

LESSON 7

PART I: SPECIAL INTRODUCTION TO JAMES

Importance

R. V. G. Tasker has noted that The Epistle of James is not valued as highly as it ought to be by—

1. Catholics who are content only to find in it authority for what they call the sacrament of Extreme Unction or to use it as a stick with which to attack the doctrine of justification by faith, and
2. Protestants who are influenced by Luther's devaluation of the epistle.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion of faith and works in the second chapter is a conscious or unconscious threat to the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone. However, James can serve as a corrective for those who limit the meaning of salvation by faith to a legalistic transaction. James' emphasis on the practical, ethical side of Christianity balances the dogmatic aspect which often becomes barren orthodoxy or mere intellectual belief.

Origen was the earliest Christian writer to mention this epistle as the work of James. It is not listed in the Muratorian Canon, but neither are Hebrews and the epistles of Peter. The Muratorian Canon listed the books recognized by the Roman Church at the end of the second century. Eusebius, in the early fourth century, implied that the Epistle of James was genuine but acknowledged that some regarded it as spurious. It became firmly established in the Canon of the western part of Christendom by the end of the fourth century, but some continued to question it and others did not regard it highly. In recent years, the book has continued to be neglected by large segments of Christendom.

Doubts regarding the epistle may have arisen because of evidence of non-apostolic authorship. In addition, the epistle claims to be by James, but the particular James who wrote it is not identified specifically.

<sup>1</sup>The General Epistle of James in The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 10.

Identify the two following attitudes towards the Book of James by writing Catholic or Protestant before each.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Feeling of threat to the doctrine of justification by faith alone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Authority for Extreme Unction and use of it to attack the doctrine of justification by faith.

(1. Protestant, 2. Catholic)

Was James listed in the Muratorian Canon, which contained the books recognized by the Roman Catholic Church at the end of the second century? \_\_\_\_\_

Who implied that the Book of James was genuine? \_\_\_\_\_

James became firmly established in the western Canon by the end of the \_\_\_\_\_ century.

(Compare your answers with the test.)

## Authorship

The writer identifies himself as "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 1). The name in the English translation is actually misleading because the Greek reads "Jacob." The English name 'James' apparently came from the old Latin *Jakomus* which goes back to the Hebrew 'Jacob'. This name was common in New Testament times, and there is no internal evidence to specify which James is intended. James, the son of Zebedee, was not likely the author since he was put to death by Herod in A.D. 44. Eusebius stated that the Epistle of James was said to be by the Lord's brother. This became the traditional view and continues to be held by most conservative scholars today.

Some have suggested that the name is a pseudonym attached to the letter to add a note of authority. Evidence which supports the traditional view includes:

1. The author gave indication of a Jewish background. He drew heavily from the Old Testament, at least in concepts if not by direct quotes. The Greek reflects traces of Hebrew idioms, and the Jewish Diaspora was addressed.
2. Similarities exist between James and Acts 15, which contains a speech and letter attributed to James, the brother of Jesus.
3. The letter reflects an authority which coincides with the position held by James, the brother of Jesus. He was leader of the Church at Jerusalem at the time of the Council, and his suggestions carried much weight.
4. The epistle carries a Jewish doctrinal perspective which coincides with what was known about James. He was devoted to the Law and zealous for the continuance of Jewish ritual requirements.

According to Acts, James, the brother of Jesus, gained great authority and respect among Palestinian Christians. The fact that he presided at the Jerusalem Council in A.D. 49 indicates that he had replaced Peter as leader. Paul mentioned going to Jerusalem and seeing only James, the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:19). He listed James first, along with Peter and John, as a pillar of the Church (Gal. 2:9).

*Four facts which support the view that the Lord's brother wrote the epistle of James are:*

1. *The author gave indication of a \_\_\_\_\_ background.*
2. *Similarities exist between James and \_\_\_\_\_ which contains a speech by James.*
3. *The letter reflects \_\_\_\_\_ which coincides with the position held by James, the brother of Jesus.*
4. *The epistle carries a \_\_\_\_\_ doctrinal perspective.*

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

*James presided at the J \_\_\_\_\_  
C \_\_\_\_\_ in A.D. 49.*

*Paul listed three men as pillars of the Church. They were: J \_\_\_\_\_, P \_\_\_\_\_,  
J \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(Jerusalem Council, James, Peter, John)*

He referred to certain Judaizers who came from James (Gal. 2:12). Paul reported "unto James" after returning from his third missionary journey (Acts 21: 18ff.). He followed the advice of James in submitting to Jewish purification rituals to avoid stirring up the nationalism of the Jews, who knew that he was an apostle to the Gentiles.

Jewish Christian tradition invested James with a priestly sanctity. His piety was illustrated by the tradition that he knelt until his knees were as hard as the knees of camels. He was said to be constantly in prayer in the Temple; he went about barefooted and practised abstinence from wine and bathing. He came to be known as 'James the Just'. Tradition claims that he called down rain during a drought, after the manner of Elijah.

