

Jacob

Book Study of "James"

**Study series as posted at the website
and originally e-mailed to the subscribers.**

© 1997, 2006

**A Voice in the Wilderness
P.O.Box 9531
Spokane, WA 99209 USA**

www.a-voice.org

The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

Jacob

Book Study of "James"

Contents:

03	Introduction
04	1: 1- 1 - Bondservant: -of Jesus Christ
06	1: 2- 8 - Testing of your faith: -Growth
08	1: 9-11 - Rich man: -Fading beauty
10	1:12-18 - Testing of faith: -Endurance & God's gift/s
13	1:19-27 - Doers of Word: -Pure Religion
16	2: 1-13 - Doers of Word: -Partiality, Love neighbor
18	2:14-26 - Doers of the Word: -Faith & Works
21	3: 1- 1 - Teachers: -their calling & assessment
24	3: 2-12 - The Tongue: -out of the heart
26	3:13-18 - Wisdom: -from above
28	4: 1- 5 - Fighting & lusts: -enmity with God
31	4: 6-10 - Submit to God: -He gives more grace
33	4:11-12 - Judging a brother: -judging the Law
36	4:13-16 - Life's Plans: -vapor
38	4:17-17 - Do good: -don't sin
40	5: 1- 6 - Coming of the Lord: -the wealthy
41	5: 7-11 - Coming of the Lord: -Patience, Endurance
43	5:12-12 - Yes, Yes - No, No: -don't oath
46	5:13-18 - Prayer of Faith: -sins forgiven
50	5:19-20 - Bring back the Wanderer: -sins covered

Addendum:

52	Oaths
----	-------

Introduction:

A collection of a lot of little random thoughts on practical Christian living... Probably best describes the book of James. Written to the "twelve tribes which are scattered abroad."(1:1) But, as the book of 1Peter was written to the "dispersion" of Israel, it is also written to "Christians" since the Church actually began IN ISRAEL. The 12 apostles were Jews. The Day of Pentecost (Acts2), which marks the beginning of the Church age, was a Jewish event.

It would seem that "this" James (probably the half-brother of Jesus - Gal1:19) had become respected as a leader in the early Church. When Jesus was resurrected, He made a point of appearing to "James, then..all the apostles."(1Cor15:7) And when Peter was let out of prison by the Lord, he makes a point of asking the Believers to tell James (Jesus' half-brother) about it.(Acts12:17) In Acts 15:13 when all the rest are finished debating the issue being questioned, the rest are silent, and James then speaks. When Paul returns from his missionary journeys, he meets with "James, and all the elders."(Acts21:18) And, he had become one of the "pillars" along with Peter and John (Gal2:9) We know it wasn't John's brother, because his brother had been martyred previously. (Acts12:2)

His name is actually Jewish; "Jacob." (Strong's 2385 -Iakobos) Rendered into the English Bible since at least the Wycliffe version (1384) as "James." We won't debate the possible reasons for this error here. But, since "James" has stuck through succeeding translations, we will leave it as "James", as this series was originally written in 1997.

Bondservant: of Jesus Christ - (James 1:1)

"James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." (vs1)

If this is the same "James" as the "Lord's brother"(Gal1:19); through this simple statement we see a remarkable transformation that has happened to him. At one point he had taunted Jesus, telling Jesus to go and "show Himself," perform some signs and announce Himself to the world; proving Himself to be Who He said He was, the Messiah; because as it says, "..even His brothers did not believe in Him."(Jn7:5)

And "now" he calls himself a "bondservant" ...of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What was a bondservant? In the Old Testament when a fellow-Hebrew came into debt and had to sell himself to his creditor because he could not pay his debts, on the seventh year after six years of service, his debt was considered "paid." He was set free to return to his possession. And was supplied with necessary means to get "back on his feet" again. (Ex21:2-6,Deu15:12-17)

If he entered servitude married, his wife was freed with him. However, if he was single, and was given a wife who then bore children, the wife and children were the "property" of his former master. He could either go out free "single" again, or he could choose to stay. Because of his love for his wife and children, he could choose to remain in servitude. If he chose to stay, they would take him to a doorpost, and pierce his ear with an awl. And he then became a servant "forever." He was "bonded" by this act, with a permanent mark on his body.

He was not required by law to do this. He had the legal option to go free. But he would PURPOSELY forfeit his freedom in order to be enslaved, because of his love for family and master.

So, back to James...he gave up his familial relationship to Jesus to become a bondservant.

My, my! What an opposite attitude to what we see today. Fleshly, spiritually carnal "babies" clamor for "friendship" with Jesus. (Jn15:15) And based on Jesus comments, "greater works than [what I do] he will do,"(Jn14:12) they seek to become "little Christ's" with all His power and authority; forgetting that Christians only have ability because it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."(Col1:27) That the "power" we have is not something we wield, but God's power is "TOWARD us." (Eph1:19) It is His power, not ours!

Many people accuse the apostle Paul of pride for all "his" writings and commandments, forgetting how he considered himself a "bondservant." (Rom1:1,Tit1:1) And spoke of being an "ambassador in chains."(Eph6:20)

With his ultimate desire to be found "well-pleasing" to Christ. (2Cor5:9) The same Jesus, Who during intimate moments with His disciples spoke of "friendship" also exhorted the attitude in response to service rendered, "We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do."(Lk17:10)

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery [something to be clung to] to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross....Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation [works appropriate to, befitting, as a result of-- salvation; being "doers of the Word"; demonstrating your faith with works] with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Phil 2:5-13)

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Rom 6:16-18)

Testing of your faith: Growth - (James 1:2-8)

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."(vs2-4)

First of all, the Christian life is characterized by Joy. Paul writes, "Rejoice always..in everything give thanks."(1Ths5:16,18) However, in the context we are about to explore, it may become obvious that this might not necessarily be a "clap the hands, laugh and shout with glee" type of joy. The same Paul who rejoiced always, and in prison sang songs after being beaten (Acts16:25) also used his Roman citizenship to get out from under a Roman flogging.(Acts22:25) Somehow, I seriously doubt that the many times he was beaten, he would "savor" each blow with, "Oh, yes, please. Can I have another. Maybe make the next even harder than the last." But he wrote about the "peace of God which surpasses understanding.."(Phil4:7) A deep settled peace.

But, the joy is because our faith is (being) proven. This proving is to make sure it's solid.(1Cor3:13) Real.(2Cor13:5,1Pet1:7) When a person ties a rope, he tries the knot. The rope is tugged on, to "test" the knot to make sure it will hold. If it wasn't a good knot and slips, the rope has to be pulled back out, and man-handled to get it right. In electronics, circuit boards are tested. If there are problems, the "HOT" soldering iron is taken to it, to go about fixing the problems. But not too hot, lest the traces be lifted. In the same way God does not allow our testing to be more than we can withstand or would be beneficial.(1Cor10:13)

We rejoice because the testing produces PATIENCE.(vs3) Have you ever wondered why, when you prayed to God, asking for patience, it seemed that more trials came your way? That's part of the process. In some ways, it's like "discipline" which our society seems to have forgotten about. But is a necessary part of growth and maturity. "What son is there whom his father does not chasten?"(Heb12:5-8)

As patience matures to fruition, the person becomes a complete whole. With understanding.(Eph1:18) Fuller knowledge of Jesus Christ. (2Pt1:5-8) Reliability and dependability. Faithfulness.(1Co4:2)

A close relative to "patience" is "wisdom." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."(Ps111:10,Pr1:7) Where does wisdom come from? From God.

How do we get wisdom? We ask of God. And He gives LIBERALLY and WITHOUT REPROACH.(vs5) Jesus promised the water would "become..a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."(Jn4:14) Overflowing..!!

But we must desire it. Jesus said, "ask and it will be given to you."(Mt7:7) James says, "but let him ask in faith, with no doubting."(vs6) Jesus said further, "Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."(Mt21:22)

Here's where trials, patience, and faith all work together. When we are still immature, we "don't know how to pray as we ought."(Rom8:26) And so the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf. We go through the first level/s of trials, and see the Lord's working/s in bringing us through them. And we are strengthened. Another trial comes along, and builds on the experience of that last one, and we are stronger. After a while, when we see a trial about to come upon us, we can look forward to it, because we know God is going to work it all out, and eventually we can observe the trial and its fulfillment, almost as an onlooking bystander, because we "understand" it from start to finish. We understand God. And after awhile, we relish in watching God deal with the matter...to see His power and wisdom. "How is He going to do it [this] time?"

The doubter is like Peter. 'Sees the boistrous waves, takes his eyes off Jesus, and sinks. The initial, Oh, Lord, if it's really You...let me have this "experience." And so we jump up and down on an "emotional high" of "praising the Lord." But just like the roller coaster, after the high comes the plunge. The pits of despair. Such a flighty person does not receive anything from the Lord, "being unstable in all his ways."(vs8) He is "double-minded." Trying to serve "two masters." (Mt6:24) And as the waves thrash about, he gets tossed from this "wind of doctrine" to that one.(Eph4:14)

Initially, we ask for wisdom. And He gives without reproach. Later we will learn how He gives only good things.(vs17) And then, as we become accustomed to His workings we realize we don't "need" to ask. As we follow, He leads us in the paths of righteousness.(Ps23:3) While the testings come, He feeds us in the midst of the troubles.(vs5) When we fall, he prods us along with His "rod and staff."(vs4) He leads us to the still waters by which we drink.(vs2) And He "restores my soul" when that is the need.

With such great care on our behalf, how can we BUT "count it all Joy!"

Rich man: Fading beauty - (James 1:9-11)

"If I were a rich man... ..all - day - long - I'd - biddy biddy bum...if I were a weal - thy man! - !!!" sings "Papa" in "Fiddler on the Roof."

