200,000 would be somewhat more *complicated* than the family which lives on \$20,000.

But which of these two families would qualify for the term *rich*? What is *rich*? This is somewhat difficult to nail down--if you and your family only bring in \$20,000 this year you will almost definitely not consider yourselves rich. But up against most of the population of the planet--whose average incomes for this year will probably be far less than \$20,000--everyone in this church is *quite* rich...

Here's a few interesting facts from a recent Princeton University survey of 2,000 people in the U.S. workforce:

75% (3 in 4) said they think churches and synagogues should encourage people to be less materialistic, that materialism (74%) is a serious social problem, and 71% said they believed that being greedy is a sin against God, and yet only

12% had been *taught* that it is wrong to want a lot of money...and only 16% among those who attend church every week. Add to this the fact that

78% called having a beautiful home, a new car and other nice things **important** and 84% said they wish they had more money than they do, and you get a serious *conflict* between people's attitudes towards money, and their faith... *Church Network News* June/July 1993 [EANE]

Now today as we arrive at James' condemnation of the rich in the fifth chapter of his letter, whom did he have in mind? The first few verses of chapter 5 are, in fact, a condemnation of the *attitude* of richness, or wealth. But first let's look back into chapter 1, verses 9-11. The early Christians were largely under the thumb of rich and powerful people. There were not many rich Christians in the early days of the church; the Christians were for the most part, the poor ones. So, I believe James is directing this condemnation mainly at the rich UNbelieving community, which were sometimes oppressing the Christians. But in the text itself, he does not specify *exactly* one class or another of rich people. Folks that are truly wealthy, whether saved or not, will see their wealth eventually decay and dissolve.

But today, there are a lot of wealthy Christians--our whole *society* is far better off than most people in all history, a fact for which I am thankful and enjoy. But dear ones, the ATTITUDE of wealth is what James would say for us to guard against.

The Fate of Wealth Everyone around here has probably heard of Hetty Green, but I read in *Our Daily Bread* this week about the John G. Wendel family who lived in the same house in New York for 50 years. They were probably the most miserly people of all time. When the last Wendel sister died in 1931 her estate was valued at over \$100 million; and yet her only dress was one she made and she had worn it for 25 years. The attitude a person can develop, regardless of how much he has is that of *worship* of what you have. But all riches will eventually decay. That is a truth that is hard to believe sometimes but is ultimately true.

I cannot say that I know what true poverty is like. I have always been blessed with a roof, a car, clothing, plenty of food and plenty of entertainment things. Although I have a mortgage and almost no savings, I consider myself very blessed. I spend very little time or energy worrying about the condition of my holdings, or even my future. Maybe this is a little foolish too, but in any event, I have little to worry about. Because the ultimate truth is that all money eventually *rot*, as James says in verse 2.

Many people put a lot of attention on clothing. This is nothing new and was true in ancient days also. But *why* are fancy clothes so important to some people? Because their love in self, and their image is more important than almost anything else. And from James' perspective, putting very much stock at all in physical appearance and image is a colossal *farce* because of what he says at the end of verse 3: ***It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure.*** From the apostles' viewpoint, the second coming of Jesus Christ was right around the corner. We get so focused on things here, and on our possessions and financial situation when in fact, the end of this world is right around the corner.

The business card for another pastor in this area has a little logo of a cross on it, with the words "the end is near." This is true. And the first thing that will perish when the Lord returns is the riches and wealth and possessions that people have accumulated and put so much time into and energy and affection.

There are three "goals" which so many around us seem to promote and devote themselves to: 1) *Get all you can* 2) *Hoard all you get* 3) *Indulge yourself*. It is tragic that so many devote themselves to these goals, but they do; and it has always been part of the fallenness of this world. People in churches are not immune to it. But walking closely with Christ goes a long way toward having a correct *attitude* about wealth and riches. Jesus was not hostile towards the rich--He had friends and followers who were wealthy. But He dealt very squarely and honestly with them.

