

Cleveland Bible Commentary James Menu

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Cleveland Bible Commentary on James Chapter 1

James 1:1

JAMES = The brother of Jesus who led the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:13) and was martyred in A.D. 62.

SERVANT = The Greek "doulos" (Strongs #G1401) means "slave, bond-servant." A slave is required to have absolute obedience, absolute humility and absolute loyalty. Here James proudly uses the term "slave" as a title of distinction and honor: for there is no greater goal for a Christian than to be absolutely obedient, humble and loyal toward Christ.

TWELVE TRIBES SCATTERED = This letter is not addressed to the literal Jews of the literal Diaspora for there were too many for one letter to reach (more than one million Jews lived in Alexandria alone during this time). Instead, James is referring to Christians scattered because of persecution (see James 2:1; Galatians 3:26-29). Just as the literal Jews descended from the twelve literal sons of Israel, so the Christian Church descended from twelve literal Apostles who were all sons of God.

James 1:2

CONSIDER = First of the three "C's" in Christian maturity: "Consider" (James 1:2); Comprehend ("know") (James 1:3); Cooperate ("must finish") (James 1:4).

JOY = The Greek "chara" (Strong's #G5479) means "calm delight." See Matthew 5:11, 12; Romans 5:3; 1 Peter 1:6-7. The Christian is to rejoice when trials come, because without them his faith can never result in a mature character.

WHENEVER YOU FACE = Trials are inevitable in the life of every Christian. How we face those trials is supremely important in the maturing process.

TRIALS = The Greek "peirasmoi" (Strong's #G3986) means "a trial, temptation, usually a test of character." We generally think the outward trials are what overwhelm us, but the inner carnal desires are what create the weaknesses which enable the trial to destroy us (James 1:14). The idea here in James 1:2 is that trials are not designed to seduce us into sin, but rather to strengthen and purify us just as a weight lifter lifts weights so he will be strong enough to win the competition.

James 1:3

KNOW = The Greek "ginosko" (Strong's #G1097) here means "a personal knowledge derived through experience rather than through second-hand knowledge."

TESTING = The Greek "dokimion" (Strong's #G1383) means "a testing or trial." It is often used in connection with gold which passes the test for purity (Revelation 3:18). The testing is not meant to weaken or discourage us, but rather to purify and strengthen us (James 1:4). These tests are similar in character to

the weights which an athlete lifts in order to strengthen and tone his muscles.

FAITH = The Greek "pistis" (Strong's #G4102) means "faith." Faith is both objective (meaning something we believe such as a doctrine) and subjective (meaning a firm conviction or belief).

PERSEVERANCE = The Greek "hupomonay" (Strong's #G5281) means "bearing up under adverse circumstances, patient endurance, cheerful endurance, constancy."

James 1:4

PERSEVERANCE = The Greek "hupomonay" (Strong's #G5281) means "cheerful endurance, constancy." It is not just the ability to patiently endure, but the ability to overcome the obstacle and thus have increased strength and increased ability to overcome the next challenge. The result is that the Christian is "mature and complete, not lacking anything."

MATURE = The Greek "teleios" (Strong's #G5046) means "full-grown" as opposed to being an "infant." It is not "perfection" in the sense of inherent sinlessness. Christian maturity is the result of perseverance through the growth process and thus accomplishes the designated/desired goal.

COMPLETE = The Greek "holokleros" (Strong's #G3548) means "whole, complete in every part." It is illustrated as one who once suffered loss but has now regained what was lost and is fully restored (such as a blind man now being able to see).

NOT LACKING = The Greek "leipo" (Strong's #G3007) means "to be deficient, lack, fail, fall short." This is the "perfect" maturity Jesus spoke about in Matthew 5:48.

James 1:5

WISDOM = A symbol for Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30).
Worldly wisdom without Christ lacks substance and value.
Wisdom from God is a prized possession (Proverbs 4:6, 7). In context, James is specifically speaking here of the wisdom to "know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (James 1:3) and that "perseverance must finish its work so you may be mature and complete (James 1:4).

HE SHOULD ASK GOD = God is the source of all that is good, noble, and blessed (1 Corinthians 8:6; James 1:17).

WITHOUT FINDING FAULT = The Greek "oneididzo" (Strong's #G3679) means "upbraiding, taunting."

James 1:6

BELIEVE = Here the term is synonymous with "persevere" in James 1:12.

DOUBT = Doubt prevents a person from acting decisively, positively, and with conviction. Doubt is a civil war raging within the mind, and thus is "blown and tossed by the wind."

BLOWN AND TOSSED BY THE WIND = See John 8:30-31; Ephesians 4:14.

James 1:7

THAT MAN = Reference back to the man "who doubts" (James 1:6).

James 1:8

DOUBLE-MINDED = The Greek "dipsuchos" (Strong's #G1374)

means "doubtful, two minds, two souls." When doubt and faith are present in the same person they produces an inner civil war that is like driving with the brakes on. Here the "double-minded" man knows what God says and what man says, and is torn between the two.

James 1:9

HUMBLE CIRCUMSTANCES = Contrasted with "one who is rich" (James 1:10).

PRIDE = The Greek "kauchaomai" (Strong's #G2744) means "to exult, rejoice, boast" in both a good and/or bad sense. The Christian rejoices that God cares enough to redeem him.

HIGH POSITION = Christianity teaches that every person has true value: (1) He is important in the church for there is no class distinction; no master and no slave (Galatians 3:28). (2) He is important in the world because God has called him to special work (Mark 13:34). (3) He is so important to God that Jesus died for him (John 3:16).

James 1:10

RICH ... LOW POSITION = Riches provide a false security, thus the rich Christian should take pride (rejoice) that he knows the deceitfulness of riches and places his full dependence upon God.

James 1:11

SCORCHING HEAT = The Greek "kauson" (Strong's #G2742) is a hot burning wind which comes off the desert and withers plants in an hour (Isaiah 40:6-7).

EVEN WHILE HE GOES ABOUT HIS BUSINESS = In other words the withering comes rapidly and unexpectedly in the midst

of everyday life (see James 4:13-14).

James 1:12

PERSEVERES = The Greek "hupomeno" (Strongs #5278) means "to remain under, bear up under, endure, have fortitude."

CROWN OF LIFE = This term is also used in Revelation 2:10. Eternal life is the crown that is given to those who overcome.

LOVE HIM = Here James links our love for God with our willingness to patiently endure/persevere in the trials of life.

James 1:13

TEMPTED = As Christians we must recognize the difference between temptation and testing. Temptation originates with Satan and is designed to make us fall (Matthew 4:1). Testing comes from God and is designed to strengthen our weaknesses until we become invincible (Genesis 22:1; Hebrews 11:17).

"It is easier to stay out than to get out (of temptation)". -- Victory Over Temptation, Dr. Bruce H. Wilkinson, (Mark Twain), page 99.

GOD CANNOT BE TEMPTED = Here we see God's ability to limit Himself. For instance, there are a number of things God cannot do: God cannot lie. God cannot be unjust. God cannot sin, et cetera.

James 1:14

TEMPTED = Satan uses the evil desires lurking within us to press his temptations home. If we were without sin, temptation would not have an effect upon us. Thus our prayer should be: "take away my evil desires" rather than "take away my temptations."

HIS OWN EVIL DESIRE = The Greek word "epithumea" (Strong's #G1939) means "strong desire, lust, a strong longing for something." The strong emphasis upon it's definition is apparent when we study the use of "epithumea" where it appears in 1 Corinthians 10:6; Matthew 5:28; Romans 13:14; 1 Peter 2:11. The Jews tried to describe this inner battle by using the terms "yetser hatob" (the inner "good") and "yetser hara" (the inner "bad"). These two inner natures are in a continual war against each other just as Adam and Eve began to blame each other as soon as they sinned: Genesis 3:11-13.