Recently at my store it was necessary to turn away a job. And the customer simply could not understand how anyone would "turn away a hundred dollar bill."

We have a president who has many moral and ethical issues hovering over him. Possibly, even murder. But seemingly, the only things prosecutors are able to grab hold of are ones involving "money" as recent news was mentioning possible impeachment proceedings because of particulars related to fund-raising.

Corporations are usually more interested in the "bottom line" than in the welfare of their employees. Laws are passed with "money" as the determining factors. Somebody dies in an accident, and the survivors sue for "money." People play the lottery in hopes of "hitting it rich." People who don't have it, want money. Those who have it, want more.

James says, "let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation."(vs9) Notice, he's talking about a "brother." A Believer in Christ. What is the exaltation? Paul writes, "set your mind on things above, not on things (including money) on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."(Col3:2-4)

Now, as we consider what "glory" is, we have been given little glimpses of it. On earth everybody clamors to have gold. Lots of it. The wealthy have gold-plated...everything. However, the new Jerusalem which comes down from God is made of "pure gold." The "street of the city was pure gold."(Rev21:21) We will be "walking" on gold there. Like the fellow who had saved up all his earthly riches, and packed them in his suitcase, gets to the "pearly gates" and meets "St.Peter" wanting access to heaven. And Peter asks, "what's in the suitcase?" And the man opens it proudly to display all the gold he had hoarded. And Peter exclaims, "You brought - PAVEMENT..!?!"

The rich man has to hire people to continually polish his gold to keep it sparkly. But once he is gone, after a few years he is forgotten...that he even existed. "...its beautiful appearance perishes."(vs11)

Jesus taught, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Mt6:19-21)

We need to be like Moses, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. (Heb11:25-26)

The prize, as Paul anticipated, "...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil3:13-14)

Testing of your faith: Endurance & God's gift/s - (James 1:12-18)

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."(vs12)

All things in creation need "proof." The proof of a diamond is its resistance to scratching and chipping; and was formed originally under great pressure. Proof of metals is intense heat; The finest steel is produced with tremendous heat. Certain species of animals have mating rituals which guarantee the purity of the species, and not an impostor. Many software programs "go out" and check to see what kind of computer they are running on as part of the load-up process; many programs won't run on an inadequate machine. The batch file "menu" with which I backup various things on my computer goes to the floppy once inserted to see if it is the correct disk. If it's the wrong disk, it beeps at me and will not save to that disk. 'Don't want to back up e-mail addresses onto my Bible study disk, etc.

Faith in Christ is the same. Peter writes, "that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, (1Pet1:7)

James speaks of the blessedness of the one who "endures." Jesus said, "He who endures to the end will be saved."(Mt10:22) What is this "end?" In the context He was speaking of martyrdom and persecution. Paul assures us, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."(1Cor10:13)

There are a couple kinds of "temptation" here. There is the overt, out-n-out persecution and torture which Satan is allowed to bring upon us. And there is the sneaky, crafty temptation to sin, which he brings along. As proof of this latter, recall that Peter says about Lot, "(for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds); (2Pet2:8)

But in either case, we are called upon to "endure." On the one hand we are comforted that God will not allow more than we have the capacity to endure and/or resist. On the other hand we have Christ's example. He resisted temptation "without sin."(Heb4:15) And, He endured the cross unto death.(Phil2:8) Just as Christ, the firstfruits(1Cor15:20) was "exalted..and given a name above every name,"(Phil2:9) the Christian who endures looks forward to the "crown of life."(vs12)

One thing we need to be clear on. God NEVER tempts us, nor brings adversity on the Believer. But, He will turn a person over to Satan. (1Cor5:5) In the case of Job we see that Job's "proof" was for Satan's benefit.(Job1:12) Let us not forget that our relationship with God is not merely between God and us, but there is a whole "grandstands" of the heavenlies who are watching.(Heb12:1a) And the struggle is a spiritual one.(Eph6:12)

In the same way that Satan had God's permission to try Job, and "sifted" Peter as wheat(Lk22:31), it is quite likely that God and Satan have this "understanding" regarding the Church. Jesus said, "on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."(Mat16:18)

You see "who" is the aggressor here. The "gates of Hades." (Hell-kjv) And Jesus said, they would not prevail against the church. A true Believer will not deny Christ, even unto death. If a person under torture recants, he is NOT a True Believer, because, by definition, he will not recant. Satan will not be able to force a Christian to deny Christ...this, a Christian who has resolved in his heart, and endures.

What about those temptations and lust? Satan certainly tempts us. But he does not force us to sin. We do that on our own. Our own lust carries us away, and leads us down the path of sin.(vs14) So, how do "these" temptations produce in us the maturity we discussed earlier in the chapter?

God often allows us to go our "merry way." But often hedges up our way with thorns.(Hos2:6) Sometimes He will "blind" us to an imminent temptation, which He knows we would readily fall for. Or at other times he will put obstacles in our path, so those "plans" we were nursing become impossible to fulfill. He often has to use His "rod and staff" to prod us.(Ps23:4) But eventually, if not straightened out sooner, the path we are on brings us to "hit bottom."(vs15) When we hit bottom, how do we respond to God? The prodigal "came to his senses" and returned to his father.(Lk15:17) Jonah quite possibly died under the hot sun in rebellion. (Jon4:9-11)

When my unequal yoke left, that was my "bottom." The Bradshaw disciples counseled me that God had brought about the divorce, and all that happened. No! My lust and sin brought it about, when I married the unequal yoke in the first place. Where I ended up 15 years later was my own doing. The "when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."(vs15)

But, at the "bottom" the only direction to look, was "Up." And I did. Confession and cleansing.(1Jn1:9) And as a result, the temptation, which led to sin, which ended up in trials...because I repented and returned to God fully..resulted in God's "perfect work" in my life.(vs4)

Don't let anyone deceive you, beloved brethren.(vs16) God does not tempt us to evil.(vs13) He gives good things to His own.(vs17) As earthly parents desire to give only good things to their children, "how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!(Mt7:11)

This ought to be a further encouragement regarding the "pre-trib" Rapture of the Church. Through the past 2000 years Satan has been allowed to persecute the Church. But during the Tribulation, it is a time of "God's Wrath" upon the world.(Rev6:16-17,19:15) Even if we didn't have all the other Scriptures that give assurance of this, based on everything we know about God's love for His own, simple logic would tell us that He would not subject His own TO [His] "Wrath."

God's gift/s are sure and solid. He does not shift and turn according to whims.(vs17) He is the "same yesterday, today and forever."(Heb13:8) Furthermore, God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"(Num23:19)

We are "a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."(vs18) "But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."(1Cor15:23)

Doers of the Word: Pure Religion - (James 1:19-27)

"be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.(vs22)

In Matthew 21 Jesus told a story about a man who sent one of his sons to go out into the field to work, and the son initially refused, but then later repented and went. The man went to his other son with the same command, and this one said, "Sure, I'll go" ..but didn't. And Jesus closes off this story by asking His hearers, "Which of the two did his father's will?" and they answered, "the first."(Mt21:31) And Jesus responded, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you."

Who was the "you" here? The religious elitist snobs. They had set themselves up at the top of the chain-of-command hierarchy, and had come to Jesus asking Him what His "authority" was for all He was teaching and doing. They were not accepting His "deity." They were not accepting the fact that He came representing God.(Jn12:49,14:10) They thought He should be under some "human" organization or committee. Primarily...THEM.

"..be swift to hear, slow to speak."(vs19) They were not willing to hear God's Truth. They were always teaching others. They had set up so many laws and regulations for people to conform to, but they, themselves would finagle around them for their own benefits. Jesus said, "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. (Mat23:4)

"..slow to wrath." When they argued with the man born blind, whom Jesus had given sight to, the man concluded that Jesus "had to be" from God, because no mere man could do such a thing. And they angrily said, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out. (Jn9:34)

Have you ever noticed how a person who is in the wrong, usually argues their point, usually interrupting anybody who tries to reason with them with truth? Usually, also, becoming quite angry. They, along with the scribes and pharisees of Jesus' day do not...

"..receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."(vs21) They did not receive Jesus' words. They did not receive Jesus, Who [IS] the Word.(Jn1:1) Who is the "way, truth and life." (Jn14:6) Who is the "image of the invisible God."(Col1:15) Upon Whom, faith in Him gives eternal life.(Jn17:3) And thus, as Jesus said, "..unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.(Mt5:20)

In their state of self-exalted superiority the scribes and pharisees forgot who/what they were.(vs24) As well as they claimed to know the Law, they forgot that they were merely representatives of God to the people, and intermediaries of the people before God. But they became [THE] "authorities." They were merely "hearers" but not "doers" of the law.(vs23) And thus, Jesus' verdict upon them was that they were lost, because the word which they claimed to know, their actions demonstrated that they had not received it, because they did not [DO] the Word. Thus, they were not saved.

Religion of words is useless.(vs26) Have you noticed how the various religions wax eloquent with words? Paul warned Timothy to avoid "the profane and idle babbling and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge." (1Tm6:20)

The false prophets of "christianity" are no different. When a false doctrine is involved, the purveyor of it usually has one or two "proof texts" which he hammers and hammers. He will wax eloquent with MANY words, telling "how he is GOING TO tell you" the "great truth." But, he will babble and babble, impressing the deceived with his many words; but in the end, will not have said anything. His "christianity" is useless!