Tradition states that his martyrdom came at the hands of the scribes and Pharisees. They besought James to restrain the people from going after Jesus. They put him on the pinnacle of the Temple where he might be seen and heard by all the people. They said, "O Just One, to whom we all give heed, inasmuch as the people is gone astray after Jesus who is crucified, tell us what is the gate of Jesus." James answered with a loud voice, "Why ask ye me concerning Jesus, the Son of Man? He sits in heaven on the right hand of the mighty power, and he is also about to come in the clouds of heaven." Many believers began to sing, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" The scribes and Pharisees became furious and cast him down from the Temple.<sup>2</sup>

Arguments against the traditional view that James, the Lord's brother, was the author are:

1. The style of the Greek is too good for the Galilean peasant. The Greek vocabulary is extensive and the diction does not appear to be that of a man whose native language was Aramaic. Little importance should be attached to this objection.
2. The author does not claim in the epistle to be the Lord's brother. On the other hand, James' mention of himself as a servant is far more becoming than had he boasted of being the Lord's brother.
3. The author failed to mention the great doctrines of Christianity: the death and resurrection of Jesus and

<sup>2</sup>Recorded in Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* II. 23.

After his third missionary journey, Paul reported to \_\_\_\_\_.

(James)

James was martyred by the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

(scribes, Pharisees)

After you have read the four arguments against the traditional view that James, the Lord's brother, was the author of the Book of James (continued on the next page), then use the following words to complete the arguments.

book	brother	Galilean
doctrines	Greek	accepted
author		

1. The style of the \_\_\_\_\_ is too good for the \_\_\_\_\_ peasant.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ does not claim to be the Lord's brother.
3. The author did not mention the great \_\_\_\_\_ of Christianity.
4. If James had written the \_\_\_\_\_, it would have been \_\_\_\_\_ more readily.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

the work of the Holy Spirit. This objection fails to take into account the fact that the purpose of the epistle was not to set forth doctrines but to guide in conduct.

4. If James, the Lord's brother, had written the book it would have been accepted more readily. This epistle was accepted in the East at an earlier date than in the West.

It has been suggested that the epistle is pseudonymous. The person who wrote it wanted the authority of James for the epistle. This theory needs the support of explaining why the writer left the pseudonym so ambiguous. Another suggestion has been that the epistle was originally anonymous and the name of James was added later. Others have suggested that it was written by a James other than the brother of Jesus. Since the epistle fits the circumstances that surrounded James, the elder of the Church at Jerusalem and the brother of Jesus, the objections against this traditional view of authorship are not strong enough to justify looking in another direction.

#### Purpose

James is very difficult to outline because it does not develop a particular theme. It contains a number of exhortations on Christian living, but there is no central theme, and an underlying outline and development are missing. It has been suggested that James is a compilation of sermon fragments. It was composed to confront members of the Church with the responsibilities of the Christian life. The author was concerned that the Jewish Christians apply their profession to their daily activities.

#### Recipients

The writer's reference to his readers as "brothers" reveals that the epistle was written to Christians. It appears to have been written to Christians in general rather than to a particular local situation, or single congregation.

It is not possible to be very specific concerning the recipients. James mentioned the "twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (1:1). Perhaps the author had reference to the Jewish Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire. According to James 2:2, the recipients met regularly in synagogues, suggesting a Jewish Christian group. Elders are mentioned in 5:14 and 15.

*Underline the word or words which make the following statement true.*

*The objections against the traditional view that James, the brother of Jesus, wrote the epistle (are, are not) strong enough to justify looking in another direction.*

*(are not)*

*The purpose of the Book of James was to confront members of the \_\_\_\_\_ with the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ life.*

*(Church, responsibilities, Christian)*

*The epistle was written to the \_\_\_\_\_ tribes which were scattered abroad, perhaps the \_\_\_\_\_ Christians throughout the \_\_\_\_\_ Empire.*

*(twelve, Jewish, Roman)*

Date

The epistle contains no reference to the fall of Jerusalem, neither is there any mention of the sacrificial system. Arguments based on silence, however, are weak and fail to prove whether or not the Temple was still standing when the epistle was written. The author's purpose was not to argue for or against a Jewish doctrinal position but to emphasize ethics; therefore, the question of the Law was not introduced.

If James, the Lord's brother, wrote the epistle, it would have been written before A.D. 62 when he was martyred. Attempts have been made to relate the discussion concerning faith and works directly to the epistles of Paul. Some scholars contend that James' teachings caused a doctrine of salvation by works to develop which Paul refuted in his epistles. This position points to an early date for James. Others propose that Paul's epistles had been written first and they had led to a perverted doctrine of justification by faith. James was written to counteract those who made only empty professions.

The primitive character of Church order and the Jewish tone of the letter indicate an early date. It is impossible to relate the epistle to a historical event by which it can be specifically dated. Perhaps the epistle was written early, shortly after A.D. 50.

Literary Form and Style

J.H. Ropes compared the form of the epistle to Greek diatribe in which the question and answer method was used as a dialogue with an imaginary person.<sup>3</sup> The epistle consists of general ethical exhortations on numerous subjects, and this type of literature is known as paranesis.<sup>4</sup> Exhortation on various subjects was a typical approach used to instruct Christians. The exhortations were placed together in a loose organization without concern for a development of one theme or line of thought. A catch or key word was used to tie the paragraphs together. In some cases, no logical connexions for the placing of materials can be found. This characteristic makes it very difficult to outline the Epistle of James.

<sup>3</sup>A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1916), pp. 12ff.