1. Keep Christ as your first love.

Jesus said, Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also...No one can serve two masters...you cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:19,20,24).

2. Recognize that all you have is on loan from God (*Lord Sabaoth*).

3. Give of the first fruits, to the Lord's work.

As God said to Samuel, ...those who honor Me, I will honor; and those who despised Me will be lightly esteemed (I Samuel 2:30).

4. Do not engage unethical, greedy or unjust business practices.

Christ means to be a full partner with you in every business venture that you have going. He is not a silent partner, He wants to be a full, participating partner. And this will effect the way you deal with employees who work FOR YOU too (vs. 4).

5. Use what you have well.

This means becoming smart and *staying* smart about investing your money. You may not be interested in "investments," but if you own a home, you have an investment. If you use a bank, you receive interest and you have an investment. If you choose to spend every dime of your paycheck and not save even one dollar a month or not give even just a tithe to the Lord's work, you are making significant investment decisions, whether you realize it or not. No one is *not* involved in investments...

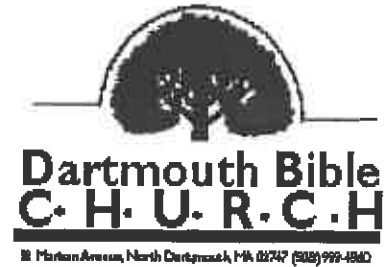
6. Avoid *fantasy* expenditures (lotteries, lavish entertainment).

7. Endure set-backs with faith in the imminent return of Jesus (vs. 8).

8. Run your finances as though Jesus may return tonight.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Epistle of James
Scripture: James 5:7-12

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 16 June 13th, 1993

Being Patient for the Second Coming

Part 2

Introduction If there is one quality that preachers talk about a lot to the sheep, its the quality of patience. And if there is one quality that the sheep are probably tired of hearing about, it may be *patience*. But the sheep need to be patient with their preachers, because developing patience is a central issue for Christians. It is a fruit that God, the Holy Spirit, produces in believers, and it is one of the most basic and fundamental "tip offs" of authentic, real, genuine Christianity.

I don't think that patience necessarily comes with age. I think that real, spiritual patience comes from walking with the Lord Jesus and allowing Him to take you through the trials of life without growing bitter. And today we're going to talk about patience, and in particular as it relates to the second coming of Christ. James' whole message has to do with HOW WE DEAL WITH TRIAL, and in this chapter he brings the trials that Christians must face into the light of the coming again of Jesus Christ. When you remember that Jesus is *not through with this planet*, it puts a different spin on the hard things you may have to endure.

I need to remind you, dear ones, that no Christian has been exempted from trials. Every Christian is going to have difficulties. Sometimes it may be physical; other times mental or emotional; other times financial; other times marital or in other family relationships; and other times they may come in the area of your employment; and still others it may be *governmental*, coming in the form of persecution. However they come, they *will* come. Jesus has not promised to give us a life free of stress or depression or injustice or illness. He simply has not. What He *has* promised to do, is to enable you day by day, hour by hour and maybe sometimes moment by moment, to ENDURE the trial spiritually and to grant you the insight, the *vision*, we might say, to SEE HIS HAND AT WORK.

One Word for Bad-Wealth As we dealt with the matter of attitude in those who are rich last time, and how a rich person might oppress a Christian; really, there is a single word which describes the problem: tight. A person who is tight, whether

getting mad at them. The farmer can *wish* that the crop would grow overnight--but he **MUST** wait to see his harvest (vs. 7).