Pure Religion (beliefs, values, activity; constituting ceremony), in other words, the acting out of what we say we believe; consists of 1) care for the needy, and 2) a holy life. (vs27)

Does this mean Christians should participate in social activism? Probably not, because such programs have other agendas which motivate them. But we are to follow the "golden rule"(Lk6:31) and, as Jesus put it, "love your neighbor as yourself" after loving God(Lk10:27) Because on this hangs all the "law and prophets"(Mt22:40) in a practical day-to-day sense. We will discuss this further in chapter 2.

So, what of the pastor of the "Bible Bxpxxt" church, who, years ago suggested to my uncle's widow after he died that she should sell the heavily in-debted farm and bring the money to the church? This widow had 3 pre-school children to care for. Did this pastor's stance on "KJV-only" and "church membership" and "???" mean anything? His religion was not pure. It was "defiled" by greed. As Jesus said of the scribes and pharisees, "who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation." (Lk20:47)

What does it mean to "keep unspotted from the world?"(vs27) To be holy. Again, to the scribes and pharisees, Jesus said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." (Jn8:7) This, in relationship to the woman they brought to him, "caught in the act" of sexual immorality. BTW ...where was the "man"..? (Deu22:24) They didn't bring him to Jesus!

Was she, by chance, THEIR "play-thing?" ..as they one-by-one walked out, beginning with the eldest.(vs9)

It doesn't do a bit of good to preach morality and abstinence, if one's own life consists of affairs, homosexuality, and other such perversion! Such religion is "useless." He says, "lay aside [put off] all filthiness [defilements] and overflow of [abundance, preference for] wickedness [depravity].(vs21) Paul writes, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision [plans, forethought] for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."(Rom13:14)

"But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty... "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death"(Rom 8:2) ...and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.(vs25)

Doers of the Word:

Partiality, Love your neighbor (James 2:1-13)

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. (vs1)

Every once in a while I get a note from somebody, wondering "why" their church snubs them. Wondering what they can do about it. All they want to do is go and worship, learn from God, and fellowship with other Believers. As I read the note/s they are usually full of misspellings, poor punctuation, missing grammar parts...sometimes to the point that I have to really struggle to understand what it is the person is saying. Obviously, "uneducated." In amongst the tale they tell, they will possibly say something about being "overweight" ...and something else about "all-you-can-eat" restaurants. Gradually a "picture" forms in my mind. Perhaps they also drive an old Ford station wagon ("boat") which is rusted out. These are the ones, you know, you wonder when their last bath was. And as they sit there, you can hear their breath wheezing in and out from clear across the sanctuary.

Then there's Miss Prim N. Proper. You know her. She sang the solo this morning. Was wearing the stretch-knit, fashionably short dress. Make-up was "just so." Just had her hair done yesterday. Her nails are deco'd with fancy stenciled art work. Her husband is dressed the part. And they drove up in their '97 Taurus, spotlessly clean from the wash/buff/wax job yesterday because they knew she was singing the solo today. (I often wonder what the "shiny car" has to do with "ministry!")

When she finished her solo, the pastor got up to preach, and raved her up and down. And after the service made a point of seeking her out to give her a big hug, because that solo "prepared him so wonderfully" for the message. On his way to her, he brushed past Mrs. All-you-can-eat whose hand was reaching out to him to shake his hand, because, strangely enough, in spite of his hypocrisy, there was something from God's Word which met her heart that morning. And she needed to communicate. But he didn't stop, but just "had to get" to Miss Proper, pushing his way through the crowd swarming around her...

"...have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?"(vs4)

"Has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith.."(vs5)
"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven..blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."(Mt5:3,6) "...not many wise..not many mighty..not many noble are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise..that no flesh should glory in His presence."(~1Cor1:26-29)

Next time you find a summons to court, or a threat that someone is going to write about you to the newspaper, see who it is. It won't be Mrs. All-you-can-eat. It will be Miss Proper, because you didn't give her the recognition she wanted as she handed you a "business card" with nothing on it but "her name." After all, don't you know WHO SHE IS?!!

You might keep the law and don't lie or steal. But, pastor, if you were enjoying her "attractiveness" as she sang that solo, in your heart, you sinned. Jesus said, "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Mt5:28)

As a side note: how many times haven't I heard on TBN, Benny Hinn or some other person, sitting around "chatting" refer to some "attractive" woman regarding this or that "ministry." Maybe they didn't commit murder, but in their heart/s they committed adultery. They were guilty of breaking the law.

The whole basis of the law is, "Love your neighbor as yourself."(vs8) How would you feel if your heart was in need, and someone snubbed you? The lowly, while not physically appealing to the senses, are precious in God's sight. They are souls for "whom Christ died."(Rom14:15)

Perhaps we would wish to quote to them, "a man who has friends, must himself be friendly."(Pr18:24) In other words, "clean yourself up, and take better care of yourself...make yourself 'presentable'...consider others whom you wish to befriend you." But, perhaps, before they can do that, they need spiritual help. Usually an externally unpleasant person has very deep internal, spiritual, burdens. As a Christian brother or sister, we are called to love them just as we would anyone else.

Showing partiality is sin.(vs9) We are called to behave towards others as those, who, ourselves, are under scrutiny.(vs12) If we show partiality, we are "judging" that person to be somehow "less" or inferior to ourselves. But, if they are in Christ, they are a "fellow-servant." And we are not to judge a fellow-servant.(Rom14:4)

The judgment that comes to those who judge, will be without mercy. (vs13) In fact, Jesus put it this way, "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." (Lk6:37-38) If you show compassion, you will receive compassion. If you snub and reject a person, you will receive back in full measure, according to your deeds. If you showed no mercy, there will be none for you.(vs13)

"So speak and so do"...because, "Mercy triumphs over judgment."(vs12,13)

Doers of the Word:

Faith & Works - (James 2:14-26)

"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can [that kind of] faith save him? (vs14)

First of all, as we get into this "famous" [proof text] passage, let us make one thing clear. The debates that go on between conservatives and liberals always seem to hinge on the concept of "faith [OR] works." Let us realize at the outset, the issue is really "faith [AND] works." Let us continue and discover why.

At the end of chapter 1 the discussion was "be DOERS of the word." Not merely "hearers." Pure religion was defined as "faith in action." Keeping the tongue in check (to be discussed further in ch3), helping people in need, living a holy life.

Now, the question is asked, to argue the other side of the issue. The question is, IS IT POSSIBLE to have faith [WITHOUT] works?"

Suppose a less-than-prosperous family, whom you know well, has a fire and is burned out of their tiny trailer home. They are left destitute, and are in debt. No insurance. Cannot afford a motel. Besides, his employer just went bankrupt recently, and he's without work, and his last paycheck bounced.

It just so happens that you live in a very large house. It contains many bedrooms and several baths. You have just recently fixed up the kitchen and it is amply set up to cook for large gatherings/parties... because you designed it specifically to "entertain." And you've just recently been on a shopping spree, and your freezers and pantries are stuffed to overflowing with food. And you happen upon these people after church, and you make a point of going up to them, shake their hand, pat them on the back, and maybe even shed a few tears with them over their loss as you give them a big warm hug, and as you drive off in your '98 Integra (or whatever) you wave out the window "Ta ta...I hope things go better for you real soon...I'll be praying for you!" ...and you don't offer to invite them over to stay with you until they can get back on their feet! What good were the "tears?" What kind of "prayers" are those?!

So, what does that have to do with "faith?" Are we not saved APART FROM works? Of course. "By grace you have been saved through faith..it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."(Eph2:8-9) And Paul writes further, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. (Rom3:28) We were/are not able to save ourselves, "For when we were still without strength [ability], in due time

Christ died for the ungodly."(Rom5:6) And, "without faith it is impossible to please God."(Heb11:6)

So, see?? We don't "need" works. ...Right?

To BECOME "saved" ..correct. But, how do we know you are saved? We are told, "do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God."(1Jn4:1) What criteria do we, humans, have to "test" the spirit of the person claiming to be a Christian?(1Ths5:21) Only God knows the hearts, for sure, to know who is truly a Believer. (Heb4:12-13) Isn't it just enough for you to TELL ME SO? And if you have told me so, isn't it then distrustful, "unloving and judgmental" of me to question you? After all, modern "grace" teaches that "God accepts me JUST AS I AM" and therefore He doesn't "need" for me to change. (Just for "fun" compare that statement with the definition of "repentance.") (Mt3:8,Rev2:5,Acts3:19)

If it waddles, flaps its wings, has webbed feet, and "quacks" ..we assume it is a "duck." If a person struggles with the demons of drugs, alcohol, perversion, lying, immorality..."out of the abundance of the heart.." we understand the person to be unregenerate. (Mt7:21-26, Lk6:45, Rev21:8)

James gives examples. Abraham "believed God" and he was accounted to be "righteous." But, his faith was "proved" when he trusted/obeyed God regarding offering up his only "true" heir (through Sarah). I expect he had started the downward stroke with that knife to kill Isaac, with all his might, so as to make it as painless as possible. And God stopped him short. His faith had been tested. Peter writes about the "proof/genuineness of faith."(1Pet1:7)

His faith, working TOGETHER WITH his works, his faith was made "perfect."(vs22)(1:4) While God, Who knows the heart, knew Abraham's faith which made him righteous; the faith needed to be proved for the sake of Abraham, his family, the angels, and Satan.(Heb12:1)

You see, the demons have "faith."(vs19) They know God exists. Oh, how they know!! They "believe in God." They believe in Jesus. They believe that He is THE Christ. They believe that Jesus came to die on the cross. They believe in the Holy Spirit. They believe in the pre-tribulation Rapture of the Church. They believe in the coming of God's Wrath upon the world. And tremble!! Their faith, rather than being coupled with obedience, is characterized by rebellion.