"Why do we entertain tempting thoughts which are contrary to God's Word and God's will? Let's face it -- we do so because we want to. We're not tempted by foods we don't like, by unattractive members of the opposite sex, by unwanted promotions, etc. Temptation's hook is the devil's guarantee that what we think we want and need outside God's will can satisfy us. Don't believe it. You can never satisfy the desires of the flesh. Instead, 'Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied' (Matthew 5:6). Only sustaining right relationships, living by the power of the Holy Spirit, and experiencing the fruit of the Spirit will satisfy you." -- The Bondage Breaker, Neil T. Anderson, page 135.

"What is the real cause of those severe temptations? ... It is nothing on the outside but everything on the inside (of you). ... The source of temptation is inside of you! ... Since temptations are only temptations because of that which is inside of us, then none of us 'real men' can blame 'her' or 'it' ever again. The only person we can dare blame for that temptation is what lies in the lusts of our heart. Passing the blame to the thing outside of us has always been the way to squirm out of the responsibility and accountability. Ever heard those famous words, 'The woman made me eat it,' or 'The woman that You gave me' or 'The fruit looked so good and I just had to'? ... Temptations only work because of your lusts ('his

own evil desire')" -- Personal Holiness in Times of Temptation, Dr. Bruce H. Wilkinson, pages 31-32.

HE IS DRAGGED AWAY = The Greek "exelko" (Strong's #G1828) means "to draw out from something, to drag away, draw away."

"You know what 'Temptations' really are? Most often, they are cunning hunters. They are active and not passive. They come after you rather than you going after them. ... In most cases, when you are not even thinking about sin or even your 'desires,' temptations come lurking after you. In order for a temptation to pull you into sin, it must first get your attention. ... Temptations must first distract you from what is at hand to what is in their 'hand.'" -- Personal Holiness in Times of Temptation, Dr. Bruce H. Wilkinson, page 33.

"Know what one of the most important things is that you must learn in your pilgrimage to holiness? To immediately identify when you have been 'dragged away' and when you are in the process of being 'enticed.' Why? Because it is at that very moment that you must turn away. The sooner you stop considering the temptation, the safer you are. Not only that, but temptations are a remarkable thing -- the longer that you consider a temptation, the stronger it becomes." -- Personal Holiness in Times of Temptation, Dr. Bruce H. Wilkinson, page 34.

James 1:15

DESIRE = The Greek "epithumea" (Strong's #G1939) means "to desire greatly, strong desire, lust." This is a selfish, sinful desire. See notes on Genesis 4:7 and James 1:14.

CONCEIVED ... BIRTH = Sin is a process with a specific beginning and ending. However, Christ enters our life and aborts the sin process.

DEATH = The Greek "thanatos" (Strongs #G2288) means "to die, death." God is the source of life. Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2). Separation from God results in death. The first death is first spiritual, and then physical (Genesis 2:16-17), the second death is a fiery eternity without God (Revelation 20:14-15).

“Often in the Septuagint, ‘thanatos’ has the sense of destruction, perdition, misery, implying both physical death and exclusion from the presence and favor of God in consequence of sin and disobedience, but never as extinction.” – The Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament, Zodhiates, AMG, p. 717

James 1:16

DECEIVED = The Greek "planao" (Strongs #G4105) means "to cause to wander, lead astray, deceive." The deceitfulness of sin lies in it's ability to hide under many guises. "Do not be deceived" is the watchword that should arm every Christian.

"Beware of self-deception. ... We deceive ourselves when we hear the Word but don't do it (James 1:22; 1 Peter 1:13). ... We deceive ourselves when we say we have no sin (1 John 1:8). ... We deceive ourselves when we think we are something we are not (Romans 12:3; Galatians 6:3). ... We deceive ourselves when we think we are wise in this age (1 Corinthians 3:18-19). ... We deceive ourselves when we think we are religious but do not bridle our tongue (James 1:26).... We deceive ourselves when we think we will not reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7). ... We deceive ourselves when we think the unrighteous will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). ... We deceive ourselves when we think we can continually associate with bad company and not be corrupted (1 Corinthians 15:33)." - The Bondage Breaker, Neil T. Anderson, pages 155-158.

"Deception is the most subtle of all satanic strongholds. Have you ever noticed that all people with addictive behavior lie to themselves and others almost continually? The alcoholic lies about

his drinking, the anorexic lies about her eating, and the sex offender lies about his behavior. Lying is an evil defense prompted by the father of lies, Satan (John 8:44). ... Satan's lies are at the heart of addictive behavior. The spiritual side of addictive behavior cannot be overlooked." - The Bondage Breaker, Neil T. Anderson, pages 191-192.

"We are more vulnerable to Satan's deception than to any of his other schemes. Why? Because when he tempts you or accuses you, you can recognize it, but when he deceives you, you don't always know it. That's his strategy: to keep you in the dark. If he can get into your church, your home, or your mind undetected, he can control those lives and those ministries. Sad to say, he is doing just that across our land by deceiving many people. You cannot expose Satan's deception by human reasoning; you can only do it by God's revelation (John 8:31-32; John 17:17)." -- The Bondage Breaker, Neil T. Anderson, pages 168.

James 1:17

FROM ABOVE = The Greek "anothen" (Strong's #G509) literally means "from above" and thus is used to indicate the "new birth." See John 3:3; 1 Peter 1:23.

HEAVENLY LIGHTS = God created ("fathered") all the luminaries in space (Genesis 1:14-18). But unlike those created lights, God has no changing shadows -- in other words, God never varies in the intensity of his purpose (Malachi 3:6).

James 1:18

BIRTH = Here "birth" is symbolic of the "new birth" (John 3:3).

WORD = The symbol of Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 14). The "word of truth" is without deception or error (James 1:16-17). The "new birth" comes through the reading, acceptance, and personal

implementation of God's Word.

TRUTH = "Truth" is the symbol of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible (John 14:6; 1 John 5:6; John 17:17). All are involved in the new birth experience.

James 1:19

EVERYONE SHOULD BE = Three characteristics of mature Christians are: quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry. The use of the words "should be" indicates these are three characteristics all Christians are to develop in their lives.

SLOW TO BECOME ANGRY = The Greek "orgay" (Strong's #G3709) means "wrath, anger, vengeance, indignation, fretfulness." Except for godly/righteous anger (Ephesians 4:26; James 1:20), all personal anger is the result of selfishness -- focusing on self.

"Anger destroys the quality of our personal lives, our marriages, and our health." -- Victory Over Temptation, Wilkinson, (R. C. Sproul), page 116.

"Seven reasons for anger stir up our sinful nature and hamper our effort to live by the Spirit. In a life fully surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, these seven reasons for anger are opportunities to either become angry, or to trust God with yet another area of our lives:

"1. Violation of rights. ... We feel we have many rights: common courtesies, constitutional freedoms, the right to earn a living and to raise a family as we see fit. When our rights are violated, we become angry (but see Proverbs 19:11).

"2. Disappointment with station in life. Many people become bitter with anger when they begin to suspect that their 'oyster' doesn't have the pearl they wanted. Many of us need to accept our lot in life as from the Lord, provided we have been

faithful with our abilities (otherwise see Proverbs 19:3). ... If we are not content with what we have, the issue is not getting more but learning to be content with our circumstances.