There are several reasons why you and I need to be patient--and to keep developing patience which flows out of a close walk with the Lord:

1. Because lots of times there's nothing to do to immediately change the circumstance.
2. Because this is what our God Himself is like. When we read that patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, its not just that the Spirit produces some random quality in us... No--what He makes us like, is like God Himself. You and I are being gradually transformed into the image of God's Son. And godly patience always looks at things from the *macro* viewpoint--from the "big picture" standpoint.
3. Because from the divine viewpoint, His coming again to earth is right around the corner. I do not think a Christian will feel ashamed when we get there, of having had such short-sighted vision. But I wouldn't be surprised if we feel a little silly. We may remember the silly things, even between ourselves, that we got upset about and have our whole view re-calibrated at that point--"His coming was so close--and *HE* was so close--He was standing right there the whole time we were arguing and complaining against one another..."
4. Because, just as Jesus made so clear Himself, we are going to be measured up against the same standard we use--and this isn't only relevant inside the church doors. It's relevant in our families too. The kinds of things we complain against one another about in the great scheme of things, are usually pretty insignificant. "*I didn't get treated right*", we whine. "*He took my seat...*" "*My name didn't get put in the bulletin*" "*My kid didn't get treated fairly.*" "*I wasn't appreciated enough.*" "*She got more money than I did...*"

You know, so much in the Book of James reminds us of things we read in the Gospels. And the part here in James 5:9 brings back Matthew 18 pretty powerfully. In that chapter we have Jesus' instructions about what to do if a brother sins. And then Jesus tells a parable about *forgiveness*. Forgiveness follows right on to this message today about patience--and about when we feel like complaining about each other. The Greek word here means, literally, *groaning and murmuring*. It is talking about the INWARD FEELING OF A GRUDGE, more so than an outward verbal complaint. And frankly, I find people who "get it out on the table" and do so quickly easier to shepherd than those about whom you are wondering, "what silent grudges are they harboring, and just not airing?" But of course, we need to be patient and

they're a Christian or not, is going to have problems in his life--tightness does not mean *carefulness* or *wisdom*. Being a good steward with what you have, is a quality that I need to have. By *tightness* I mean holding on to money like it was real, real important--like it was just about the most important thing that we have. It is NOT the most important thing that we have. The most important thing we have is RELATIONSHIPS.

Your relationship with your spouse is *far* more important than anything related to money.

Your relationship with your children is *far* more important than anything related to money.

Your relationship with your brethren in Christ is *far* more important...

Your witnessing relationship with unbelievers in the community or in the work place is *far* more important...

And most important, is your relationship with God. And if money is a higher priority--making it or keeping it--than your daily walk with Him, than it doesn't make any difference at all how much money you have or win or save--you are poor--*desperately* poor.

I have had a tiny piece of the feeling of being deprived of something by an employer. This little feeling is FAR overshadowed by the great blessings I have had by a number of *other* employers--but I can still feel the sting of a little incident that happened in the Winter of '73. It was while I was in college and it was over Christmas break. I worked construction jobs on my breaks, and I was a laborer on a shopping center job. The carpenters were all real friendly, as was the engineer. But the foreman distinctly disliked me. He had not hired me (the engineer had) and he knew I was only there for a month. On Christmas eve at noon time, a company truck pulled on to the site and they began distributing turkeys and Christmas baskets to all the employees (I was the only temporary worker). I was working at the far end of the project and when I saw the truck and what was happening, I started walking toward the truck and the guys around it. The foreman intercepted me and in no uncertain terms told me that this was not for me. He didn't say why (although I knew). And the foreman *was* no rich man at all. But he was the king pin on the job and he set policy for the workers. It was really no big deal. I didn't need a turkey or a Christmas basket. But I can still feel the sting of being deprived of something everyone else was getting and being told "this is not for you"--right out in front of everybody.

Now this is about as close as I can come in relating personally to the kind of feelings Christians must have had commonly and with far greater severity in the first century. To the rich with an attitude, James says *Wise up*. To the Christians, he says *Be patient*.

The Patience We Need To Have But what exactly does it mean to "be patient?" The word which James uses is *makrothumeo* (μακροθυμew) which basically means forbearance and to be longsuffering. Our word *macro* comes from this Greek word. In science you have the "macro" view and the "micro" view. In economics there are *macroeconomics* and *microeconomics*. In computers, we speak of writing *macros* which are little programming tools which help you to accomplish a lot of little tasks in one move. It looks at the problem FROM ABOVE...