Rahab, on the other hand, at the risk to her own life, hid the Israelie spies who came to spy out Jericho. And when they were leaving, promising to return for her and her household in safety, when the rest of Jericho was destroyed, "promptly" put the scarlet rope out the window.(Josh2:21) She did not try to speculate time tables, formulas, and interpretations of prophecy. She was prepared "now." She "demonstrated" her faith with action. And when the conquering soldiers came, they found Rahab and

her family, in her house. She had demonstrated her endurance through the siege, and they found her where she promised she would be. (Josh6:22-23,25)

Well, some might argue, "Isn't God a bit unfair?" Doesn't He expect an awful lot from us poor helpless people? After all, He can sit "up there" in heaven and dictate all this to us, and not lift His finger to help. He doesn't really "know" what Weee go through!

Oh yes, He went through it, too! Let's not forget Jesus Christ. He, Who preached, "He who endures to the end shall be saved"(Mt24:13) Himself endured "such hostility from sinners."(Heb12:3) And, in His flesh, He had to learn "obedience" when He died on the cross, as He pled and pled "with vehement cries and tears"(Heb5:7) that He might not have to endure the cross.(Mt26:39) But He was "perfected" and became "the author of eternal salvation."(Heb5:9)

Not only was Jesus "proven," God "DEMONSTRATES His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."(Rom5:8) God did not simply send us messages, and shower us with wealth and comfort on this earth...because He "loves" us...only to let us continue on towards death. No! His love had "action." In fact His love was SO GREAT that He sent His Son to DIE!(Jn3:16) As Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.(Jn15:13)

In this case we see God's love fulfilled via death. If Jesus had not died, then God's "love" would have been dead. It would not have been real. In the same way, if faith has no proving/demonstrating works to back it up, it is dead.(vs26) On the other hand, if faith is real, a person "put[s] to death" his former life,(Col3:5) lives in "newness of life" (Rom6:4) and thus proves his faith to be genuine.

Yes, we are "saved by grace through faith...UNTO good works."(Eph2:8,10)

Teachers: their calling & assessment - (James 3:1)

"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."(Jas 3:1)

This one little verse is a gateway to such a potentially expansive topic that books could be written. But let's consider just a couple of key points.

First of all James says, Don't clamor to be a teacher. This...in contrast to Paul's hierarchy of the "spiritual gifts" where "teachers" is third from the top.(1Cor12:28) as he says "earnestly desire the best gifts."(vs31) And mentions "teachers" in (Eph4:11) as one of the specific gifts for the equipping, edifying and growth of the Body of Christ, the Church.

This is why James puts a big "Caution" sign in front of "teacher." While it is one of the preeminent gifts, it is not for everybody. Paul asks, "Are all teachers?"(1Cor12:29) ...with the assumed, expected response, "No." In other words, "Not everyone is a teacher, are they?" ..."No."

Because it is such an important position, James says it is also fraught with responsibility and judgment. Let us define three words here, so we know what we are talking about.

"Important" =strongly effecting the course of events. A teacher is not important because he is [A] "somebody" and thus, he's an important "person." No. What he [DOES] is important, because what he teaches affects the lives of everyone whom he teaches.

Thus...

He has great "responsibility" to do his job right. In other words, he's "liable" to give account of how he has despatched his duty and trust. To whom is he liable? Certainly, to those he has taught. Their blood is on his hands.(Ezek33:8-9) But ultimately to Him to Whom we must give account.(Heb4:13)

Thus, "judgment" is rendered. The Master gives into the charge of his steward/s certain responsibilities, as the capability of the steward warrants. When the Master comes back to evaluate, will the judgment be "well done, good and faithful servant" ..or.. "cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness" ..??(Mt25:14-30)

What is the servant's duties? To give those of his "household...[their] food in due season."(Mt24:45) And Jesus says, "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing."(vs46)

Just as an aside here, consider the "Woe" to those who misuse this trust! "But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'my master is delaying his coming...'"(vs48) Today, who are those who say Jesus isn't coming "so soon?" He won't be coming yet until after God's Wrath. His coming isn't "imminent" as Scripture teaches...don't believe in such "escapism." And these teachers are plagued by many other such falsities. Jesus says, "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him at an hour that he is not aware of..." Pay close attention to the verdict here!!! "...and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."(vs51) This is the judgment for false teachers. (True Believer...don't fellowship with these. Don't link to their websites!)

So...what are some considerations for being a teacher?

First of all, it is God's gift to the Church.(Eph4:11) In the Jewish tradition, Paul "laid hands" on Timothy as God's gift was given to him.(2Tm1:6) In other cases, God's "burden" was heavy upon those whom He called.(Isa14:28) As He spoke with them directly and called them.(Isa6:8-9) In the N.T. the Holy Spirit guided and directed those who should do specific ministries.(Acts13:2)

Then, the teacher's function is for "the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God."(Eph4:12-13) What are the teaching goals?

1) Equipping other Believers to minister, to witness. One pastor or teacher cannot "do it all." ("that's what we PAY him for") The Church functions as a complete whole, each member doing its part.(1Cor12)

2) Goal towards "sameness" of faith. To where the whole Body comes to believe the SAME DOCTRINE.(1Cor1:10) We have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all." And it is the one and SAME Spirit Who teaches all Believers "One Doctrine."(Eph4:3-6) You notice Paul writes in vs.3, "endeavoring to KEEP the unity of the Spirit." Which is something entirely different from what today's movements are after...to "create" unity. In Christ, the unity EXISTS...ALREADY, amongst those who are His.

3) Ultimately, to "KNOW" Christ. We truly know Christ when we know His Word. Paul's desire was, "That I may know Him..."(Phil3:10) John spoke of the ultimate goal when we are with Him, that "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."(1Jn3:3) And he goes on to say, "everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."(vs4) But until we get there, our desire and goal as we continually grow in Christ is, "with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2Cor3:18)

These are the things the teacher is to teach. Thus, it becomes obvious why a teacher cannot be a brand new "baby" Christian.(1Tm3:6) And why the more mature Christians should not be too hasty to appoint a new convert to service responsibilities.(1Tm5:22)

This is one of the primary scourges of our present last-days apostacy. A great percentage of current leadership were thrust into, or took upon themselves, their positions shortly after "being saved." Their former "high-profile" lives in politics, acting or entertainment fields kept them in those positions, and they became leaders in "christianity" before they were proven to truly be Christians (2Cor13:5) and fully tested (Acts15:26,1Pt1:7) and [spiritually] mature enough to teach others. (Notable examples: Chuck Colson, Pat Boone, etc) And thus, now incur the same "condemnation as the devil," being vaunted with pride, and their teaching fraught with major error. The mature leadership let the ball slip, and didn't take them aside like Aquila and Priscilla did for Apollos to "[explain] to him the way of God more accurately." (Acts18:26) Even Saul/Paul, with all his pharisaical training from the noted & esteemed Gamaliel (Acts22:3,5:34) when he was first converted, spoke out boldly...but needed time to grow, and so went "home" to Tarsus for a while.(Acts9:30) And spent a period of three years in the wilderness, learning from God.(Gal1:16-18)

Thus, James says, "let not many of you become teachers." It's much too big a responsibility to lay on just anybody. There is much too much at stake! Souls of people are at stake! If the teaching is erroneous, people can be damned to an eternity without God. And, while they will die in their own sin, their blood will be accounted to the teacher.

"...everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.(Lk12:48)

The Tongue: out of the heart - (James 3:2-12)

"If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body."(vs2)

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.(Lk6:45)

Many things in this life can be "fixed." If a room is painted the wrong color, it can be repainted. If a bolt is stripped while working on your car, you can get a new bolt. If you type something on your computer that you wish to correct, you can either edit it or delete it.

Even, many hurtful acts can be dealt with. Broken bones will mend. Even if one sins and conceives a child, God provided the remedy, even in the "law" for the couple to marry and make things right.

But a SPOKEN WORD, once it leaves the mouth, can never be retrieved. And the ear that heard that word can never UN-hear it. If it was a hurtful word, the heart and soul it injured is usually never the same.

During wild fire seasons each year thousands of acres of land are destroyed in the infernos. Millions of dollars in damage and resources to fight the fires. What is usually the flash point? A cigarette butt, sparks from logging pulleys, a match; not to mention the "natural" sources..lightning. Nevertheless, a "single," often TINY source.

We can glibly criticize the media and tabloids for untold damage to people's lives. But what about that gossip which begins with, "You know what I heard?" Or, somebody "speculates" something, voices it to another, and before you know it, whether it's true or not, it has become "fact" as everybody views it. How many a career, reputation or ministry has been foiled by "words!"

A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter. The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, And they go down into the inmost body. (Pr11:13,18:8)

And here we get to the crux of the matter. We already know that "we all stumble in many things."(vs2) "For there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin." (Eccl7:20) "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."(1Jn1:8)

But, the "tasty trifle" which pierces down "into the inmost body" affecting the hearer (often) irreparably, also comes "out of the heart" of the speaker. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.(Mt15:19)

This is why the tongue is "untamable." It says what comes "naturally." Now, if he is a false prophet or "pretend christian" he can purposely formulate pious words on a regular basis, but when it gets down to the nitty gritty, his true nature speaks. Where do you suppose the "eruptions" come from at church business meetings?

A current prime example can be shared. As this is being written, responses are coming back to exposes on Promise Keepers. One reply contained beautiful words, desiring oneness and acceptance of "our brothers" of "different faiths." Desiring that more "grace" be practiced. When the falsehood of their dogma was exposed with Scripture, the "attitude of grace" turned into vicious "personal" diatribes. The "true nature" came out. So much for "acceptance" of "all our brothers...and their views." ...me, supposedly being one of them.