"3. Blocked goals. Setting and achieving realistic goals can be a great source of personal satisfaction. ... When we are blocked from achieving our goals, for good cause or not, we frequently respond in anger (but see Psalm 37:5-8).

"4. Irritations. Life's little irritations often seem to weigh more heavily on us than our true dilemmas (but see Ecclesiastes 7:9).

"5. Feeling misunderstood. ... We often think people don't understand us. ... They probably don't. But ... becoming angry doesn't help us resolve the misunderstanding.

"6. Unrealistic expectations. ... We frequently don't build enough 'slack' into what we expect from others (see Ephesians 4:31-32).

"7. Pathological/psychological. Occasionally a man will have a problem with anger because of an illness or emotional disorder (and should seek professional help). ...

"Frankly, most of our anger ends up as sin. The seven reasons for anger we've just reviewed have two characteristics in common: selfishness and impatience." -- Victory Over Temptation, Wilkinson, (Patrick Morely), pages 117-119.

James 1:20

MAN'S ANGER = As opposed to God's anger, is seen in: Ephesians 4:31 and Colossians 3:8.

ANGER DOES NOT BRING ABOUT = Anger is generally a negative motivator which requires fear in order to be temporarily successful. God's method uses the positive drawing power of agapay love as a successful motivator for long-term results (1 John 4:18, 19).

THE RIGHTEOUS LIFE = This dramatic life change is the result of "humbly accepting the word planted in you" (James 1:21).

"Occasionally, we become angry for a righteous cause, but 99 percent of the time we become angry because we are selfish and impatient." -- Victory Over Temptation, Wilkinson, (R. C. Sproul), page 116.

James 1:21

GET RID OF ALL MORAL FILTH = Accomplished by looking intently at the perfect law and applying it to our own life (James 1:25).

HUMBLY ACCEPT = In contrast to the angry man who does not apply the Word to himself (James 1:22).

THE WORD PLANTED IN YOU = The term "planted" is suggestive of an expected growth process. The growth process requires looking "intently into the perfect law," and "doing" what the law requires (James 1:25).

James 1:22

DO WHAT IT SAYS = The true test of a relationship with Christ is whether or not one does what He says. The Bible is designed to produce does of the Word, not only hearers -- it is meant to transform, not just inform. "You only believe the part of the Bible that you do." -- The Purpose Driven Church, Rick Warren, p. 143.

DECEIVE YOURSELVES = This self deception arises from the belief that one can assent to the Christian religion without consenting to Christ's Lordship.

James 1:23

LISTENS ... BUT DOES NOT DO = All Christianity is focused on, and revolves around, changed lives. The difference between legalism/Judaism and Christianity lies in the personal application vs. the theoretical. The difference between a religion of external forms and an internal, saving, relationship with Jesus Christ lies in the willingness of the individual to personally apply and benefit from what he has heard in the Word.

James 1:24

IMMEDIATELY FORGETS = In other words, "he does not apply what he heard to his own life and lifestyle."

James 1:25

PERFECT LAW THAT GIVES FREEDOM = Anarchy brings the slavery of mob rule. Obedience to God's Law gives us true freedom: freedom from sin, freedom from guilt, freedom from the fear of God or man, freedom from the second death, et cetera. This "perfect law" is defined further in James 2:8 as the "royal law."

James 1:26

TIGHT REIN ON HIS TONGUE = A Jewish proverb says: "God gave us two ears and one mouth, showing that we should listen twice as much as we speak." In context, the "tight rein on our tongue" is to keep us from saying angry words (cf. James 1:19, 20). Also see Proverbs 10:19; 13:1-3; 17:28; 29:20.

James 1:27

LOOK AFTER ORPHANS AND WIDOWS = Outward deeds. The reason many people are depressed is that instead of looking after the needs of others, they are constantly focused upon themselves. When a person is depressed because of an inordinate focus on self, he is not honoring his Creator.

KEEP ONESELF FROM BEING POLLUTED = Inward faith.

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Cleveland Bible Commentary on James Chapter 2

James 2:1

FAVORITISM = See Jesus' example (Mark 12:14); Peter's statement (Acts 10:34, 35); Paul's observation (Romans 2:11).

James 2:2

MEETING = The Greek word is "synagogue" (Strong's #G4864) and signifies that Christians originally applied this term to the places they met for worship (see Acts 13:43; 15:21; 26:11). Christians carefully distinguished between these "Christian synagogues" and "Jewish synagogues" (see Acts 13:5; 14:1; 17:1, 10). In James 5:14 the Greek word "ekklesia" (Strong's #G1577) is used for the "church," thus signifying that the words "church" and "synagogue" were used interchangeably by early Christians. Also see notes on Acts 15:21.

''Meeting': Literally 'synagogue.' It could refer to a company of Jewish Christians or to the building. The word may be another pointer to an early date, but the reference can hardly be to an ordinary Jewish synagogue, as the Christians could not be held responsible for the conduct there." -- The International Bible Commentary, F. F. Bruce, editor, pages 1539-1540.

"The word translated 'meeting' is synagoge (GK G5252/Strong's #G4854), which had primary reference to the Jewish synagogue. The term need not be taken literally, however, as an indication that the Jewish Christians were still meeting in synagogue buildings. Even after leaving the synagogue, Jewish Christians no doubt continued to refer to their church meeting as a synagogue." -- Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary (electronic version on James 2:2), by Barker & Kohlenberger

"In James 2:2 a synagoge is used to designate the worshiping assembly of the Jewish Christians. In other places in the NT, it is used as the assembly place of the Jews. ... Assemblies were held in these at first only on the Sabbath and feast days; but subsequently also on the second and fifth days of the week, Mondays and Thursdays. The exercises consisted chiefly in prayers and the public reading of the OT which was expounded from the Hebrew into the vernacular tongue, with suitable exhortations (cf. Luke 4:16 ff; Acts 13:14 ff). The meeting was closed by a short prayer and benediction, to which the assembly responded with 'Amen' (Nehemiah 8:6)." -- The Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament, Zodiates, Zondervan, p.1334

Ante-Nicean Father, Irenaeus, refers in passing to the Christian Church as the "synagogue of God": "He (here) refers to the Father and the Son, and those who have received the adoption; but these are the Church. For she is the synagogue of God, which God -- that is, the Son Himself -- has gathered by Himself." -- The Ante-Nicean Fathers, Volume 1, Irenaeus in "Against Heresies," Book 3, Chapter 6, (page 867 of the electronic version).

GOLD RING = Gold jewelry was not condemned by the early Christian church. The apostles did not teach against jewelry other than to warn that jewelry and outward adornment was not significant when it came to matters of the heart and soul.

James 2:3

SHOW SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE MAN = The Old Testament was clear that we are not to be partial to someone because of social position. This is especially true in judicial matters: Deuteronomy 1:17.

James 2:4

DISCRIMINATED ... JUDGES = This discrimination is evidence that we are "double minded and unstable" (James 1:7-8). Also see Leviticus 19:15; Matthew 7:1-2.

EVIL THOUGHTS = Both rich and poor should be welcome in the church, for both need to be saved. To welcome one over the other is evil for we are all equal before God. We cannot hide our evil thoughts from God for He knows not only our thoughts, but even the motives behind our thoughts (1 Chronicles 28:9).

James 2:5

GOD CHOSEN ... POOR = Not that God prefers the poor over the rich, but that the poor have tended to respond more quickly to His calling because they are "poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3). See Luke 1:52; 1 Corinthians 1:26-27.

James 2:6

INSULTED THE POOR = John Calvin remarked: "it is odd to honor one's executioners and injure one's friends!"