You and I need to develop *patience* with our circumstances with the view from above--with the *macro view*. We are facing problems which cannot be solved just by

not be indulging little stuff all the time. A good rule of thumb in most cases is "let it slide." Remember, I am going to be held to the same standard that I hold others too.

If I want people to be responsible and be on time for things, am I on time?
If I like to be spoken to carefully and gently, do I do that?
If I want other people to appreciate me, do I go out of my way to show appreciation for others?

Dear ones, what real Christianity looks like, is a group of people so PREOCCUPIED with Jesus Christ, His way of dealing with people, HIS program of reaching folks with the good news, HIS ethics for business, HIS care of the hurting and needy, that a group of people like that has no time to get so focused on themselves.

I believe this Franklin Graham Crusade will be a real test of how authentic the Christianity is in Bristol County. Now that's taking one Crusade pretty seriously, I know. But it is the *kind* of reaction we are seeing in our churches that will tell a lot about what kind of shape we're in. On the one hand there are some 40 churches that have said, "Yes, we will participate." And in so doing, they are (I believe) evidencing a *macro* view of things. And then there are churches who have a lot of manpower they could lend, but will not because of a complaining spirit. Their theological prejudices over secondary issues are more important than adding their resources to this great and much needed opportunity.

I need to not get focused and complaining *myself* though. We can get reactionary to the short-sightedness of others too. And that is just as disabling as the short-sightedness itself.

We can take the two examples from the Old Testament as a guide for patience. One is the prophets, who were stoned, slain with the sword, sawn in two, afflicted, denuded and "destituted" for their faith (see [Hebrews 11:37](#)). And we can take Job, who did nothing to earn his trials, but honored God through them, nonetheless. We are not without *mentors* in our faith. These were real people who struggled no less with their trials or with injustice than we do.

And above all we can focus on the very CHARACTER OF GOD (vs. 11c). In the end we will see fully how full of compassion and mercy He really is. Instead of licking our wounds; instead of complaining against one another and getting all wrapped up in that and sidetracked by it, as we focus on HIM, we are re-fueled and sustained by HIS character. Others will invariably and unavoidingly *disappoint* you, dear ones. But He will never disappoint you. He is so good, and so great and so worthy of our KEEPING our eyes on Him. Let us keep our eyes right there...

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Epistle of James
Scripture: James 5:12-14

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 17 July 11th, 1993

Parting Thoughts from the Apostle James

Introduction When you think about the earliest followers of Jesus, have you ever wondered what it must have meant to be an apostle? Being an apostle was a very unique kind of ministry. You had to either have known Jesus personally or have received directly from Him a special supernatural call to go and be one of the main Directors of the whole Jesus-movement. An apostle was equipped with extra gifts, I think, and he had special authority to discern doctrine and to set it, in cooperation with the other apostles. But I believe being an apostle was a lonely calling with little earthly glory and little fleshly pleasure associated with it. It was the highest calling of the church age but it also cost most if not all of the apostles their lives. What would it have been like to *not* be a famous or rich or politically powerful person to begin with, but then to find yourself possessing the call of the Lord Jesus Himself to be one of the apostles? Talk about "trading places..." James was one of these people and in his letter we see a man burdened with the short-comings of the movement. And right down to the very last words of the letter he wrote that we have in front of us, he was dealing with the problems of the church.

Other apostles had to deal with a great variety of theological problems. And even though we know James was no light-weight theologian, he had to mainly face down *practical* problems in the church-at-large. The thing that burdened him the most was the church's need to be *authentically Christlike*. He saw that many Christian people were going around claiming to have a personal relationship with God and claiming that they had real faith in Him. But he also saw that their lives were not sufficiently backing up those claims. In fact, some of those people, James saw, were really behaving quite worldly, especially in relation to their fellow church members.