In one case, "blessing." At the next turn, "cursing." "Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh."(vs10-12)

Thus, we can also say, in context, the same mouth cannot bless AND curse. "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. "Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. (Mat 12:33-34)

But when a person is "in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new."(2Cor5:17) And then it is possible to have "your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.(Col4:6)

Wisdom: from above - (James 3:13-18)

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct..his works..in the meekness of wisdom."(vs13)

Here, again, we see the concept repeated, "be doers of the word, not hearers only."(1:22) ...and "faith in action."(2:14-26)

A different area of "how to" is considered; but it is related to the first part of the chapter. James has already warned about not clamoring to be a teacher, due to its level of importance, associated responsibility and judgment. However, many seek to be teachers. They spew forth with their mouths; often mixing blessing and cursing. Often to be "noticed by men."(Mt6:5) And while they do these things, what are they hoping for people to notice about them? ...their "Great Wisdom." To be respected as one "who knows."

While a person can pontificate his own wisdom with words, James exhorts the need for "works" done in humility. As David had just garnered for himself a spot in people's hearts after killing Goliath; even though he had been annointed by Samuel to be the next king; it says that he, "behaved more wisely than all the servants of Saul."(1Sam18:30)

Contrary to modern thought, self-seeking is of the evil one. It does not elevate one to god-hood, but is earthly. All the lust, lasciviousness, and complete mentality that is based on, and centered in carnal desires; providing the basis for most sit-coms, commercials, and socialization activities; while purporting to be caring and based in "love" ...is full of envy, self-centered self-seeking sensuality. And is actually "demonic." This was the "serpent's" lie to Eve, "see how wonderful it will be FOR YOU? [YOU] will be wiser. [YOU] will be like God."(Gen3:5) And follows his own original agenda when he selfishly, proudly proclaimed, "I will be like the Most High."(Isa14:14)

However, while we can "blame" it all on Satan; he couldn't do a thing without a willing follower. The self-seeking is "in your hearts."(vs14) "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." (Mt15:19)

So, while the world tries to cure all its ills by helping people to develop and nurture their "self-esteem," we are told that, in actuality, self-seeking is the source and catalyst of confusion and "every evil thing."(vs16)

For example: Married individuals leave their spouses in order to seek "self" ...blaming their spouse and the marriage for their lack of "fulfillment" in that union (and life); when, in fact, that desire to please "self" is at the very root and core of the problems (real or imagined) which exist in that marriage.

Godly wisdom, however, is based on spiritual fruits.(Gal5:22) And the person so disposed "in Christ" has "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."(vs24) "Crucifixion" speaks of "death." Having "put to death your members which are on the earth.."(Col3:5) Because "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who love me and gave Himself for me."(Gal2:20)

So, if Christ is "in" me, then I have the "wisdom from above" because it is His wisdom in me. Such wisdom is characterized by Purity, peaceableness, gentleness, good fruits, honesty without hypocrisy, etc.(vs17) And "...whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy..."(Phil4:8) ...these are the things we will meditate on, which will characterize our being "doers of the Word."

Wisdom, then, is not intellectual, philosophical musings, that only specially trained and indoctrinated elite can pride themselves in, and thus, impress others as they sit around and "talk" about it. Nor is it the rantings of the self-righteous who "strain at gnats and swallow camels," while telling everybody else how they should live.(~Mt23:24,4)

True wisdom comes from a "fear of the Lord."(Pr1:7) ...and manifests itself in a pure life "in Christ."(2Cor5:17)

"Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."(vs18)

Fighting & lusts: enmity with God - (James 4:1-5)

There used to be a saying, "When the devil was cast out of heaven, he fell and landed in the church choir loft." As a former musician & choir director, I can personally attest to church "problems" in the choir. When I took over one bedraggled choir, there were HOURS spent on the phone with this faction and that, telling me all the woes of the past, and what was wrong with "everybody else."

However, I think, before the devil got to the choir, he stopped at the pot-luck supper and business meeting first. Some of the anger, tempers and yelling like I have never heard in other places, I've witnessed in "church" business meetings. Places where the pastor was a preacher & teacher of the Word.

Where does all the nonsense originate? The FLESH. Having majored in voice, and sung professionally myself...I think I am qualified to make an observation that singers are some of the most egotistical people on earth! (While the politics of it all was why I got out...on retrospect, it was the Lord's way of "freeing" me for other things.) Choir members can sit up there "to be seen by men"(Mt6:5) but not be capable of "carrying a tune in a bucket." Oh...and don't even think of expecting them to actually "work" to learn their music...they are far too "important" for that. And if they never showed up for rehearsals, you'd better let them sing at the "pageant" anyway, otherwise they will be sure to put up a real stink.

At business meetings, by-laws are being formulated. "Should the pastor have a vote in board meetings?" Well, if he's preaching what I like to hear, sure. But if he is faithfully preaching God's Word, and something there stepped on my toes...then, No Way! In fact, let's string him up by his toes. And retort to him after the service, after being pleasantly greeted, "How are you today" with, "I won't be happy until you're gone!" (Yes, true observed incidents!)

What are the "desires" and "pleasures"(vs3) that people seek in "church?" Well, the "church" is about the only place, aside from the government and civil service, where totally inept, unqualified people can hold "positions." They are given jobs in order to "keep them coming." Or to make them "feel" needed and useful. Some clamour for status, prestige and "self"-worth. Some, for money. Some, are simply "liked" a lot by everybody. Very seldom have I observed Acts6:3 in action; people chosen "of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom."

James says they "murder."(vs2) How do they murder? When they in anger and envy, gossip and slander someone else, to attempt to gain advantage.(Jude16) Jesus said that anger against a brother was just as bad.(Mt5:22) When a person is slandered falsely, their character is "assassinated."

Rather than "asking" they use subterfuge. If they do ask in their "prayers" those prayers are not answered, because God knows their selfish heart motives.(vs3) He knows that they don't have the "profit of all" (1Cor12:7) in mind.

Such wing manipulation is worldly. For some reason, people look "up to" other "people." People with status, education, importance. Even the early Church had this problem and Paul said, "But from those who seemed to be something--whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man.."(Gal2:6) But when people manipulate themselves into positions of importance, others lust after them, to be like them. "For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."(Ps73:3) Jesus said, "For after all these things the Gentiles [unregenerate] seek..."(Mat6:32)

James is rather strong, "Adulterers and adulteresses!"(vs4)

What is an "adulterer?" Someone, although married, who carries on with another who is not their spouse. Paul says to the carnal Corinthians, "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. (2Cor11:2-3)

A couple of Jesus' disciples wanted place of prominence with Him in heaven, and the others became disgruntled against them and Jesus said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave...(Mt20:25-27)

If we are "married" to Christ, and go "whoring" after status, position, fame, fortune and the praise of men, we are committing adultery against Christ. We are claiming a relationship with Christ, but lusting after the things the world.

Just as Paul was "jealous" over the Corinthians, James expresses the "yearnings" of the Holy Spirit over us.(vs5) The Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It is one of the characteristics of being a Christian. (Rom8:9) He is Christ's representative in us of "Christ in you."(Col1:27) How DARE WE lust after the things the world does?! We are "in Christ...old things have passed away, behold all things have become new."(2Cor5:17) And besides, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God..."(2Cor10:4)

"For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts

another."(Ps75:6-7) Jesus said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Mt6:33)

Submit to God:

He gives more grace - (James 4:6-10)

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. (Isa55:8-9)

"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore submit to God."(Jas4:6-7)

The world says, "Do your OWN thing. Be PROUD of yourself. Assert yourself. Go for it. Just DO it!"

God's ways are the opposite. God is opposed to the proud. But recognizes the humble. When the proud pharisee and the humble sinner prayed before God, Jesus said the sinner who prayed, "God be merciful to me the sinner" (Lk18:13) was the one who went to his house "justified" rather than the other. "...for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."(vs14)

Thus, James exhorts, "submit to God."(vs7) "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up."(vs8-10)

This is not the happy-go-lucky, frolicking running to the "counseling area" like we typically see in the big crusades. The person who comes to God in repentance is utterly CRUSHED in spirit. There is an utter "abhorrence" of self.(Job42:6) There is utter despair at the inability to save ourselves..."when we were WITHOUT STRENGTH [ability]..Christ died for the ungodly."(Rom5:6) If we come unregenerate, the promise is that we "will be saved."(Acts16:31) If we come as wayward children, he promises to "restore [our] soul."(Ps23:3)

This is true grace. Not that which the highly self-esteemeds promote. "I am worth so much to God...He saw all my worth...therefore He accepts me." No! No! No! We were worth NOTHING. Even our "goodness" is like "filthy rags" in His sight.(Isa64:6)

When we are dying, squirming in our own [after-birth] "blood"(Ez16:6), that is when He comes along and says "LIVE! LIVE!" ...that is Grace!!

Now, when we submit to God, not "serving two masters"(Mt6:24) we will naturally "resist the devil."(vs7) Notice, it says nothing about "binding satan!" We are to "resist him, steadfast in the faith." (1Pt5:9) Remain grounded in doctrine, taking up the "whole armor of God." (Eph6:11) You

will notice that we "stand against the wiles of the devil."(vs11) And, while the "sword" is construed by many as a weapon of "attack," you will notice that all the items to be "put on" are "defensive" in nature. You will notice that Jesus, Himself, when confronted by satan, used the "sword" in defense. "It is written."(Mt4) And Jesus is our "example" of enduring against satan.(Heb4:15)

So, when we "resist" satan, simply resist...he will flee. Just say "No!" (..several times, if necessary) "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong." (1Cor16:13)

When we come in humility, His grace, then, lifts us up.(vs10) "..He... brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps." (Psa 40:2)

Judging a brother: judging the Law - (James 4:11-12)

"Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge."