<sup>4</sup>For a fuller discussion of paranetic style, see Harold S. Songer, "James," Vol. 12 of The Broadman Bible Commentary (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), pp. 101ff.

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When was James martyred? \_\_\_\_\_  
  
(A.D. 62)

An early date of writing, perhaps A.D. 50, is indicated by the primitive character of C \_\_\_\_\_ o \_\_\_\_\_ and the J \_\_\_\_\_ t \_\_\_\_\_ of the letter.  
(Compare your answers with the text.)

Match the following terms and definitions.

1. Greek diatribe	a. Ethical exhortations
2. Paranesis	b. A form of writing in which questions and answers are used in a dialogue with an imaginary person

(b-1, a-2)

[Empty box]

Some sixty imperative sentences are found in the five chapters. Short paragraphs of elaboration are given on the imperatives.

PART II

THE NATURE OF TEMPTATION AND FAITH

James 1:1-2:26

The Author's Salutation

James 1:1

The author identified himself as "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." If he was the Lord's brother, his self-designation as a servant was much more becoming than a boastful identification of kinship with Christ. He chose a title of humility and did not identify himself with a particular office in the Church. It is possible that he was well known and carried great authority among the Jews. It was quite natural for James, who led in the Church of Jerusalem, to address Jewish Christians in the churches throughout the Roman Empire: "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (1:1). The background of the twelve tribes was the old Israel, but as Paul referred to Christians as the sons of Abraham, so James used a symbolic description of them as the new Israel. Jewish Christians were forced from Jerusalem with the persecution of Stephen. Wherever they went, they preached the Gospel and could truly be described as the Dispersion.

The Nature of Temptation

James 1:2-27

The proper attitude during trials (1:2-4)

Prejudice towards the Jews, which included Jewish Christians, existed universally among the pagans and often led to persecution. The time came when Jewish Christians were rejected also by non-Christian Jews. Since the Jewish Christians were in a minority in the Gentile world, they were being subjected constantly to affliction and ridicule. James advised them to count their trials 'wholly joyful' without any feeling of sorrow (v. 2). The word 'temptation' also means 'trial'. Trials are outward experiences and temptations to sin. If the persecuted would count their trials as "all joy," they would be able to escape their temptations to sin.

How many imperative sentences are there in the five chapters of James? \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Are these statements true or false?

1. Possibly James was well known and carried great authority among the Jews. \_\_\_\_\_
2. He wanted to encourage the Christians during a time of persecution. \_\_\_\_\_

(1. true, 2. true)

Match the following words and their meanings.

- \_\_\_ 1. Temptation
- \_\_\_ 2. Trial

- a. Internal enticement of man's spirit to turn from a life of faith to a life of evil.
- b. External troubles or afflictions which become the occasion for man to be tempted to forsake the life of faithfulness to God.

(a-1, b-2)

Trials result in the testing of faith (v. 3). When a person receives Christ as Saviour, he expects good fortune to come rather than troubles. When trouble appears, his faith is put to the test. A person can respond by either rebelling against his situation or by trusting God more fully with the expectation of being delivered eventually. The response of faith relates the person to God in such a way that God supplies sufficient grace to enable him to endure. Strength to endure enables him to wait patiently for God to bring about His will and to fulfil His promises (v. 3).

When patience has its full effect, the Christian life develops in maturity and completeness (v. 4). The Christians were exhorted to rejoice in trials because trials result in the maturing of Christian character. Trials cause a person to rely on God and to live in the power of God rather than in his own strength.

The need of wisdom during trials (1:5-8)

Wisdom is man's ability to guide his ways aright. Trials and afflictions may tempt him to change his way of living. If he has professed faith in Christ and yet continues to experience hardships, he may become impatient and lose his zeal for Christian living. Man needs wisdom from God to know how to conduct his life, especially during trials (v. 5). He will never go astray by seeking to know God's will for his life.

Man needs spiritual insight and not just an awareness of the 'ups and downs' of the physical life. Spiritual insight will save him from slipping back into the ways of the unregenerate man when temptations come. Paul stated that no one knows the mind of God except the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:11ff.). Christians have received the Spirit of God; therefore, they have available the wisdom which God teaches. True wisdom is spiritual discernment. If man lacks wisdom, he can ask of God and be assured that God will respond liberally without upbraiding (v. 5). God will not chide him for lacking wisdom, but He desires that every man have spiritual insight which comes through His Spirit who dwells within.

When man asks of God something which God has promised, he ought to expect to receive it (v. 6). God does not desire to withhold from man that which is beneficial. God is love; therefore, man should not doubt that his heavenly Father will bestow good gifts on him when he asks in faith. If man fails to have confidence (faith) in God, he is unstable, like a wave of the sea which is tossed about by the wind (v. 6). One day he will be zealous for the will of God. The next day he will be questioning whether God answers prayers. The double-minded man has two loyalties: himself and God. Faith is exercising his loyalty to God by submitting to God and depending on Him to

*Underline the statement which shows how trials are helpful.*

1. *Trials cause a person to rely on his own strength.*
2. *Trials cause a person to rely on God and to live in His power.*

*(Compare your answer with the text.)*

*When trials tempt man to compromise, he needs God's \_\_\_\_\_ to help him know how to conduct his life.*