I think one of the little "fringe benefits" of studying the Letter of James is that, whatever church you might find yourself in that has some problems, you can always look at James and see that the earliest church had problems and inconsistencies too--sometimes quite dramatic. And it is interesting to

me--just as a biblical observation--that with all the problems that some of the N.T. assemblies had, in not one place (that I am aware of) does any apostle *ever* tell someone to change churches.

Now, other church members were really struggling with various trials. And while it would be the apostle Paul's job to deal with many theological issues and Peter's and John's to address other issues, it fell upon James to address "square in the face" the church's need to really be LIKE CHRIST, and to reflect Him. This is my desire for us here today, as well. I believe the Lord really wants us to concentrate on becoming like Him. We can so easily become distracted with other needs and other big, important issues. But I think the main thing the Lord wants you and I to pursue, or let's say this should always be the FIRST priority, is our own individual relationship with Him. He wants you and I to so completely be filled with HIS character, that no matter what *other* weaknesses we may have, we still just look like Jesus.

The First of the Last Thoughts

Now in the last verses of this book, James seems to change directions kind of abruptly from one subject to another. Maybe this was due to some urgency he was feeling the same way you and I might finish a letter if we were pressed. He does a lot of comforting them about suffering and then he gives stern warnings right on the heels of encouraging them. There is a "dichotomy" of needs that NEED to be addressed, and I think many churches are like this. We do not all have the same spiritual needs at the same time. The assembly of believers is very diverse (or at least it *should* be--how boring it would be if we all were at the same place, spiritually!)

Some believers are suffering and others are wealthy.

Some are full of the love of Christ and others are full of themselves.

Some believers do a lot of talking about the faith, and others just *live out* the faith and don't talk too much about it--they *demonstrate* authentic faith BY the works that they do in their lives.

Again, the Tongue

The thing we get into once again in verse 12 is the tongue. How we speak and what we say are *not* insignificant as God sees it. People quite commonly excuse their speech by saying, "Oh, I don't really *mean* for God to actually damn some- thing." Or, "I'm not *really* trying to be crude or blasphemous." And the answer to that excusing (and we Christians do this too) is two-fold:

1. Swearing or profanity is a sin. Period.
2. WHY does a person do it? Giving them the benefit of the doubt when they say "I don't really mean it", then why say it? And the answer is because it feels good. Well, the Scripture tells us to *Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its*

desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another... (Galatians 5:16,17)

In 1930 the commentator A.T. Robertson wrote, "It is today one of the saddest things in life to note how common profanity is in the ordinary speech of men and boys, mannish boys who imitate the men about them. It is positively disheartening to hear it on the streets, in the streetcars, in the trains..."

Primarily, the kind of profanity James is condemning is that which would use the Lord's name vainly or mindlessly. Saying things like "Oh my God" or "For Christ's sake" or "Jesus!" (and even "Jeez..." is an appocopation of our Savior's name)--these expressions make us look like the world and not like Jesus Christ. People who work at controlling their tongue--even though it the practice of self-control doesn't *feel* good all the time--even though it doesn't *indulge* my "right to expression"--self control looks like Jesus Christ and demonstrates the authenticity of the faith we claim to genuinely possess.

James says our speech is to be like Jesus said it should be: ***let your yes be yes and your no, no; so that you may not fall under judgment.*** This is too close to what the Lord Jesus said to be an accident. In Matthew 5:34-36 we have recorded these things Jesus said: ***But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King; Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be "Yes, yes" or "No, no" and anything beyond these is evil.*** And you know, it makes sense, too. A man or a woman of character does not *need* to embellish or decorate their statements with spicy or profane language. A person of character will be trusted just by his or her word. Resorting to profanity just cheapens a person's statement and their reputation. As Robertson observes *Violent expletives throw discredit on one's ordinary statements and suspicion on the one that he seeks to bolster up with artificial means...*

Instructions to the Suffering and to the Happy Now in vs. 13 he again turns to the suffering. Is anyone here suffering? No? Yes? James tells you to pray. You see, if you are suffering it is not wrong to express your feelings. Certainly swearing is not the way to express your feelings; neither is bottling it all up inside and *pretending* to be spiritual. But the expression of a Christian's feelings about suffering should be in an act of worship. Like David cried out when he was suffering, ***Give ear to my words, O Lord, Consider my groaning. Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God*** (Psalm 5:1,2).