"Judge not, that you be not judged. "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? "Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (Mt 7:1-5)

What are some of the "standards" by which "Christians" have judged each other? Some judge the drinking of wine, while themselves drinking coffee. Others drink wine, and judge coffee. Depending on a geographic region, the question might variously consider dominos, cards, pool/billiards ...or any table game that incorporates the use of dice. What about women's make-up and jewelry? Should skirts be at the ankles, at the knee, above the knee? Should a man's hair be closely cropped above his ears, or is it OK at the shoulders? And on and on...

Quoting "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1Th5:22-kjv)...many have been the condemnations against a true Brother or Sister in Christ, who didn't happen to follow some regiment the observer believed in. The observer not realizing that the KJV word "appearance" actually means "form or kind" as rendered "Abstain from every FORM of evil." (1Th5:22-nkjv) It is not, "will this LOOK bad (to others)" but rather, "whatever form evil comes in... abstain from it."

Here's an example: suppose you see a "Sister" in Christ whom you've met recently, on the arm of a man whom you've never met. She's all "spiffed up" with make-up and jewelry, etc. And she and this "man" walk into a tavern or night club, and they're obviously having a "good time" with each other. What is your judgement?

"Oh! Gasp!! What a TERRIBLE WOMAN! She's dressed like a 'slut.' And... did you see her with that man!? Why! You'd think she was out to seduce him! Oh, my, oh my! She can't possibly be a 'Christian' like she claims. How DISGRACEFUL!! I just KNEW there was 'something' about her, the way she always dresses..." And next time you see her in church, you give her a good stare-down. After all, she "deserves" every bit of it, and more! And, for that matter...all the people in the congregation are looking at her with "knowing looks" because the "word" has gotten around, and everybody, by now, knows what a terrible sinning "hypocrite" she is!

All this, based on the fact that, by "appearances" you "saw" this woman go into the night club with a "man."

Well, Surprise, Surprise! Guess what! That "man" she was with, is her "husband" she's been praying for. He does not know Christ. And one form of recreation, to him, is to go to the tavern or night-club. And this Dear Sister, is being submissive to her husband; being a "WIFE" to him. If she's not with him, be assured some other woman WILL "find" him. ...and you know what "that" outcome is! She is living a life before him "without a word"(1Pt3:1) In the hopes that she might "save" him. (1Cor7:16)

Dear "judge" ...can you say that your love for "your" spouse is of the same high calibre as this Sister's is for hers?

Another example: (this one's real) A Sister, in context of recent VW discussions and Q/A's about Halloween and Christmas, shared with me that they are having the full Christmas "thing" in their household. The tree, presents, and all that goes with it. I think she was a bit hesitant to share this. But you see...she is married to an "unequal yoke." And this is what they do.

Do we have any Scriptural precedent for this?

Naaman the Syrian has just been healed of leprosy at the word of the "man of God." As a result he comes to "Faith" in Jehovah, promising to offer sacrifices only to the Lord, and to no other gods. And then, because he is under his ruler "back home" and there are certain royal protocols, he asks: "Yet in this thing may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon; when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD please pardon your servant in this thing." (2Ki5:18) And what does Elisha reply? "Go in peace."(vs19)

Could not Elisha have quoted the "Law" to him? "You shall have no other gods before Me...you shall not bow down to them nor serve them" (Ex20:3-5) But you see, Elisha was seeing Naaman's HEART, and the fact that he was returning to a pagan country, and a pagan master. While Israel was trying to legalistically follow the "Law" ...God desired their "heart." 'Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! (Deu 5:29)

"GO IN PEACE!"

Paul gives a little teaching in this. "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it TO THE LORD and he who does not observe the day, TO THE LORD he does not observe it.

He who eats, eats TO THE LORD for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, TO THE LORD he does not eat, and gives God thanks. (Rom14:5-6)

You notice, these are not things pertaining to the "gospel" and "doctrine" which he has strong words for.(Gal1:8-9,Rom16:17) These are "doubtful things." (14:1)

James says, "who are you to judge another?"(vs12) We could paraphrase into current vernacular: "Just who do you think you are?!" And Paul says regarding these things, "Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand."(Rom14:4)

After the prayer of thanks for the meal, Johnny announces, "Suzie had her eyes open during prayer!!" Well, "Johnny...how would you know that, if your own eyes were closed?"

"But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy."(vs11-12)

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only [and judges], deceiving yourselves."(Jas1:22)

Life's Plans: vapor - (James 4:13-16)

"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appear for a little time and then vanishes away. (vs13-14)

"..I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' (Lk12:18-20)

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles [unbelievers] seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things...Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things..."(~Mt6:31-34)

The hustle bustle that people get into typically has two motivations. The need for security, and the desire for prosperity. Often the dividing line between the two is hazy. It starts out with the quest to satisfy necessities. And builds into "keeping up with the Joneses" and/or surpassing the Joneses to become the one looked up to. Our credit card, debt-based society is testament to the desire to live at ease...and do so NOW.

Several things people forget, however. First of all, life is fleeting. One never knows when it's "their turn" to be in that fatal car crash. Or when it's their time for the terminal disease. Or, that mugger will come along and "pick" them for murder. God said, "You fool, tonight your soul is required of you." When we pass on, we do not take any of "it" with us. We stand before God naked.(Heb4:13) When we stand before Him, how will we give account of ourselves?(Rom14:12) That fancy car will mean nothing before God, nor that big raise and prestigious promotion.

Another thing; God knows our "needs." Have you ever watched the sparrows at McDonald's, picking up the scraps left for them? When the people are gone, and the scraps...Who takes care of them? "God"(Lk12:6)

Typically I prefer to not talk about myself with these writings. But God's working in my life in these matters is an "example" worth sharing. When the "unequal yoke" (see testimony) left seven years ago, I was devastated. Among other things, I was "panic-stricken" regarding running the business by myself. I am good at technical things and production. But am NOT a "people person." 'Was absolutely "terrified" regarding dealing with customers. Knowing, of course, that customers are "needed" to keep the business going.

In spite of myself, that first year God prospered the business in ways I could not have imagined. Allowing for the purchase of equipment that would help me be self-sufficient, and to streamline operations.

The first time it was necessary to turn away a big job, it was "scary" because I was turning away "necessary" income. (or so I thought) But within the next hour, the Lord brought in another job which was even bigger than the one that had to be turned away. These types of things happened over and over.

Then, as leases were paid off..or loans..where I reasoned that I could now start "getting ahead" ...the Lord had other plans. As each loan was paid off, the business (revenue) dropped by the "same" amount. There is always a "certain amount" of reserves. The bills are always paid on time. Things are ALWAYS "just right" financially. It has become so predictable now, that the Lord's hand can be seen in every "surplus" in preparation for the upcoming "slow time" or taxes & payments. It is a life of "faith." I often tell people that it is the "Lord's store" ...because my "success" in running it for seven years is not because of my talent or training in business. As there is more...as there is less; each up and down; I see His hand in it. Even to the "schedule" of the phone ringing and customers coming in, as it relates to writing many of these offerings "at work" ...it is "all" in His hands.

Israel followed God in the wilderness in the same way. In Numbers 9 is found the account of how Israel would travel. If the "cloud" remained, Israel remained encamped. If the cloud rose, they broke camp and travelled. If the cloud remained days, weeks or months; that's how long they stayed encamped. If the cloud rose every day; they travelled every day. And it says, "At the command of the LORD they remained encamped, and at the command of the LORD they journeyed; they kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses. (Num9:23)

James writes, rather than making all sorts of plans that we have no idea whether or not we will be able to fulfill, "Instead you ought to say, 'if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.'"(vs15) If we are following the Lord's leading, then it doesn't matter. He knows the future. He knows "how long" we will be here, or there; doing this or that.

He writes further, "...now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil."(vs16) The man-made plans are of the world. "Do not love the world or the things in the world...for all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (1Jn2:15-17)

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Mt6:33)

Do good: don't sin - (James 4:17)

"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."(vs17)

In this one tiny verse lies the whole crux of the book of James. Earlier he had said, "be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."(1:22) And further, about works "proving" one's faith."(Ch2)

He spoke of "deception." If a person claims to be following God, but doesn't obey His Word, he is deceived. And if he claims to have faith, and there are no supporting deeds, his faith is dead. Now, he focuses in on the matter, bores into it, and says it like it is. If a person knows the right, and doesn't do it, it is "sin." John wrote, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."(1Jn1:8) If we don't have Truth, we do not have Christ, because Jesus is Truth.(Jn14:) When Pilate asked, "What is truth?"(Jn18:38) he was admitting to not knowing Christ, as Jesus was standing right in front of him.

Jesus told a story about a father and two sons.(Mt21:28-32) The father told the first son, "go work in the vineyard" and the son replied, "I will not." And then later repented and went. To the second he gave the same command, and the son glibly replied, "Sure, I'll go." And didn't. Jesus asks His hearers, "Which of the two did the will of his father?"(vs31) They replied, "the first."

Jesus continues on then, expressing to the self-righteous leaders that tax-collectors and harlots would get to heaven before them, because they came in repentance. But even when they, the leaders, knew the truth, they refused to repent and accept.

What good does it do to piously week-after-week go to "church" and sing all the songs of "praise" and get charged up with the "warm-n-fuzzies" if a person is living like the world the rest of the week? "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Mt15:8-9)

A person might say, "I don't do this, and I don't do that...sin." Well, very good. The Scribes and Pharisees also followed their "don't" lists. But what about the things God has called you [TO] do? If you don't do them, you sin just as much as if you "do" the things you shouldn't.