*(wisdom)*

*True wisdom is s \_\_\_\_\_ d \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(spiritual discernment)*

*For the double-minded man, faith enables him to exercise his \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ by submitting to \_\_\_\_\_ and depending on \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(loyalty, God, God, Him)*

guide and provide for his life. Doubt points in the direction of unbelief, which means to turn one's life from dependence on God to dependence on self. Doubt does not mean necessarily that a person renounces his religion, but it does mean that he thinks the power for Christian living depends on himself instead of on God's grace. The self-dependent man cannot expect to receive anything from God (v. 7). He is unstable in all his ways because his own strength and wisdom are inadequate to cope with life's situations (v. 8). When man thinks he has to face trials in his own strength, he is unsure of himself because he is aware of his own finiteness and human limitations. Those who believe that salvation must be merited by man can never have assurance that they are saved, for they know their own sinfulness. Those who depend on God for salvation and victory in this life have assurance and joy even though trials come.

The value of humility during trials (1:9-11)

When a person receives Christ as Saviour, he does not become immune to afflictions and troubles. He does, however, experience a new power which enables him to rise above them and to experience joy and victory in spite of them. Whether man is rich or poor, it is profitable for him to recognize humbly what he is. The Christian who has few material possessions can rejoice in the wealth of his spiritual heritage (v. 9). He is a son of the King. The man who is rich should behold his material possessions in humility, for they will pass away along with himself, like the flowering grass (v. 10). The worth of man does not depend on his material possessions. They are temporal, but he is eternal. Material wealth can be enjoyed for only a brief period. Man's existence beyond the material expands into countless ages. Often the poor man is driven to greater dependence (faith) on God than the wealthy man; therefore, the poor man is better prepared for eternity with God.

Life in the material realm may be pleasant for a season, but trials come like the hot sun and the scorching wind which wither the grass (v. 11). The freshness of the morning flower ends in death (v. 11). The rich man who neglects God may begin his life free from affliction, but the time will come when his life will confront death and eternity. Death comes to the rich as well as to the poor.

The right understanding of trials and temptations (1:12-16)

The word for trials in verse 2 is the same word which is translated 'temptation' in verse 12. Trials are external problems or afflictions, and they are occasions for temptations. Actually, verse 12

*Doubt involves two things:*

1. *The sincere questioning of whether dependence on \_\_\_\_\_ is worthwhile;*
2. *The temptation to revert to \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(God, self-dependence)*

*Underline the correct description of what happens when a person receives Christ as Saviour.*

1. *He becomes immune to afflictions and troubles.*
2. *He experiences a new power which helps him have joy and victory in spite of afflictions.*

(2)

deals with trials which are to be endured, and verses 13-15 deal with temptations which are to be resisted. When a man is faithful to God in the midst of trials, he is approved and shall receive the crown of life (v. 12). Jesus informed His disciples that during their lifetime there would be wars and rumours of wars. They would be delivered up to be afflicted, and some would be killed. They would be hated by people of every nation because of their Christian stance. He did not promise that He would come and deliver them from their afflictions, but He did promise that whoever endured to the end in spite of afflictions and troubles would be saved (cf. Matt. 24:4-14). James stated essentially the same thing in verse 12. A man will face trials of affliction, but if he endures them he will receive the crown of life which the Lord promises to them who love Him.

Although all things are of God, He does not send afflictions deliberately upon men to tempt them to turn away. This world is under the authority of an evil power who opposes God and His people. Afflictions result from the work of this evil power. Since God is supreme, the evil power can do no more than God permits him to do, but the prince of the world is the source of man's trials. External troubles become the occasion for man's temptation to forsake the life of faithfulness to God (v. 13). Since God is not the source of man's affliction, he should not say that he is tempted of God (v. 13). However, God does permit trials and uses them to mature man's faith.

Temptation which is internal and concerns man's spirit is an enticement to turn from the life of faith to a life of evil, centred in this world. The Spirit of God, who abides within man to guide him in the truth, does not entice him to turn away from God in the midst of trials. Man's own lust lures him away from the spiritual life to a life focused on the material world (v. 14).

The world became afflicted with evil as a result of sin. Original creation did not include trouble and affliction. Man's environment fell when he yielded to the influence of the serpent and disobeyed God. When man took of the forbidden fruit, his natural desire for food was perverted and misused. Man was permitted to eat of every tree which would have satisfied his instinctive hunger within acceptable limits. Man's physical instincts become his master when he does not control them according to their intended purposes. Man's body was meant to be the servant of his spirit, not the prison of it.

An over-emphasis on natural desires is lust. Man can so permit his life to be centred on the satisfaction of physical desires that he neglects his relationship to God. His inclination to permit his

Verses 12-15 of Chapter 1 deal with trials which are to be \_\_\_\_\_ and temptations which are to be \_\_\_\_\_.