This week on *Focus on the Family* they played a tape from 1987 when E. V. Hill was preaching the funeral of his own wife who had passed away after 32 years of happy marriage. Pastor Lou and I both heard that broadcast and in the message, Dr. Hill was agonizing as he preached about what God was

doing right then and there in his own life. The Lord was saying to him, "Trust me," and Dr. Hill said, "the only thing I can trust you for is to heal my "baby" (what he affectionately called his wife). And God communicated to E.V. Hill, "No, you must trust me to take care of her when you can't see her." This is one of the greatest kinds of suffering, I think, that people must endure. But how wonderful it is, when we can go through grieving a loved one, and we know they are with Christ. We can pray and pour our hearts out to God, and worship Him--maybe like we cannot at any other time.

Now, on one side of you there may be someone suffering and on the other side of you there may be someone whose heart is just overjoyed this morning. To that person who is in a happy mood this morning, James says, "Hey--sing praises to the Lord, then!" The suffering need some merry-makers around them, sometimes. What a "bummer" it would be if all there were in the church were sufferers. And how trite it would seem if all there were in the church were cheerful people. No, there are many kinds of spiritual needs present on any given Lord's Day in the assembly of the redeemed. But you know, happiness is not the same thing as joy. Christians can have joy and not be happy. James doesn't say to the suffering "BE happy." Nor does he say to the sick, "GET cheerful." It's human and perfectly OK to be *real* and not cheerful when you're suffering or sick. But you need to be around some folks with a lighter burden right now who *can try*, at least, to cheer you up--not in a pretentious or patronizing way; and not with shallow little clichés, and the like. But with their genuine cheerfulness that God has blessed them with right now. The "praise-singer" who is happy will have a good effect on the sufferer or the sick, if the sufferer or sick will let him get alongside!

The Effective Prayer of Righteous Men (introduction) To the sick person, James says quite a bit, and it centers on prayer. We will end our exposition of the letter of James next Sunday and we will say a good bit about prayer at that time. But today, let's just notice that there is something very *biblical* about praying over the sick person. Of course in this context, it is the elders who James says should be summoned, and we will look at that next Sunday. But God is honored and pleased when believers pray for one another. I know that it takes some "risk" to ask someone to actually come over to your house and pray with you. I think that we don't "go out on a limb" like that very often, if ever. Maybe we're afraid we would become Pentecostal if we started doing that? Maybe we're afraid it would cut into our personal schedules too much if we started praying with and over each other personally? But there is something very biblical (and right) and praying with and for each other. It does require the "risk" of opening yourself up and making yourself a little vulnerable with your brethren in Christ. But that's part of what authentic Christianity is too, right? To be all bottled up and completely private and "protected" from anyone knowing anything about your needs is to be no different from the world. And we do not want to be like the world, do we? We want to be like Jesus Christ. We want to LOOK like Him, amen?

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Epistle of James
Scripture: James 5:14-20

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 18 July 18th, 1993

The Effective Prayers of Righteous People

Introduction Of all passages in the Bible for us to look at, this surely must be one of the most exciting. That's because it deals with the great good that can be accomplished if we will use the tool of prayer and if we will learn to use it correctly. We know that it isn't mindlessly and vainly repeating specific prayers that moves God. We know that prayer, without a humbled heart and without holiness, cannot accomplish anything. It isn't just the raw *practice* of praising God or asking Him for things that accomplishes anything. We know that prayer is not some automatic mechanism that manufactures the desired result. Prayer is the process of drawing near to God Himself, and deliberately humbling ourselves in His holy presence and then deliberately making use of our *sonship* to pour out our hearts to Him.