Let's illustrate. A person is brought before the judge for "abuse" of the little baby who has died as a result of not being fed and cared for. (Sadly, a true scenario all too often these days!) And the defendant responds, "I didn't do anything!" ...Exactly! The baby needed feeding and nurturing. The person's "inaction" CAUSED the baby's death.

"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." (vs17)

Coming of the Lord: the Wealthy - (James 5:1-6)

It looks like James is speaking to the Laodiceans here. They boasted, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" -and do not know that they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked.(Rev3:17)

"You have heaped up treasure in the last days."(vs3)

This is what we see on many fronts today. We see cults and survivalists, with the name "christian," stock-piling. Piling up the canned goods for when all hell breaks loose on the earth in the coming years, as God's Wrath is poured out upon the unrighteous. The hope to survive and make it through the Tribulation on their own efforts.

Jesus said, "do not worry about your life...for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.(Mt6:25~) Besides, He promised to "come and receive [us to Himself]"(Jn14:3) The Believer won't be here.

A VW subscriber recently communicated the Lord's affirmation of this in a very practical manner this year. They like to "gather in" their food. However, this year's garden is not doing well. As this person was observing the matter, it was as if the Lord was saying, "You won't be needing it anyway..."

On another front, we see the leaders of these survivalists parading around, threatening God's curse upon people if they don't send in their money to help these ministries. They deal in money by the millions of dollars. And who is it who supports these charlatans? The naively "innocent." While these people live in the lap of luxury, the people who actually "work" for a living, scrape by, often, barely making it from pay-check to pay-check, barely keeping up with the bills, and give sacrificially to these "rich."

To these fraudulent ones James writes, "howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!"(vs1)

Coming of the Lord: Patience, Endurance - (James 5:7-11)

In the previous section the Lord decries the rich. Now James writes to, "brethren." Be patient until the coming of the Lord.

Many times in the past year, in writing to brothers or sisters in Christ, a common theme emerges. The anxiousness for the Lord to come. The eagerness to be with Him. The tiredness of being in this world with its corruption. My screen saver here says, "Perhaps today...come Lord Jesus, Come!"

However, just like the farmer waits for the crop to grow, we wait. If you are from N.Dakota, the farmer typically plants the crop in the spring of the year. Once planted, there is not a whole lot he can do between that time and harvest. He waits "in faith" for the rains to fall. Hoping he doesn't get hailed out. Trusting for the grain to not get rained on when it's in the swath at harvest time.

If we are faithful, we are busy planting seed and watering.(1Cor3:6) But God gives the increase. And we often will not know "what" the increase is. But we are exhorted to "establish" our hearts. Be stable, firm, strong, steadfast. "For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end" (Heb3:14) We remain steadfast, because we know the "coming of the Lord is at hand."(vs8)

We do not grumble and fight with one another, lest we be condemned, and be caught "red-handed" since "the Judge is standing at the door!"(vs9) As James' brother, Jude, wrote, "building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for [in expectation of] the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.(1:21)

Not only are we patient in waiting. We also endure. Sometimes to the point of suffering. (Whatever God calls us to) Some have endured physical torture for Christ, even to death. Others receive financial hardships. Some, sickness and disease due to the squalor in which they minister. And still others, psychological and emotional abuse.

Those who endure receive the crown of life which the Lord promises to those who love Him.(1:12) Paul exhorts, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong."(1Cor16:13) And as the example of Job shows, the Lord rewards those who are faithful. Even though satan sought and received the momentary pleasure of buffeting Job...the Lord was compassionate and merciful, and rewarded his "end."

So, Brothers and Sisters, hang in there. Another day...another day...another day. Keep looking up! But also keep busily engaged in that which our Lord has given you to do.

"Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes." (Lk12:43)

Yes, Yes - No, No: don't oath - (James 5:12)

"But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment."(vs12)

"Cross your heart and hope to die?" "Do you swear on your mother's grave?" "By god, I will do this!" "May God strike me dead, if I... etc. etc." ...just some of the kinds of oaths by which people make promises.

According to the dictionary, "swear" means "to make a solemn declaration, invoking a deity or sacred person or thing, in confirmation of and witness to the honesty or truth of such declaration."

Long past are the legends of honesty. A person making promise, and keeping it. One such legend involved an Indian of the frontier wild west of the United States who was convicted of some crime, punishable by hanging. The hanging was to occur some months in the "future." As the Indian was riding his horse into the distance, one younger fellow asked if that wasn't "foolish" to let him go free before his execution. And the old timer droned..."Naw! He'll be back." And he was. Such was the legendary "honesty" of the Native American peoples before being corrupted by the "white man." Whether it was always true...such were the legends.

It used to be that "contracts" were not necessary between parties in the "old west." A person's "word" and a hand-shake was enough.

Throughout history, the matter of honesty has been handled in various ways. But along the way, man decided that an "oath" of some sort was necessary to seal a matter. A person's "own" word was no longer enough, as people broke their promises. And so, the more "precious or holy" the object of the oath, the more sure the promise was supposed to be.

By the way...ever notice how the person who is more intrinsically dishonest by nature, spends more time swearing oaths as to his honesty?

Jesus had this to say, "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; (Mat 5:33-34)

He then goes into the various things people swear by. If you swear by "heaven," that is God's throne. If you break your promise, you sin against God. If you swear by your own head, do you have any control over it to make your hair black or white, or to keep it from balding? If you are swearing by something, do you have control over the thing by which you swear, to make anything come to pass? And then He closes with, "But let

your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. (Mt5:37)

Like the old "Dragnet" TV series, "Just the facts, Ma'am." Like with the children of a friend of mine. "Is your homework done?" "Uh, sputter, stammer...mostly!" Again..."Is your homework done? Yes or No?" When caught with the internet pornographic files which have been resurrected for the confrontation, "What are these?" "Well, I, uh... ACCIDENTALLY..." "So, you went to this website?" "Well, uh, I..." "Yes or No!?" "Well, I accidentally clicked..." "Yes or No?"

As adults we can enjoy "being adults" and not enduring the interrogation that we used to be subject to as children...so we think. But those habits of dishonesty follow us into adulthood. It is part of the sin "nature" to lie.

Jesus said that whatever is not simple "Yes" or "No" is from the "evil [one]." In another place He said to His detractors, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do...he does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. (John 8:44)

By contrast, "But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. (Jn8:45) Jesus said, "I am the way, the TRUTH..."(Jn14:6) John writes much about "lies and truth" in 1John.

Why does intellectual man study "philosophy?" Because as Isaiah writes, "The way of peace they have not known, And there is no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace. (Is59:8) They don't want to have to admit that they are sinners (vs2-7). They don't want to acknowledge the fact that God knows their hearts down to the intimate details.(Heb4:12-13) So, they go about to establish a different set of principles which do not include God and His righteousness. They become fools.(Rom1:22) As they change (in their minds) the things of God into things of uncleanness.(vs24) they become those who "strain at gnats."(Mt23:24)

So, those things which Jesus said a "child" could understand(Mt18:3), they take and complicate. They come up with creeds, doctrinal "statements", theologies and philosophies...which an average person finds difficult to understand, except he be "educated" to understand them. Very complex system of words to explain away God's simple, "Thus says the Lord."

Do you remember those childhood lies? As lie built upon lie, pretty soon it was hard to keep track of them. Eventually, a person would be entrapped in their own words. And in my case, punishment was much more severe, than had I simply told the truth.

Am I a sinner? Yes. Have I sought for God? No. Can I save myself? No. Did Jesus die to take away the sin? Yes. Can I be saved by coming in repentance and receiving Jesus' blood shed on my behalf? Yes.

As a person answers these initial questions, and then becomes a Child of God, a Christian's life is then guided by this same honesty. If we are "in Christ" ...we are "in Truth." Jesus is "the truth."(Jn14:6) If we are of Christ, our lives and speaking will be characterized by Truth. And oaths are not necessary.

See Also Addendum: Oaths

Prayer of Faith: sins forgiven - (James 5:13-18)

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.(Jas 5:13-15)

For whatever number of people there might be, there is an equal number of various states of spiritual conformity/rebellion to God. Of physical well being. Of emotional states. These situations are as varied as the uniqueness of each person so possessed. God knows each one, and is in loving care over the matter.(1Pt5:7) Furthermore, not everyone is "meant" to be in the same situation, and as such, in the case of Believers, one cannot necessarily tell another what he should or should not be. "To his own Master he stands or falls."(Rom14:4)

If a person is in pain, let him pray. There are those who say that a Christian should not feel depressed or sad, that to do so is to not trust in God's sovereignty. And people are encouraged (as I USED TO do as a song leader) to "put on a smile" and be happy. But you notice Jesus told the parable, "We mourned to you, and you did not weep." (Lk7:32) After all, the Lord of the whole universe "wept" at the death of a loved one.(Jn11:35) When Paul says, "Rejoice always"(1Ths5:16) this does not necessarily mean one is "smiling" and "dancing around" with glea. One can lose a loved one through death, be rejoicing in one's heart because that loved one is now with the Lord, and yet feel the deep pangs of personal familial loss and emptiness. There is a "deep seated" joy in the heart, while at the same time feeling "lonely." Where does such an one find comfort? From the Lord. "...let him pray"(vs13) Prayer is fellowship and communion with Christ.

Is anyone cheerful? Let him behave accordingly. As David was bringing the Ark "home" he "danced before the Lord WITH ALL HIS MIGHT." (2Sm6:14) If someone is so disposed at the moment, and you are of more somber spirit, do not despise them, as Michal did of David (2Sm6:16) as he was dancing and "whirling" before the Lord. She suffered the consequences by becoming childless.(vs23)

Is anyone sick? Let..the elders pray..anointing him. Possibly one of the most misunderstood passages in modern christendom. It is one of the primary proof texts for the basis of the teaching that every person who is a Christian should be in good physical health, with no illness or other malady. And thus, there is a whole "industry" of healing "ministries" and other such things. They say, "See? It says to pray for him and he WILL BE HEALED." But let us take a closer look at this passage. What does it REALLY say?