(endured, resisted)

Write which--man's own lust or the Spirit of God--causes man to focus on each of the following:

The spiritual life                      The material world

(The spiritual life--the Spirit of God, The material world--man's own lust)

Lust is an over-emphasis on \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

natural desires to be in control of his life is the basis of his enticement to change the centre of life from God to the material (v. 14). When lust (uncontrolled natural desires) matures and takes control, it brings forth sin (v. 15). Sin is man's rejection of God's control over his life in order to gain freedom to do what he pleases. It is an attempt to live independently of God. Sin grows out of pride and self interest, which claim the right for sensual desires to have their way without restraint. Man seeks his fulfilment in the material realm which God has created rather than in his Creator. Since man is dependent on his Creator, to turn away from God is to enter the realm of death (v. 15). As a creature he cannot sustain life. Man should take care not to be deceived (v. 16). To refuse to submit his desires to the will of God will result in sin and death.

When uncontrolled natural desires or lusts dominate, man seeks his fulfilment in the m \_\_\_\_\_ realm which God has created rather than in his C \_\_\_\_\_.

(material, Creator)

Correct thinking about life during trials (1:17-18)

Even though God is not the source of afflictions which try man's faith, he is the source of every good and perfect gift (v. 17). The fact that God permits man to face struggles and trials is good also if he faces them with faith. What happens to man is bad only if evil which springs from his own lust causes him to respond in unbelief.

The reason that gifts from above are perfect is because they come down from the "Father of lights" (v. 17). God's gifts do not tempt man to do evil. God is good and what He does for man is always constant. He does not bestow good gifts upon him one moment and confront him with an enticement to sin the next. God is consistent. Although the sun appears constant, it has periodic variations. At different times of the year, it casts various lengths of shadows. The moon varies constantly because it changes positions with reference to the earth. On occasions, the moon is shadowed completely by the earth. God does not change as the heavenly bodies and their shadows do (v. 17).

*Underline the correct word.*

(God, Satan) tempts man to do evil.

(Satan)

To illustrate the good gifts which come from above, the author referred to the new birth which is the work of God through His Word of Truth (v. 18). Man's birth from above is based on God's will, not on his own accomplishments. The Word of Truth is the Gospel of Jesus Christ concerning redemption from the power of sin and death and concerning translation into the Kingdom of God. Although God has created all men, those who have been born again are "a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (v. 18). "A kind of" indicates the figurative nature of the statement. It is taken from the requirement of the Jewish law that the first-born of men and cattle and the first growth of fruits and grain are to be given to the Lord. Christians have been begotten from above by the will of God, and

*Write either God's will or his own accomplishments in the blanks to make the following statement true.*

Man's birth from above is based on \_\_\_\_\_ and not on \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

they belong to Him in a special way above other creatures.

The appropriate response to God during trials (1:19-21)

The readers were again called "brethren" and were admonished to fear and obey the Word of Truth which had brought them forth (v. 19). Man must be willing to listen to God's Word with a readiness to respond ("swift to hear"). The Word of God is more than inanimate sound waves. It is God's power by which His will is accomplished. The Word which brought about man's new birth has been implanted within him and is able to save his soul (v. 21). John identified Jesus as the Incarnate Word which dwelt with man. He spoke of the Comforter whom Jesus sent as the Spirit of Truth which dwelt within man. The expressed Word of God is more than a written statement; it is His redemptive power.

Man is to be slow to speak because careless speech reveals his own perverted desires and will. The man who is swift to hear seeks and follows God's will. The man who is swift to speak externalizes his own desires, a process which leads to wrong actions. Especially is he to be slow to speak when he is angry. Man's wrath prevents God's righteousness from being carried out (v. 20).

James admonished the readers to lay aside the dirty garments of an impure life which results from man's attempts to live his life in his own way. A man's sinful nature results in evil actions. He is to put away his sinful self-control and to be controlled by the implanted Word which brought about his birth from above (v. 21). A meek person is one who is controlled but not necessarily weak. A person who is controlled by self is not meek but sinful. The implanted Word produces meekness by controlling the life of the believer.

Wise actions during trials (1:22-27)

Since God's Word is not idle prattle but redemptive power, it is important that Christians give the utmost heed to it. There must be a unity between hearing and doing if man is to respond properly to the Word of God. To hear the Word of God and not put it into practice is to deceive oneself. This type of deception is a disease which has continued to be prevalent among Christians. Most Christians who attend worship on Sunday say 'amen' to the sermon which is preached, but the application of the Gospel of love to business practices and work responsibilities during the week seems impractical. To approve of the message on Sunday and not apply it during the week is to deceive self by false reasoning (v. 22).

The Word of God is His r \_\_\_\_\_  
p \_\_\_\_\_.

(redemptive power)

Write slow and swift in the blanks below to make a correct statement.

During trials, man is to be \_\_\_\_\_ to speak and \_\_\_\_\_ to hear.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Which word best describes a meek person: weak or controlled? \_\_\_\_\_

(controlled)

A prevalent failure of Christians is to \_\_\_\_\_ the Word of God and not to put it into \_\_\_\_\_.

(hear, practice)

The man who hears the Word catches a fleeting view of what God means for him to be, like a person who catches a glimpse of himself in a mirror (v. 23). The person who fails to practise what he hears does not portray what God intended for him to be as reflected by the Word. He is like the man who catches a glimpse of his reflection in a mirror but forgets what he is like after he goes his way (v. 24). The man who puts into practice the Word of God does not forget the reflection of what he is to be as revealed by the Word (v. 24).