RICH EXPLOIT YOU ... DRAGGING YOU INTO COURT = In the early days of Christianity the rich (rich Sadducees) persecuted the church: Acts 4:1-3; 13:50; 16:19.

James 2:7

SLANDERING THE NOBLE NAME = The highest offense of the rich mentioned in the previous verses is that they slander Christ.

TO WHOM YOU BELONG = At baptism each believer is baptized into the name of the Trinity (Matthew 28:19, 20), adopted into God's family and receives the name of Christ: "Christian." These rich people were not truly believers, even though they may have been baptized, and they thus were slandering Christ's name.

James 2:8

IF YOU REALLY KEEP = The distinction between "really" keeping the royal law and only giving it lip service is found in how we really treat both the rich and the poor. When we show favoritism to either we demonstrate that we do not "really keep" the law.

ROYAL LAW = James quotes Leviticus 19:18 here (God condensed His Moral Law down to one sentence). Jesus also summarized God's Moral Law in Matthew 22:36-40. James goes on in James 2:11 to quote God's six and seventh commandments. In context, the Royal Law, as James uses the term, refers to the second half of God's Ten Commandments. Love (for God and man) is the fulfilling of the entire law: Romans 13:10, and an essential part in the reception of eternal life: Luke 10:27-28.

James 2:9

THE LAW = Specifically God's Moral Law, which James also refers to as the "Royal Law" (James 2:8); and "the Law that Gives Freedom" (James 2:12).

James 2:10

WHOEVER KEEPS = These people are depicted by John in Revelation 14:12.

THE WHOLE LAW = The point James is making here is that we are not free to pick and choose which part of God's Law we will obey. We cannot point to the fact that we have chosen to fulfill one

part of God's Law as an excuse for our failure to keep the remainder of God's Law.

STUMBLES = The Greek "ptaio" (Strong's #G4417) means "to stumble, to fall into sin." The idea is that we cannot say simply because we sinned on only one point that we are thus better than someone else. "Stumbling" -- sinning at any point makes all of us sinners beyond compare (Romans 3:23).

ONE POINT ... ALL OF IT = James points out the futility of legalism here. Jesus demonstrated that the legalist can never perfectly keep God's law (Matthew 19:16-22). But through the Gospel, Christ's perfect obedience to all of God's Law is bestowed upon us by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8- 9).

James 2:11

ADULTERY = Here James quotes God's seventh commandment (Exodus 20:14).

MURDER = This is God's sixth commandment (Exodus 20:13).

James 2:12

SPEAK AND ACT = Genuine Christian love is demonstrated in both our speech and our actions.

LAW THAT GIVE FREEDOM = The same "Royal"/Moral Law James referred to in James 1:25; 2:8, 11. True freedom comes from accepting Jesus' mercy. Those who spurn Jesus are criminals -- and only criminals lose their freedom.

James 2:13

MERCIFUL = Mercy is the characteristic of making allowances for another person's deficiencies even though they deserve none. The one who has received mercy from God is obligated to show mercy to

others: Matthew 6:12; 18:23-35.

JUDGMENT = See Luke 6:31 and compare with Matthew 5:7; 6:14, 15; 7:1-2 for the relationship between mercy and judgment.

James 2:14

CLAIMS TO HAVE FAITH = The truth of the matter is that genuine faith can never exist apart from deeds. In the following verses the antinomians' claim to faith is demonstrated to be a false claim.

CAN SUCH FAITH SAVE HIM? = This is a rhetorical question which demands the obvious answer, No!

James 2:15

WITHOUT CLOTHES ... FOOD = This is a serious condition which demands prompt action on the part of genuine Christians.

James 2:16

ONE OF YOU SAYS TO HIM = The "faith" James speaks of here is merely a "wordy" faith -- it is all talk and no action. This "faith" springs from a selfish, callused heart and does not even deserve to be called "faith."

James 2:17

ACTION = Our faith is tested for genuineness each time we see someone in need.

James 2:18

FAITH WITHOUT DEEDS vs. FAITH WITH DEEDS = The reality of Christian living is this: it is easier to talk faith than to walk faith -- faith that talks but doesn't walk is no faith at all.

James 2:19

YOU BELIEVE ... DEMONS BELIEVE = True belief results in deeds/actions (Revelation 14:12). False belief is mere assent. John Calvin said: "A knowledge of God can no more connect a man with God than the sight of the sun can carry him to heaven." Genuine faith, not knowledge, is what draws a person to God. The "demons" are lost, not because they refuse to believe, but because, while believing, they don't act.

ONE GOD = An alternate translation has "God is One": a reference to the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead.

GOOD = Belief in correct doctrine is good, but doctrine in itself will not save one person.

SHUDDER = "Shudder" in terror. This is active proof that fear does not change lives -- love changes lives: Luke 1:74-75; 1 John 4:18.

James 2:20

FOOLISH MAN = A foolish man is one who cannot discern that faith without deeds is not genuine faith.

James 2:21

ABRAHAM OFFERED HIS SON = See Genesis 22:6-12.

James 2:22

James 2:23

SCRIPTURE = A quotation from Genesis 15:6.

CREDITED TO HIM = The Greek "logizomai" (Strong's #G3049) means "to count, number, reckon, impute." Here it means righteousness was put on Abraham's account and therefore

Abraham himself was counted as righteous. Abraham's "belief" in God occurred thirty years before (Genesis 15:6) he offered up Isaac, but that belief was fully evidenced in Abraham's commitment to God. The fact Abraham was willing to offer up Isaac did not earn for him the title of "God's friend." It was only the evidence of his solid belief in God. That belief is what made Abraham God's friend, not his works.

CREDITED = Abraham's willingness to obey God to the point of slaying his son Isaac vindicated God's declaration that Abraham was righteous. His faith was evidenced by his actions (James 2:24).

James 2:24

JUSTIFIED BY WHAT HE DOES = This refers to the on-going process of sanctification. Romans 3:28 refers to justification while James 2:24 refers to sanctification: both are two sides of the same coin. Justification cannot be earned by works, and sanctification cannot occur without deeds. Thus, in this context, justification is faithful obedience. Also see Romans 6:15, 16; John 10:27, 28.

"Justification is an action of God by which He declares persons as righteous (i.e., in true and right relationship to Himself). The basic fact of Biblical religion is that God pardons and accepts believing sinners. The doctrine of justification determines the whole character of Christianity as a religion of grace and faith. It defines the saving significance of Christ's life and death by relating both to God's law. It displays God's justice in condemning and punishing sin, His mercy in pardoning and accepting sinners, and His wisdom in exercising both attributes harmoniously together through Christ. It makes clear what faith is -- belief in Christ's atoning death and justifying resurrection, and trust in Him alone for righteousness. It makes clear what Christian morality is -- keeping the law out of gratitude to the Savior whose gift of righteousness made keeping the law needless for acceptance." -- The Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Walter A. Elwell, editor, page 260.

James 2:25

RAHAB = James selected Abraham, the father of the Jews, as the highest example and Rahab, a Gentile prostitute, as the lowest example of faith in action: Joshua 2:1-6.

FOR WHAT SHE DID = See note on Revelation 22:12.

James 2:26

SPIRIT = The Greek "pneuma" (Strong's #G4151) means "spirit, life principle, breath, mind."

"The vital spirit or life, the principle of life residing in man. The breath breathed by God into man and again returning to God, the spiritual entity in man (Septuagint: Genesis 2:7; Psalm 104:29; Ecclesiastes 12:7). The spirit is that part that can live independently of the body." -- The Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament, Zondhiates, AMG, pp. 1180-1181

FAITH ... DEAD = Genuine faith always results in deeds. Faith which does not result in deeds is a counterfeit faith.