Now let me digress for a minute to say that I believe this Franklin Graham Crusade can be one of the greatest things to hit our area, from a spiritual standpoint, that we have ever seen. I am excited about it, and things are coming together well. I am proud of those in our church who are working hard on it. But it will not happen if we do not make this just about the most prayed about thing in our lives over the next 84 days. But if we will, as a church, really get before God and ask Him to use this in our area and in our church, and humble ourselves, and set it in a place of high priority, there is no question in my mind that He will honor that and move!

Prayer is the greatest tool you and I have to use for Christ. It is the greatest blessing we have in this Christian life. It is our highest privilege (or you might say "fringe benefit") of being saved. And so today as we finish this part of James, it is one of the most exciting passages in the Scripture we might look at...

Now many people assume that James is talking in verse 14 about physical sickness. That may be part of what he had in mind, and there is certainly nothing *inappropriate* about a physically sick person calling his or her elders and asking them to pray over them. But because of the specific words that James uses for "sick" in

this and the following verses (there are two separate words-- *asthenéo* and *kámno*), and because of the context, there is probably a more *frequently* encountered situation in his mind. And that is when a person is feeling especially weak and weary (the meaning of those two Greek words), and specifically because of the effects of sin in their own lives. The Bible teaches that even physical illness can sometimes be traced to sin in a person's life.

Miriam was stricken with leprosy because of her critical words against Moses (Numbers 12). Israel as a nation suffered physical judgments from God a number of times because of sin (Numbers 16, 21, etc.). There were believers within the Corinthian church who knew the pain of divine scourging because they were sinning in violation of the Lord's Table (I Cor. 11:30).

But whether we're talking about a physical illness that comes because of sin, or about the weakness and weariness that a Christian may succumb to, the response is for that person himself or herself to request a prayer-visit by the leaders of the church. In vs. 14 James says to call the *elders* of the church. But I think he would probably include deacons too. Prayer is a major ministry of the leaders of a church, whether it is pastors, elders or deacons. And prayer is our greatest tool to bring about change--here, from weakness and weariness BACK to a state of *cheerfulness*.

Let me just touch, here, on the many so called "healing ministries" that are out there. In my opinion (and I have visited them), they are about 95% unreal. Yes, a few are dramatically healed and that is because in those cases God is pleased--because of His own sovereign plan--to heal. It is not because of the "healer". It is not because of the "event" and I think it is not even because of the "faith." It is because God answers prayer. In no place in Scripture are we told that for healing to really occur, a person needs to go to a meeting, to a church service, to a faith-driven healer or even to the Temple in Jerusalem. What God responds to is the humble person who submits his life to God's will, *whatever* that entails and has the boldness to ASK for healing too, if that is what God wants. And then if God heals the disease or the infection or the handicap, and restores the person to health, then we GO OUT OF OUR WAY to give Him ALL the glory. But that is not the situation in most *commercial* healing ministries; and frankly I resent it--because I am jealous to guard *authentic Christianity* and I resent any form of *fraudulent* "Christianity," or any false expectations which might be enjoined upon the saints.

Now, the anointing with oil can mean one of three things--1) that it is a ceremonial or ritual anointing as a symbol of trust in a gracious and healing God; 2) that it is a medicinal application; 3) that it is a means of bestowing honor, encouragement, refreshment and grooming, the same as we read in Luke 7:38,46;

Matthew 6:17. The fallen, discouraged, distressed, weary believer can call the elders and have them pray over him or her, and God will move upon their prayer of faith. That is no small promise from James!

Also, in vs. 15 it is not the prayer for forgiveness that IS forgiveness. The idea that a leader of a church CAN forgive or absolve a person of their sins is foolishness. But God will grant forgiveness and restoration, just as He grants refreshment.