"Is anyone sick?...The prayer of faith will save the sick."(vs14-15)

First of all, what is the visible manifestation? The person is sick. Physically ill and infirmed. Feeble and without strength.

Next, the "prayer of faith." What is this? Is this the idea.. "if you just have ENOUGH FAITH.."? That in order to be physically healed, one must have "faith to be healed?"(Acts14:9) No. This is "the conviction of the truth of anything. That God exists (Heb11:6). It is the same word "faith" as in "the just shall live by faith."(Rom1:17) It is the same faith as "saved by grace through faith."(Eph2:8) And while it "is" the same word used in Acts 14:9, it is not a matter of "mustering up enough faith" to get the job done. Because, what is the outcome?

"...will SAVE the sick." Two interesting words here. "Save" means to save from perishing, preserve one who is in peril of destruction. Same word as in "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be [SAVED]" (Acts16:31) In other words, the prayer of "faith" which results in "salvation."

The word "sick" here is a different one than the question first postulated. Is anyone "physically" sick, ill, infirmed? The prayer of faith will save the "one grown weary." Jesus invited His hearers, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."(Mt11:28) In the state of sin we are "laden with iniquity"(Is1:4) One thus laden, is "weary."

OK. For you who still want to insist that this passage is promising physical healing for the sick, and don't trust these lexically derived word definitions; do we have any precedents for this...going from being "physically" sick, to being "spiritually" healed?

When the paralytic was let down the roof to Jesus for "healing" what was the first thing out of Jesus' mouth? "..your sins are forgiven you."(Mt9:2) On another occasion when Jesus healed a man, He said to him, "sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."(Jn5:14) Here, making a specific connection between the illness and the man's sin. In the case of the man born blind, the disciples asked, "who sinned, this man or his parents?"(Jn9:2) And for NT Church teaching, Paul tells the Corinthians, because of their abuses of holy things "for this reason many are weak and sickly among you"(1Cor11:30) And in another case he suggests that a militant backslider be "turned over to satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit" would be saved.(1Cor5:5) So, we see a direct correlation between physical sickness and sin.

When a sick person is thusly "saved" what is the Lord's promise? The "Lord will raise him up."(vs15) He will be "awakened, aroused from the sleep of death, to be stirred up." The same idea as the prodigal who was "lost" but is now "found."(Lk15:24)

Lest we still be stuck in the rut of "physical" healing, James goes on to say, "if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."(vs15) And then exhorts, "confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed."(vs16) To be "healed" ...ready for this..? "To be free from errors and sins, to bring about one's salvation." Same thing the prophet says, "And by His stripes we are healed"(Is53:5) ..because He was "wounded for our transgressions... bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him."

So, what about physical/emotional healing? Didn't Jesus heal these people whose sins He had also forgiven? Yes. And the same is true today. The "disease" of alcoholism, drug abuse, rage, sexual perversion comes from "sin." The reason 12-step and other programs are not totally successful is because they merely treat the body and mind. But the root of these problems is "sin." When sin is confessed, then, there is no more symptom. The gutter bum is dried up. Others' lives get in order.

Now, let's consider an aside here. Not all "physical" illness is due to sin. There are some specific reasons God allows some to be infirm and frail, for whatever reasons His plans dictate. In the case of the man born blind from birth, Jesus said the reason was "that the works of God should be revealed in him."(Jn9:2) Paul had a "thorn in the flesh" (2Cor12:7) for the purpose that he not be "exalted above measure" due to the "abundance of the revelations" given to him. Apparently Paul had a tendency to be proud due to his fervor and scholarship. And when he became a bondservant of Christ, he became privy to many mysteries which he was responsible for teaching to the new Church. He could have, apparently, become proud in his "accomplishments." Thus, he had this little reminder to keep him humble.

Similar things are accorded the Lord's servants even today. With the beginning of this ministry, this author has been given such a "thorn" lest he be tempted to go back into music. Lest he be tempted to be too "self-sufficient" as he always was prior in life. To keep him trusting in the Lord's strength, in spite of the weakness. God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."(2Cor12:9) Paul had "pleaded with the Lord three times" about the matter.(vs8) But when the Lord explained it to him, he did not INSIST upon being healed. Rather, "therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities...for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."(vs10)

Now, this kind of prayer which brings about salvation and restoration, is the same fellowship with God which allowed God to use Elijah to be the instrument of signs and wonders.(vs17) As well as Moses and the apostles. In fact, the same Paul, for whom God provided a "thorn," performed many signs and wonders, including physical healings. (Acts14:9,28:8-9)

But let us be reminded where sickness comes from. Remembering that Jesus' ministry was characterized by healing a lot of people, what was the "root" of that ministry? "Jesus of Nazareth...who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed BY THE DEVIL..." (Acts10:38) Sickness comes from Satan. Job was afflicted by satan.(Job1:12) Paul's thorn was a "messenger of satan."(2Cor12:7) Remembering that God allows Satan to taunt His own at times and thus infirmities can be for God's purposes; let us primarily be aware that a person not following God with purity of heart subjects himself to the "snare of the devil" (1Tm3:7,2Tm2:26) and should not be surprised when sickness comes upon him.

When that happens (i.e. illness) the first step taken should be one of self-examination to see what sin may be in the life; and with the psalmist pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps139:23-24)

If the life is pure before God, certainly ask to be healed. But if God says, "I have a special purpose through this" then don't fight Him. Repeat with the apostle, "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content." (Phil4:11) Certainly, don't make "your" healing the number one priority. Our primary desire is to "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"(Phil3:14) as we follow our Lord, "not [my] will, but Yours be done."(Lk22:42)

Bring back..Wanderer: sins covered - (James 5:19-20)

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.(vs19-20)

The first human offspring retorted to God, "am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen4:9) In the preceding section we noticed that we do not "judge" a fellow Believer. They are personally answerable to God.(Rom14:4) But does this absolve us of any responsibility to one another? Not hardly!

While Paul writes, "each one shall bear his own load."(Gal6:5) He also says, "if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."(vs1) And that we should "bear one another's burdens."(vs2)

When we "consider" ourselves, what are we doing? First of all, making sure we are in a spiritual position that we can rightly go to this brother. Jesus said, "first remove the plank" out of your own eye, then you can see clearly to deal with your brother.(Mt7:5)

And then, as we think of "how to" approach the brother, consider how we would be approached by someone else, were we in the same situation. Paul writes, "in a spirit of gentleness."(vs1) Many are the churches that have "church discipline" high on a pedestal, and when someone is confronted (Mt18:16), they ramrod him, sometimes not even knowing the facts of the situation. Jesus said, "just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise." (Lk6:31)

What is the object of such confrontation? To "restore" him.(Gal6:1) What does this mean? To pummel him, kick him, put him down? No. To mend, fix, to repair what's broken/damaged. To make him what he ought to be. We are parts of the "Body" of Christ. When a properly functioning body performs well, when there is an injury, the rest of the "whole" body comes to the aid of the injury. "...the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."(Eph4:16) And Peter writes, "...have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins." (1Pt4:8)

What does "cover a multitude of sins"(vs20) mean? Does this mean we cover over, and pretend the sin and error doesn't exist? Hush, hush...sweep it under a rug? No. What happens if a person ignores that lump or pain, and refuses to get it taken care of and cut out? Often it becomes malignant, and the person dies. But, when the doctor cuts it out, then the surgery is stitched up, and "covered" with medication, ointments,

bandages. So that it can heal. Thus, too, once the confrontation is accomplished, the person repents; then loving nurture is brought into the picture as the person is restored to fellowship. (2Cor2:8-10)

When the body does its job right, and the wayward is restored, that Believer can be saved from illness and [physical] death.(vs20) Earlier the relationship between sin and illness was noted. There is also a death that can happen because of sin. Paul exhorted that the militant sinner be shunned and turned over to satan for the "destruction" of the flesh.(1Cor5:5) And that because of certain errors, people at Corinth had died.(11:30) John speaks of a "sin leading to death"(1Jn5:16) and says that it is NOT something to be prayed about. How many are the deaths of "wonderful church members" who are praised at the funeral because they were such "sweet people", but whom God took in that sudden car crash, or heart attack, because they were in rebellion against Him? For whatever reason, God allows it, in order that "his spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus."(1Cor5:5)

Many people view confrontation with an erring brother or sister as being "judgmental" and "unloving." After all, did not Jesus say, "judge not, that you be not judged"(Mt7:1)? But in refusing to take responsibility to bring back the wanderer, they are actually helping them along to receive discipline and chastening of the Lord.(Heb12)

Jude sums it up thus, "on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh."(vs22)

This is ultimate "faith in action" ...the primary theme of this book.

Amen!

Addendum Section:

Oaths (James 5:12)

READER COMMENTS:

I think there is an occasion that making an oath would be right, namely when the government asks this. We have the example of our Lord before the highpriest. Otherwise you are right, we should never swear to confirm our words, but as far as I know, the only exception is when one is asked to do this by a power higher than ourselves (God, or God-controlled government, like Rom. 13 shows).

VW ANSWER:

Well, of course.

"Do you swear to tell the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help you God?"

In this case, one is making a solemn "promise" and "commitment" to be honest on the witness stand in a court of law. ...etc.etc. But that's a different deal than what James is saying. Yes? (smile)

Comment:

Again, I agree with you... My comments were just to make sure that you saw the other point as well, because some Christians would use what you were saying...that no oath before the government can be made.