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Cleveland Bible Commentary on James Chapter 3

James 3:1

PRESUME = In Paul's day there were very few restrictions on Gospel teachers and virtually anyone who wanted to speak was given an audience. Christianity now recognizes that not all who want to teach have been called by God or have the spiritual gift of teaching (see 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11-12).

JUDGED MORE STRICTLY = Increased knowledge brings increased blessing and increased accountability (Luke 12:47, 48). The teacher's work involves passing judgment. At times the work of judging others makes the teacher critical and harsh. Thus the teacher is to be aware that he himself will be judged by Christ (John 5:22; 1 Corinthians 11:32). The strict judgment James refers to here is on account of what the teacher says (see succeeding verses for his discussion of the tongue/speech).

James 3:2

PERFECT = The Greek "teleios" (Strong's #G5046) means "complete, mature, perfect." The inference is not absolute perfection, but absolute innocence before God. The ability to keep

one's tongue comes from a new heart created through the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 10:5; Matthew 12:34; Psalm 51:10).

James 3:3

BITS ... MOUTHS = When we control the horse's mouth we control the whole animal.

James 3:4

VERY SMALL RUDDER = Whoever controls the rudder controls the whole ship.

James 3:5

LIKEWISE THE TONGUE = "Likewise" refers back to the illustrations James has given in James 3:3-4. In other words, if we can control a horse by his mouth and a ship by its rudder, then we can control a man by his tongue.

BOASTS = Either that the tongue makes empty "boasts," or that the tongue genuinely has a great capacity for good or evil and thus "boasts" of the great things it truly can do.

FOREST ... SPARK = The spoken word is capable of tremendous results, just as a spark is capable of destroying a great forest.

James 3:6

CORRUPTS THE WHOLE PERSON = Paul states this same concept in Romans 3:13, 14.

WHOLE COURSE OF HIS LIFE = The effects of our speech are long-lasting. Things we say in a moment of anger, or in a moment of noble endeavor, can have effects that last a lifetime.

FIRE = There are two type of fire: the fire of the Holy Spirit (Acts

2:3) which empowers us for God's service, or hell fire which destroys us.

James 3:7

ALL KINDS OF ANIMALS ... TAMED = Perhaps James is referring back to Creation and the dominion God gave man over the animal kingdom: Genesis 1:28. Just as God gave man the power to subdue the animal kingdom, so He gives us power to change our own lives by turning to Him.

James 3:8

NO MAN CAN = No human can effectively change the nature within him which is evidenced by his speech. We are controlled by Satan and his powerful forces to the extent that we are unable to change on our own.

TAME THE TONGUE = The only way to tame the tongue is to renew the heart (Matthew 12:34; Ezekiel 11:19-20).

James 3:9

WE PRAISE ... WE CURSE = Here James focuses on the dual nature of sinful humanity (see Romans 7:18-25 for Paul's struggle with sin). Only through Jesus Christ in us can we be changed into consistent, mature Christians.

MADE IN GOD'S LIKENESS = For a detailed discussion, see Genesis 1:27; Genesis 9:6.

James 3:10

PRAISE AND CURSING = See note on James 3:9.

THIS SHOULD NOT BE = Christianity is the religion of changed lives. No Christian should be content with only a partial

sanctification. The problem is, Christians tend to believe in sanctification through will power, rather than in sanctification through the indwelling power of Christ.

James 3:11

FROM THE SAME SPRING? = The obvious answer is "No!" Thus the source of behavior must be changed if a Christian is to live a changed life. Changing the source can only be done through Jesus Christ, in His time, and according to His purpose.

James 3:12

CAN ... NEITHER CAN = We act according to our nature. If our heart is sinful, our actions will be sinful. The source of our sinfulness must be changed by Jesus Christ if our actions are to be changed. Just as the "leopard cannot change his spots," so a Christian cannot change what he is (Jeremiah 13:23).

James 3:13

GOOD LIFE = Here James introduces the concept that there are two kinds of wisdom: earthly (James 3:15) which appears to be wise but is unable to change the life and produce good deeds; and heavenly (James 3:15) which changes the life and is evidenced by good deeds. This change comes about by "letting go and letting God."

James 3:14

DENY THE TRUTH = A false teacher may purport to teach truth, but his own life style denies the truth he teaches. The gulf between intellectual knowledge and life-changing truth is portrayed here. A false teacher should not deny the truth that his life does not correspond to his teaching, and therefore should cease to teach, or begin living the truth through the grace and power of Christ.

James 3:15

"WISDOM" = Earthly wisdom is "unspiritual, of the devil," and produces "bitter envy and selfish ambition" (James 3:14). Heavenly wisdom produces a "good life" (James 3:13). If Jesus is the "root" of our life, then good works will be the "fruit."

"James indicates that if we yield to jealousy and selfish ambition, we may open ourselves to being controlled by wisdom which is 'earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.'" -- The Bondage Breaker, Neil T. Anderson, page 176. Also see Luke 13:10-18; 22:31-34; Ephesians 6:10-17; James 3:14-16; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 1 Peter 5:6-9; Acts 5:1-11.

James 3:16

DISORDER ... EVIL = Disorder and confusion does not come from God (1 Corinthians 14:33). When we observe these results we find envy and selfish ambition at the core of a person's life.

James 3:17

WISDOM THAT COMES FROM HEAVEN = The fear of the Lord is the beginning of true wisdom (Psalm 111:10). The Greek word "anothen" (Strong's #G509) means "above" (see Luke 1:3).

James 3:18

SOW ... RAISE = The law of sowing and reaping is alluded to here (Galatians 6:7; Matthew 7:20).

IN PEACE = "Those who wish to be physicians ought not to be executioners" -- John Calvin.

HARVEST OF RIGHTEOUSNESS = Those who sow discord cannot reap righteousness.

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Cleveland Bible Commentary on James Chapter 4

James 4:1

DESIRES THAT BATTLE WITHIN YOU = See James 1:13-15; 1 Peter 2:11; 2 Peter 1:4; 2:11.

James 4:2

BECAUSE YOU DO NOT ASK GOD = Human endeavor and human effort result in failure. True success comes from "asking God" (Matthew 7:7- 8).

James 4:3

YOU ASK WITH WRONG MOTIVES = Here "wrong motives" are defined as our own "pleasures." The God who sent His only Son to die for our sins takes a dim view when we squander His blood on our sinful pleasures. See notes on 1 John 5:14-15.

James 4:4

ENEMY OF GOD = Jesus tells us in Matthew 12:30 that we only have two choices in this life: Christ or the world. Those who choose the world are following their natural inclinations and are naturally against God and commit spiritual adultery (Romans 8:7-8). The

solution is to have God's Spirit renewing us (Romans 8:9).

James 4:5

SPIRIT = There are two possibilities for interpreting this text: (1) The word "spirit" means our natural inclinations, not the Holy Spirit. Thus our natural "spirit" is envious and evil. (2) The word "spirit" can mean the Holy Spirit -- and is so designated by the context. Thus there can be no friendship between the Christian and the world (James 4:4) because the Holy Spirit intensely envies (jealously guards) our relationship with God.

James 4:6

PROUD = The proud oppose God and rebel against Him, thus He opposes them. This quotation comes from Proverbs 3:34. Also see Proverbs 16:5 and Hosea 13:6.

James 4:7

SUBMIT ... RESIST = The two halves of spiritual victory are "submit to God," and "resist the devil." The process of submitting to God is described in James 4:8-10. The process of resisting the devil is outlined in 1 Corinthians 10:13.