The true listener is one who sees from God's Word what he ought to be and applies it to actual life. He does not see a code of external rules and regulations but the perfect law of liberty. The application of what he sees is not in terms of ceremonies and sacrifices but a freedom from these to do God's will in expressing Christian love (v. 25). He does not forget what he hears; therefore, what he does is consistent with what he hears. His task is not the distasteful duty of going through ceremonies, but it is the blessing of helping others by good deeds. The law of liberty does not bind him to irrelevant legal actions, but his new birth in Christ enables him to gain liberty for participation in actions which express his new nature.

It is very easy to pretend to be religious by boasting of one's piety (v. 26). If one's religion is only as deep as his boasting, it is shallow and he is deceiving himself. It is important, therefore, that he "bridleth" his tongue. In addition to boasting, the unbridled tongue might revert to gossip. Both are unbecoming for Christians.

In contrast to vain religion composed of boasting, pure religion is expressing works of love (v. 27). To redirect interest from self to the needs of others is genuine concern. To help underprivileged orphans and widows is pure religion in contrast to vain religion, which is trying to impress others with one's piety. True religion does pay attention to self—to keep oneself unspotted from the world (v. 27).

The Nature of Faith

James 2:1-26

The author employed the Greek diatribe style in this chapter. He wrote as if he were carrying on a dialogue with an audience. His subject was "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 1). His purpose was to show that faith is not an empty profession but must be expressed in external works of love.

*The man who applies the Word of God does not forget the r \_\_\_\_\_ of what he is to be as revealed by the W \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(reflection, Word)*

*The true listener's actions are consistent with what he \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(hears)*

*Notice the contrast between vain religion and pure religion.*

*Vain religion is composed of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Pure religion is expressing works of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

*In James 2, the author shows that faith is not an \_\_\_\_\_; faith must be expressed in external \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(empty profession, works of love)*

The life of faith overcomes prejudice (2:1-7)

Again, the author referred to his recipients as "brethren" (v. 1). Their showing partiality to certain persons was inconsistent with their profession of faith. Ronald Knox translates the verse, "Brethren, you believe that all glory belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ; do not combine this faith of yours with flattery of human greatness."

Since man is created in the image of God, he possesses human dignity regardless of his social position or economic status. The Pharisees emphasized the distinction of persons, believing that the wealthy were especially blessed of God for their righteousness. Special honour was paid to them and to those who held particular religious positions. A temptation in the Church today is to distinguish between clergy and laymen. Most churches show much greater concern for one of their wealthy members who is ill than for a poor member. It should be remembered that the poor have the same feelings and desires to be accepted, to feel important, and to be missed as the wealthy.

James pointed out that in his day, when a wealthy man wearing a gold ring and expensive clothes entered the synagogue, special attention was shown to him and he was seated comfortably (vv. 2-3). If a man whose clothing indicated he was poor entered the assembly, he was instructed to stand or to sit on the floor (v. 3). Such partiality shown to the rich contradicted the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus associated with the poor and needy. Most of the wealthy Pharisees and Sadducees rejected the teachings of Jesus; therefore, to show partiality when they occasionally attended the assembly was inconsistent.

The word used for assembly is 'synagogue'. The term may have been used to denote the meeting place without implying that the Christians were meeting in a Jewish service. Synagogue could refer to the coming together of the Church.

To make distinction between the rich and poor and to show partiality towards the rich is to be double-minded. Even though one worships and attempts to focus his thought on the spiritual, to show partiality for the wealthy indicates that the real concern is for the material things of this world. Such actions reveal that the members have become judges with evil thoughts; that is, their distinction between the rich and the poor is based on evil motives (v. 4).

The "beloved brethren" were reminded that God is the God of the poor and underprivileged (v. 5). He chose the Israelites, who were slaves, to be His people. His power and love are best demonstrated in

Because man is created in the image of God, he possesses human d \_\_\_\_\_, regardless of his s \_\_\_\_\_ p \_\_\_\_\_ or e \_\_\_\_\_ s \_\_\_\_\_.

(dignity, social position, economic status)

Partiality towards the wealthy contradicts the faith of Jesus who associated with the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

(poor, needy)

To show partiality towards the rich is to be \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.

Is this statement true or false?

Distinguishing between the rich and poor in a service gives evidence that the thoughts of the worshippers are on material things.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Compare your answers with the text.)

the lives of those who are underprivileged and cannot do things for themselves. Jesus was scorned by the religious leaders and wealthy people of His day because He ministered to the publicans and sinners. The Church's discrimination against the poor revealed a disgraceful contrast to God's great acts in history and to the ministry of Jesus.

The people who belong to God are elected or chosen (v. 5). God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith; therefore, they should not be discriminated against. The writer saw the wealth and the kingdoms of this world as insignificant in comparison to the Kingdom which God has promised His elect people who love Him. James made direct reference to the Kingdom only once in the epistle; however, the concept is implied frequently in his contrast between life in the world and life in relation to God. The poor of this world are rich because they are heirs of the Kingdom (v. 5). The Lord Jesus Christ is the Messiah who is ruling in the glorious Kingdom rather than over the world (cf. 2:1).

The double-mindedness of the readers is reflected in the fact that they showed honour to the wealthy who actually dominated them and took them into law courts. On the other hand, the poor who treated the Christians with respect were dishonoured in the assembly (v. 6). John Calvin pointed out that it is very strange to honour one's executioners and in the meantime to injure one's friends.