So rarely do we hear Christians asking each other to pray for their spiritual condition. It is hard to admit that I am weak and weary. Just as it is hard to admit that maybe there *has been* sin in my life that has brought about a depressed or distressed condition--or even a medically poor condition. It is hard to admit it. But that is what James says we should *routinely* do...

In vs. 16 he tells them (and us) to *confess your sins to one another*. Personally confessing our sins to each other, and then being prayerfully concerned for one another--these are things that need to be a REGULAR part of church life. If no one is doing these in a church, there should be little wonder that the church has a lot of weariness and weakness in it.

Although it is the elders that James says to request prayer from, here he says to confess our sins *to one another*. Confession does not need to be only to a minister or to an elder (although it certainly *can* be). Maybe one of the best places is in the safety of a small group that you are part of. I would feel real comfortable confessing my sins to the pastor's group I am part of in Middleboro. They would hear my confession, help me think it through, and faithfully pray for me.

At the end of verse 16 is a marvelous statement (and it's in your bulletin today, too): *The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much*. I looked at this word "effective." In the Greek it is *energetic*. The only prayer worth while is one with "energy" in it. And who is going to have good energy and power in his prayer better, but a righteous man (or woman.) Half-hearted prayer is self-defeating. But earnest, persistent prayer can make accomplish great things. What great things do you need to see happen today or this week?

Here's the deal:

If there is sin in your life that you are harboring--find another Christian or a small group of Christians to openly and honestly share it with. Ask them to pray for you. Ask them to ask God to grant you faith and repentance from that sin and a real, genuine sense of His forgiveness. Ask them to ask God to restore the joy of the Lord to you.

Notice that James does *not* say, "the effective prayer of righteous *men* can accomplish much..." He just uses ONE MAN as an example--Elijah, a regular guy who got up in the morning just like you; who struggled with the same things you do. And because he was walking with the Lord, he prayed and incredible things happened. That's what prayer can accomplish. It isn't some kind of series of mystical, magical incantations we learn to say and POOF! there's the thing we want. But as a person learns to turn to prayer FIRST when there is a need, and to talk it over with God, and be *honest* with God about the thing, and to really mean business with God--"Lord, I'm going to trust you to work IN this thing, and *beyond* it..."--that is really praying.

Effective prayer is not a matter of repetition or telling God what to do or giving God information. It is FELLOWSHIPING with Him, and doing what you have to do *sanctification-wise* to get close to God and to stay close to Him. Then you've got this super resource at your disposal--God's sovereign power and the knowledge of His will.

The last two verses in the book have a note of tenderness to them; and this is unusual because most of the NT letters end with various greetings. But here James ends on a ministry note. Christians DO stray from the truth sometimes. They did it back then and they do it now. The route to restoration is for another Christian to try to intervene. Wandering Christians NEED to be brought back to the fold.

And because of the dramatic consequence (*death*) that James predicts will result from "straying" I think he has in mind serious "wandering." I'm not talking about just changing churches because of restlessness; I'm not talking about a Christian who does something that other Christians personally disapprove of. I'm talking about clear rebellion in a Christian's life where they turn to error and wrong thinking, or fleshly thinking and start making big decisions based on that thinking. They have bought into the world's way of thinking and they blatantly disobey God's truth. These are those who need to be *turned* back by reasoning, humble confrontation and prayer. And restoration can come, James says, and those sins will be covered up--a whole LOT of sins can be covered up, when prayer is brought to bear on it.

All through this book I have been saying that the *theme* in James' heart is *AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY*. James says, "Hey--let's be real with our faith. Let's allow the Lord Jesus to really show Himself through our changed lives."

And today, our greatest tool to see that really be true here is prayer. Are we a praying church? How much are we willing to pray to see God work in this Crusade? How much are we willing to pray to see people's lives changed, even from sin back to the abundant life? I hope we are a praying church. I am excited to see what God can do!