James 4:8

WASH YOUR HANDS ... PURIFY = Old Testament priests were required to wash before entering the temple (Exodus 30:17-21; Psalms 24:3-4). In the Christian church this washing is not physical, but spiritual. It is accomplished through the Word and the work of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5) and demonstrated by baptism (Acts 22:16).

DOUBLE-MINDED = Here means lacking the commitment required of everyone who follows Christ. Instead this teacher is wavering in his loyalty to Christ and he is divided in his interests and goals. The cure for "double-mindedness" is to "come near to

God" in repentance, revival, and reformation.

James 4:9

MOURN ... WAIL = The mourning James refers to here is a genuine heartfelt sorrow for sin. This is the type of mourning Jesus promised to bless and comfort: Matthew 5:4. Those who do not "wail" in repentance of their sins now will "wail" at the punishment for their sins later: James 5:1.

James 4:10

LIFT YOU UP = The process begins with our repentance, involves the reception of a new heart (Ezekiel 11:19-20), and culminates in our high position as children of God (John 1:12-13). This is quoted in 1 Peter 5:6.

James 4:11

SLANDER = The spreading of false charges which injure one's reputation.

JUDGES = To bring under question, or assume censorial power over someone. This is not the judging that Christians are required to do within the church (1 Corinthians 5:12, 13; 6:1-3). Instead it is the kind of judging brought out in Romans 2:1-4.

THE LAW = This law is a Levitical law (Leviticus 19:16) and part of an entire section dealing with interpersonal relationships (Leviticus 19:11-18). The fact James mentions this Levitical law to Christians in about 45 A.D. indicates the New Testament church recognized the non-ceremonial laws were still binding.

James 4:12

ONE LAWGIVER AND JUDGE = "Of all the lawgivers in the world, God alone is strong enough to detect, convict and punish all who disregard or disobey His enactments" -- R. Tasker. Also see

Luke 12:4-5.

James 4:13

YOU WHO SAY = See Proverbs 27:1 and Luke 12:16-21.

James 4:14

YOU DO NOT EVEN KNOW = In other words, "you are totally ignorant, you are not even a prophet who can foretell the future. You are simply a mortal 'mist.'"

James 4:15

THE LORD'S WILL = In the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21), Jesus taught the importance of surrendering our plans to the Lord's will.

James 4:16

ALL SUCH BOASTING IS EVIL = In the previous verses (James 4:13-15) James has depicted the sinner as boasting in himself and his own plans, rather than submitting to the Lord. When a Christian "boasts in the Lord" his boasting is worthy of praise (Psalm 34:2; 1 Corinthians 1:31; 2 Corinthians 10:17-18).

James 4:17

WHO KNOWS = Sin is a deliberate act involving a conscious, knowledgeable decision to break God's Law (see John 15:22). A baby cannot sin in this sense. In context James is referring to the specific sins of slander and boasting he spoke about in James 4:11-16. See Romans 3:23 and Isaiah 7:16. The specific definition of sin is found in 1 John 3:4 as well as 1 John 5:17.

Another category of sin is what could be called "ignorant sin" -- unknowingly breaking one of God's laws. But even "ignorant sin" is counted against us regardless of the fact that we did not know we broke God's law: Leviticus 5:17. Thus no one,

except Jesus Christ, can claim to have reached moral perfection and be without sin.

THE GOOD HE OUGHT TO DO = "If one can do good, he ought to do good." -- General Wesley Clark.

SINS = The Greek "hamartia" (Strong's #G266) means "sin, an offense against God which incurs guilt." Here "sin" is tied specifically to our innate or acquired knowledge of God's will for us, thus is classified as a deliberate sin or a "sin unto death" (1 John 5:16). However, there are also sins which we unknowingly commit, for which God holds us responsible, and for which we need Christ as our Savior (Leviticus 5:17).

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Cleveland Bible Commentary on James Chapter 5

James 5:1

WAIL = Those who have not repented of their sins (James 4:9) will "wail" at the punishment that is coming upon them.

James 5:2

WEALTH ... CLOTHES = In Christ's day clothing was a form of wealth (Acts 20:33). Wealth of every type is deceitful and temporal (Matthew 13:22). Wealth, per se, is not the problem, it is the hoarding of wealth (James 5:3) and what wealth can do to us, that makes it detrimental.

James 5:3

HOARDED WEALTH = There are two ungodly reasons for hoarding wealth: (1) to achieve power and status for ourselves; (2) to protect ourselves from the insecurities of the future. Jesus assures us that the abundance of possessions is not what life is all about (Luke 12:15).

James 5:4

WAGES = Dishonesty in hiring and labor relations.

CRIES ... REACHED THE EARS = If God is concerned about even the needs of a sparrow (Luke 12:6) we may be certain that He is concerned about the needs of His children. Dishonesty on the part of either employer or employee will be avenged by God.

James 5:5

FATTENED YOURSELVES = The entire process of greed and the hoarding of wealth is seen as simply fattening oneself for slaughter. It is the consumption of resources simply for the sake of consuming. One ought to visit a cattle feed lot in Nebraska to thoroughly understand this comparison

James 5:6

CONDEMNED ... MURDERED = Greed unchecked results in the murder of innocent people: 1 Kings 21:1-11.

James 5:7

BE PATIENT = Patience is possible only as long as the believer submits to the work of the Holy Spirit, for the fruit of the Spirit is patience (Galatians 5:22).

THE LORD'S COMING = See note on James 5:8.

James 5:8

LORD'S COMING IS NEAR = In the context of the previous verse (James 5:7), James addresses this statement to his Christian "brothers." The Lord's coming is near to everyone who believes in Christ and lives in the anticipation of that great day. Every aspect of our lives is lived under the sunshine of Christ's second coming, and in that sense it is always near, for we all live just one heartbeat away from eternity.

When Jesus comes He brings His reward with Him

(Revelation 22:12). Thus His coming is "near" even for those who are lost. Those who put Christ's coming out of their minds and consider it to be a far-off event that has little relevance to their own life do not fear God, do not rejoice in God, and do not long to see God. Nevertheless, they also live just one heartbeat away from eternity, and Christ's coming in judgment is also near.

The Lord's coming (in judgment [verse 9]) was near for the Jews. James wrote these words sometime around 50-60 A.D. In 70 A.D. God's judgment against the Jews was poured out in the destruction of Jerusalem (see notes on Matthew chapter 24).

James 5:9

THE JUDGE IS STANDING AT THE DOOR = The certainty of a judgment is brought out here, and not a specific time as to when that judgment will occur. Thus this is not a prophecy of Christ's second coming, but of His daily judgment in our lives. For the Jews who were persecuting Christians, the judgment occurred just 10 years later when the Romans destroyed the temple, captured Jerusalem, and deported the Jews.

James 5:10

IN THE NAME OF THE LORD = In the power and authority of the Lord. As one who is the Lord's agent or representative.

James 5:11

FULL OF COMPASSION AND MERCY = See 2 Peter 3:9, 15.

James 5:12

DO NOT SWEAR = Greek "omnuo" (Strong's #G3660) means "to promise with an oath, to take or make an oath." The Christian's word should be so honorable that his simple "yes" is worth far more than the world's severest oath. The Pharisees frequently took oaths that avoided using God's name. Because God's name was not

invoked, they felt free to break their oaths. Thus, in the context of the previous verses, James is not condemning Christians for taking solemn oaths in a court of law. Instead he is addressing the issue prevalent in his day: frivolous or impetuous oaths taken inappropriately to hide wrong intentions (Isaiah 48:1). James is not referring to swearing here in the sense of cursing.