James gave four reasons why it was unwise for his readers to show preference for the wealthy:

1. Partiality revealed double-mindedness and evil motives (v. 4).
2. God chose the poor rather than the rich as heirs of His Kingdom (v. 5).
3. The rich who were honoured by the Christians were the very ones who had oppressed them and brought them into courts of law.
4. The wealthy spoke evil of the name of Christ by which Christians are called.

The wealthy may have been non-Christian Jews who occasionally visited the worship services of the Christians. They were from a group who opposed Christ and continued to be identified with that position as long as they remained in Judaism. If Gentiles were the wealthy visitors to the assembly, perhaps they profaned the name of Christ and made light of the Christian doctrines.

Unscramble the letters in these two words to fill in the blanks:

ropo  
hirc

God has chosen the \_\_\_\_\_ of this world to be \_\_\_\_\_ in faith.

The poor of this world are rich because they are heirs of the \_\_\_\_\_.

(poor, rich, Kingdom)

The life of faith fulfils the royal law (2:8-13)

In speaking of the royal commandment, James used the word which usually referred to the body of commandments rather than a single commandment. His usage was appropriate, however, since one commandment sums up the entire Law. Perhaps James was presenting an imaginary excuse which the flatterers of the rich used to justify their actions (v. 8). Jesus had stated that on the law of love hang all the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 22:40). The guide to love is the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you (cf. Matt. 7:12). Those guilty of partiality to the rich probably tried to justify their actions on the basis of the Great Commandment and the Golden Rule. James contradicted them by showing that partiality does not fulfil the Royal Law but is the committing of sin (v. 9). The Christians would not desire to be treated as inferior by the wealthy and neither would the poor; thus the Christian's treatment of the poor broke the law of love. Although they could justify their treating the wealthy with respect, their discrimination against the poor left them guilty of transgressing the Law (v. 9). To transgress the Law in one point, even though it was kept in another, results in condemnation (v. 10). Men cannot claim to be righteous by keeping only that part of the Law which they desire to keep. He does not have to break every commandment to be guilty of sin and to come under condemnation as a transgressor of the Law (v. 11).

It appears that the Royal Law is concerned primarily with the treatment of one's neighbour. The second table of the Ten Commandments regulates man's relation to his fellow-man. These commitments are named specifically in James' discussion (v. 11). If one has genuine love for his neighbour, he will not rob him of purity by committing adultery or of life by killing. Either act is a transgression of the Law and brings one under condemnation.

The law of liberty is not equivalent to multiplied religious rules which a person must memorize and practise legalistically. The law of liberty is the law of love. Love is concern for one's fellow-man to the extent that he who loves is willing to sacrifice to meet the needs of others. It is incompatible with taking life, purity, property, or reputation. Commandments forbid certain deeds, but the law of love goes beyond and impels benevolent actions. The Christian should evaluate his life in the light of the law of liberty, not in the light of the commandments (v. 12). Simply to follow the commandments by refraining from treating others unjustly is not an expression of love.

Christians have not been dealt with on the basis of judgement; that is, God does not base His promise on what they deserve. God goes beyond

*Partiality caused the Christians to treat the poor as inferior and to violate the \_\_\_\_\_ and the commandment of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(Golden Rule, love)*

*The law of liberty is the law of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Is this statement true or false?*

*Refraining from treating others unjustly is an expression of love. \_\_\_\_\_*

*(love, false)*

justice and deals with them on the basis of mercy. Justice is negative in that it requires a man to refrain from harming his neighbour. Mercy and love are positive in that they require undeserved actions in benefiting one's neighbour. Since God is love as well as just, man's just treatment of others is not sufficient to prepare him for fellowship with his Creator. A heart of love is willing to overlook the trespasses of others. God deals with the Christian in mercy; therefore, the Christian is obligated to show mercy towards his fellow-man (v. 13). To uphold the requirements of justice brings no joy, only protection. To go beyond justice and express mercy brings joy.

The relation between faith and action (2:14-26)

The diatribe of rhetorical questions and answers is prominent in these verses. James' purpose was to show that real faith is lacking if there are no real works of love. He does not say, "though a man hath faith" but "though a man say he hath faith, and have not works." In this statement, James makes a distinction between professed and real faith. Real faith must be expressed by works of love. Professed faith is revealed by its lack of works. Professed faith cannot save man (v. 14). Real faith saves him.

Real faith is submission to Christ which brings new birth into the Kingdom. New birth means that the Spirit of God, who is love, comes to abide in man's heart to control his actions. The indwelling Spirit expresses His nature of love through the works of man. As long as the Spirit is controlling his actions, man will be performing works according to God's nature, which is love. Professed faith omits submission to Christ's control and thus does not lead to spiritual birth from above.

One who has professed faith only continues to be dominated by pride and self-interest. He is unaware of the nakedness and hunger of his fellow-man (v. 15). His life continues to be centred on himself and his efforts are devoted to gaining things for himself. Because of his self-centred life, he is not able to enter into the feelings of others. With a lack of concern, he simply says to the needy, "depart in peace, be ye warm and filled" (v. 16). He does not feel for those who are cold or hungry; therefore, he does not share what he possesses to meet their needs. He forgets that God made the poor as well as the rich. God is as concerned about the poor as the wealthy. A faith which does not express itself in works of love is unprofitable, for it is only profession and not reality. Such a faith is ineffective. It leaves one dead in his sins rather than alive in the Kingdom through a new birth (v. 17).