James 5:13

TROUBLE = The Greek "kakopatheo" (Strong's #G2553) means "suffering hardships or evil, suffering afflictions."

PRAY = The Greek "proseuchomai" (Strong's #G4336) means "to pray to God, to offer prayer to God, whether for the obtaining of good or the averting of evil." See Jesus' words in Luke 18:1.

HAPPY = The Greek "euthumeo" (Strong's #G2124) means "cheerful, happy."

James 5:14

SICK = The Greek "astheneo" (Strong's #G770) means "diseased, impotent, sick, weak."

"There can be no doubt that James taught that there is a possibility that sickness may stem from sin. ... He explained that the prayer of faith will make the sick member well, and if he has committed any sins they will be forgiven him (verse 15). James further exhorted the sick to confess their sins to one another. ... The 'if' clause (verse 15) allows for the possibility of sickness from disease, injury, or other innocent causes. James clearly recognized two sources for sickness; one organic, one non-organic. ... The possibility of sickness as the result of sin ought to be discussed. If sin is found in the background of the problem, it must be confessed." -- Competent to Counsel, Jay E. Adams, pages 105-106.

HE SHOULD CALL THE ELDERS = James tells us it is not enough to pray for oneself in private. Here the sick person is specifically instructed to call the "elders" of the church, not just any member of the congregation. This is not to say that the elders were all medical doctors or that they all had the gift of healing. Rather, as leaders in the local congregation, the elders/clergy are acting in the spirit and authority of Christ. In 2 Chronicles 16:12-13 the Bible gives us an example of what happens when we neglect God's help and only rely on medical physicians. Also see Psalm 30:2.

CHURCH = The Greek "ekklesia" (Strong's #G1577) means "assembly, church." It is the normal word for a Christian church. In James 2:2 the word "synagogue" is used to refer to a Christian church.

PRAY OVER HIM = The Greek "proseuchomai" (Strong's #G4336) means "pray, supplicate earnestly." Pray "over him" suggests the laying on of hands.

ANOINT = The Greek "aleipho" (Strong's #G218) means "to oil, to rub or smear with oil." (The Greek word "chrio" specifically means "sacred anointing," but it is not used here.) Thus the anointing in James 5:14 is not a ceremonial anointing. Here the word is in the aorist participle which means "that rubbing with oil was a medical treatment and applied prior to the prayer offered by the elders of the church" (Zodhiates). Jesus disciples followed this same process of anointing with oil and praying for healing (Mark 6:13). In Luke 10:34 the verb used is "epicheo", meaning "to pour upon," and does not involve any rubbing or touching by hand (Zodhiates).

OIL = The Greek "elaion" (Strong's #G1637) means "olive oil as used as fuel in ancient lamps." The question is, What is the purpose of the oil? Apparently oil has three purposes: (1) It is medicinal in that it softens the tissues of a wound and thus relieves pain somewhat, and it has some antiseptic/healing properties (Isaiah 1:6). (2) Oil is the instrument for a supernatural cure in that it represents the protecting love of God (Psalm 23:5) and the presence of the Holy Spirit (1 Samuel 16:13). Notice James does not say the oil heals the sick, nor does he say the oil is purely medicinal. If the oil itself cured, anyone could administer it and there would be no need to call the elders. (3) Oil is an aid to the sick person's faith. It is easier to believe when there is a visible aid to faith. However, Jay Adams contributes an additionally valid insight:

"Olive oil was considered medicinal. In fact, in biblical times oil was used as the universal medicine (note Mark 6:13 and Luke 10:34). ... James contemplated no magic, therefore, when he mentioned the use of oil. Neither did he refer to the Roman Catholic sacrament of extreme unction. As a matter of fact, James did not write about ceremonial anointing at all. The Greek word 'anoint' (aleipho), which James used, does not mean ceremonial anointing. ... The word 'aleipho' was used to describe the personal application of salves, lotions, and perfumes, which usually had an oil base. ... And so it turns out that what James required by the use of oil was the use of the best medical means of the day. James simply said to rub oil (often used as a base of mixtures of various medicinal herbs) on the body, and pray. What James advocated was the use of consecrated, dedicated medicine. In this passage he urged the treating of sickness by medical means accompanied by prayer. The two are to be used together; neither to the exclusion of the other. So instead of teaching faith healing apart from the use of medicine, the passage teaches just the opposite. But when medicine is used, it must be used in conjunction with prayer. That is why

**James said that the prayer of faith makes the sick well." --
Competent to Counsel, Jay E. Adams, pages 107-108.**

IN THE NAME OF THE LORD = The Greek "onoma" (Strongs #G3686) means "name, title, character, reputation." This phrase occurs 40 times in the NIV and refers in general to acting in the power and authority of the Lord as His representative or agent.

James 5:15

PRAYER OFFERED IN FAITH = A key ingredient of all Christian living: Acts 3:16; 14:9; Matthew 13:58; Mark 6:5, 6; Luke 1:20; Luke 5:17. The faith of both the "elders" and the sick person is referred to here. See note on verse 14.

"Suppose you went to your doctor because you had a serious pain in your hip. After hearing your complaint, he writes out a prescription for a pain reliever. After a few days of being on the medication, the pain goes away. Would you say you're better off than you were before you went on the medication? 'Well, the pain went away,' you say, 'so I suppose I'm better.' Maybe. But pain rarely exists by itself. It is usually an alarm alerting us to an underlying problem. Medication only shuts off the alarm, it doesn't fix the thing that caused the pain. What if I told you that the pain came from a cancer growing in your hip? Armed with that knowledge, your perspective on the situation would probably change. Now you would probably want to begin an aggressive program to eradicate the cancer. Once the cancer was eliminated, the pain would go away by itself. I discovered that prayer often works the same way. When we first start praying about our situation, we usually begin by praying about symptoms. We may start by asking God to fix some of the things that are causing us pain. ... But these things are not the problem, they are symptoms of the problem. Sometimes God 'fixes' symptoms, but more often He is interested in dealing with the issue behind the symptoms. Our

prayers change direction and gain power when we start asking God to reveal the issues that create the pain our behavior is trying to anesthetize. We ask Him to search us and know our hearts, and then to guide us on the road to eternal life (Psalm 139:23-24). We ask Him to transform us by renewing our minds (Romans 12:2). Prayer now serves as a diagnostic tool to uncover the problem. Of course, the Great Physician already knows what the problem is, He just wants to clue us in, but He waits for us to ask Him first." -- An Affair of the Mind, Laurie Hall, page 138.

WILL MAKE THE SICK ... WELL = Greek "sosei" (3rd person singular future active indicative) meaning "he/she will heal." The purpose of the anointing is recovery, not preparation for death. Contrary to this, the Roman Catholic practice of "extreme unction" anoints in preparation for death.

There are times when God does not heal our physical disease. Often we think our lack of healing is God's punishment for our sins -- and we must always face that fact that sometimes we do suffer disease as a result of our intemperate, or evil, lifestyle (Jeremiah 4:18). But sometimes God does not heal in order that we can join the Brotherhood of the Suffering. It is only by developing us through suffering that God is able to fit us for the glorious work that He has chosen us for (Jeremiah 29:11 compare with Christ's experience in Luke 22:42). Thus, in this sense, we can consider ourselves chosen by God, rather than punished by God.

THE LORD = It is not the prayer as such, but the prayer "in the name of the Lord (James 5:14). Thus it is the Lord who heals: 2 Chronicles 16:12, 13. No genuine healing occurs apart from the power of the Lord. The "elders" have not been given the power to heal and cannot cancel the sentence of death pronounced upon the human race, thus the will of God rules supreme. For examples of individuals the Apostles failed to heal see Philippians 2:25-27

(Epaphroditus); 2 Timothy 4:20 (Trophimus); 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 (Paul).

WILL RAISE HIM UP = "Raise" is the Greek word "egeiro" (3rd person singular future active indicative) meaning to "he/she will rise up from sleep, will rise up from disease, will rise up from death." -- "Egeiro" is our word for "resurrection" and the same word Paul used in Acts 13:30 when he spoke of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Thus all physical healing we see now is a foretaste of the ultimate and perfect healing that will be accomplished in the resurrection when Jesus comes the second time (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

IF HE HAS SINNED = A more literal translation would be: "Even if he has sinned, it shall be forgiven." Thus even if the sickness is caused by the person's own sin, his sin will be forgiven and his sickness healed.

Scriptures "suggest that some physical problems have spiritual causes. Chronic pain, the physical symptoms of depression, psychiatric problems, and a host of other medical symptoms might qualify. How can you know if sin did it? You can't. Usually, instead of giving us the clear cause for a sickness, the Bible simplifies the problem by saying that those who are sick, whatever the cause, need prayer and encouragement from others. Furthermore, sickness is an opportunity to grow in repentance, faith, and obedience. The only time you have reason to suspect a connection between sin and sickness is when repentance and faith are followed by physical healing. Even then, however, there may have been other reasons for the alleviation of the symptoms." -- Blame it on the Brain, Edward T. Welch, p. 60

"The psycho- or spiritual-somatic connection is not an unbending rule. Our sins do not always lead to physical disability, and our faithfulness does not always lead to health. Instead, God is

gracious to sinners, protecting them from the physical consequences that their sins deserve. And He is gracious to those who are obedient and faithful, allowing them to experience physical problems as a way to keep them from getting too settled in any place other than heaven." -- Blame it on the Brain, Edward T. Welch, p. 60.

HE WILL BE FORGIVEN = Miracles of healing are a continuing evidence of Christ's power to forgive sin. Some healings occur when forgiveness is accepted, because the disease was caused by sin (Isaiah 53:4, 5; John 5:14). Just as forgiveness is not delayed until Christ's second coming, so the implication is that both physical and spiritual healing are to be expected at the time when the prayer is offered. Implied here is the necessity of confessing and repenting of sin, addressed in James 5:16.

James 5:16

CONFESS = The Greek "exomologeisthay" (2d person plural present middle imperative) (Strongs #G1843) means "you-all must habitually confess, admit, acknowledge" your sins and intercede for one another. This is the opposite of denying or concealing our faults: Psalm 32:3-5; Proverbs 28:13; Acts 19:18-20. The elders are called to anoint and pray, they are not called to hear the sick person's confession. If Christians habitually confess their sins/faults to one another there will be no need for death-bed confessions!

"When James referred to confessing sickness-causing sin, he meant primarily confession to God. But he spoke also of confessing sins 'to one another.' The sick person is directed to reveal and confess his sins to the parties against whom he has sinned. Whether he should confess to the elders as well is problematical." -- Competent to Counsel, Jay E. Adams, p. 106

YOUR = "Your" indicates your personal sins rather than some other person's sins. We are to confess our own sins, we are not to confess another person's sins.

SINS TO EACH OTHER = Here the Greek "hamartia" (Strong's #G266) means "sins" and appears as such in the most ancient manuscripts. However, later manuscripts -- including those used by the KJV -- use the Greek "paraptoma" (Strong's #G3900) which means "a false step, a blunder, an unintentional sin, a fault of weakness, mistakes, lapses, errors." It is not willful sin or rebellious disobedience. Consider the following:

"It is clear that the makers of the KJV regarded the Greek word 'paraptoma,' which they are here translating, as having in some contexts in the New Testament a less serious implication than the word 'hamartia,' the other reading in this passage usually translated 'sin.'" -- Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, The General Epistle of James, p. 134

"(To each other) does not mean that Christians are to indulge in indiscriminate public or even private confessions. And certainly the passage has nothing to do with secret confessions to a priest. Believers are to confess their faults only that they may pray for each other." -- Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 1439

"To be effective, confession of sin has to be made to men, and especially to the person wronged, as well as to God. In a very real sense it is easier to confess sins to God than to confess them to men; and yet in sin there are two barriers to be removed -- the barrier it sets up between us and God, and the barrier it sets up between us and our fellow-men. If both these barriers are to be removed, both kinds of confession must be made." -- The Daily Study Bible Series, The Letters of James and Peter, by William Barclay, p. 131

PRAY = See Romans 8:26-27.

MAY BE HEALED = The Greek "iathaytay" (2d person plural 1st aorist passive subjunctive) (Strong's #G2390) means "you-all might be healed." The subjunctive mood contrasts real action with potential action. For example, the indicative mood can be expressed as: the child runs. This expresses action which is really taking place. The subjunctive mood would be: if the child runs he will not be harmed. Here the action is not really taking place, but it is action which may potentially take place. Thus James is literally saying: "pray for each other so that you have will have the potential to be healed." The Greek makes it a possible healing rather than a guaranteed healing.

The prayer for healing covers many things: physical, spiritual, and mental. We must not overlook that healing the sick through prayer and miracles is part of the commission Jesus gave His church (see Matthew 10:8; Luke 9:2, 6; 10:9; Acts 4:30-31; 8:6-7; 9:34; 14:9-10; 28:8; 1 Corinthians 12:9.). We must also notice that there is no prohibition of going to medical doctors for help, and we must remember that Luke (who wrote the books of Luke and Acts) was a medical doctor (Colossians 4:14).

RIGHTEOUS MAN = None of us is righteous -- only Jesus is righteous: Romans 5:19; John 14:13, 14. Christ has prayed for us: John 17:9. But we are Christ's agents and ambassadors at the side of the sick, and therefore Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as we pray for the sick: Matthew 10:41; Romans 3:22, 23. An example of this prayer of righteous people in behalf of others is found in Acts 12:5 -15. Notice that they prayed even though their faith was too weak to believe God would actually accomplish Peter's release. The concept of who is a "righteous man" is illustrated in James 5:17-18.

A "righteous" man does not cherish sin in heart (see notes on Psalm 66:18 and Luke 6:42).

IS POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE = "The effect produced in the praying person bringing him into line with the will of God. It is the pray-er who changes rather than the prayer. Praying "in the will of God" means being conformed to the will of God as we pray" -- What Happens When Women Pray, Evelyn Christenson, page 65. Also see 1 John 5:14-15.

James 5:17

ELIJAH ... A MAN JUST LIKE US = Elijah had the same weaknesses, disappointments and personal failures we have: 1 Kings 19:4. He was not heard because of his personal righteousness, but because of his "earnest" prayers to the righteous God.

James 5:18

AGAIN HE PRAYED = See 1 Kings 17:1; 18:41-46. In context, the issue here is that God answers prayers.

James 5:19

WANDER = The Greek "planao" (Strong's #G4105) means "to wander, to be led astray, to be mislead, to be deceived, to be seduced."

James 5:20

COVER OVER ... SINS = See Psalm 32:1, 2 and Psalms 85:2. Does not mean the sinner's sin is swept under the rug, but that it is dealt with in a Christ-like manner, forgiven, and removed. See Ezekiel 33:6-16 for how this affects the one who attempts to "turn a sinner from the error of his way."

SAVE HIM FROM DEATH = This death is the second death which is reserved for unrepentant sinners: Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8.

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