The Hebrew concept of life did not make a sharp distinction between intellectual doctrinal beliefs

Fill in the blanks in the characteristics of justice and love.

JUSTICE

1. N \_\_\_\_\_
2. Refrain from \_\_\_\_\_ his \_\_\_\_\_.

LOVE

1. P \_\_\_\_\_
2. Undeserved actions in \_\_\_\_\_ one's neighbour.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Draw lines to match the following counterparts.

Real faith	revealed by lack of works
Professed faith	expressed by works of love

(Real faith--expressed by works of love, Professed faith-- revealed by lack of works)

What must control man's actions so that he will perform works according to God's nature? \_\_\_\_\_

(the Spirit)

and their practical expressions. An atheist does not deny necessarily with his lips that there is a God but by his conduct. In the same manner, the lack of loving activities reveals no faith (v. 18). A genuine faith, which is submission to Christ and birth from above, is expressed in works of love.

The writer used another illustration to distinguish between professed and real faith. The devils do not question but believe there is one God (v. 19). The devils know the day will come when they will be judged by God; nevertheless, it is not their nature to submit and to be controlled by Him but to oppose Him. Their knowledge of the fact that there is a God who punishes the wicked is not a redemptive belief or faith. The devils tremble because they know of the condemnation awaiting them. They have an intellectual belief. Man can have an intellectual belief that God exists, but if that belief does not control the way he lives, it is dead (v. 20). Man's life is to be controlled by what he believes rather than by his selfish desires (feelings). If his desires control him, his belief is dead and ineffective. Real faith is the kind of belief in God that invites His control of one's life. The word 'God' means Ultimate Being who is Creator, Sustainer, and Judge. A man with redeeming faith accepts the dependency of his creaturely life and conforms to the purpose and will of his Creator.

Abraham is used as another illustration to prove that real faith must include works. Paul also referred to Abraham to illustrate the other side of the argument: a man is not justified by works but by faith. There is actually no conflict in the two positions. Paul was refuting legalistic works but not works of love. He insisted that a man cannot be saved by keeping the external ceremonial and legal laws of Judaism. Salvation comes as a result of faith (trusting and submitting to Christ) which brings about a union with Christ. Legalistic works do not change the nature of a person; but Christ, who by faith is invited to abide in man, does change his nature and thereby his actions. Abraham was loyal to God because he believed in God and followed his will and not because he followed certain traditional rules. James held to the same position; he simply stated it differently.

Abraham's loyalty and faithfulness proved his belief in God (v. 21). The fact that Abraham was willing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice proved his faith in God. His works demonstrated what he believed. Abraham's faith was vindicated by his works, but his works were a result of his belief in God. Abraham's faith cooperated with his works in the sense that his faith led him to perform acts of obedience, called "works" (v. 22). Had Abraham not believed in God and God's power to keep His promises, he would not have been willing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. His faith in God was made complete by his works; that is, faith

The devils have an \_\_\_\_\_ belief in God. Their nature is to \_\_\_\_\_ Him.

(intellectual, oppose)

Paul insisted that a man cannot be saved by keeping ceremonial and legal laws of \_\_\_\_\_.

Submission to Christ results in Christ's \_\_\_\_\_ being done through \_\_\_\_\_.

(Judaism, will, man)

Abraham's \_\_\_\_\_ in God was made complete by his \_\_\_\_\_.

(faith, works)

has to be expressed in actions to be real. Faith which is not so expressed is superficial and only professed.

James made reference to Abraham's belief in God as expressed in Genesis 15:6. Abraham's faith established him in a right relationship with God ("it was imputed unto him for righteousness"—v. 23). His faith 'worked with his works' and was completed by being expressed in his works. A man is made righteous by a real faith expressed in actions and not simply by a professed faith (v. 24). Paul did not deny that the Christian who is justified by faith would produce righteous acts. He emphasized that it is impossible for a sinner to do right acts because of his evil desires (cf. Rom. 7:14ff.). Man's hope is not in dependence on himself to be able to please God through keeping legalistic rules and ceremonies. His only hope is for Christ to enter his life and to replace the sinful man. The indwelling Spirit brings about fruits of the Spirit which are works of love expressed through the life of the spiritually begotten. James' argument was similar except he did not give emphasis to the mystical, internal experience of Christ's dwelling within. He focused on the practical, external expression of the religious experience.

James used the illustration of Rahab to show the importance of Christian actions in revealing faith. Since Rahab had not been associated with the Israelites in the wilderness, her belief in Israel's God would not have been known if she had not cast her lot with the Israelites by hiding the spies (v. 25). Her actions revealed that she trusted Israel's God.

In evaluating the importance of faith and works, James did not hold that works are more important than faith. The spirit of man is elevated above the body, which is controlled by man's spirit and which houses it. The spirit is ineffective without the body, and the body is dead without the spirit (v. 26). Faith is a spiritual reality which needs works through which to express itself. James compared faith without works to a body without a spirit: both are dead (v. 26). Works give faith living reality just as the spirit gives life to the body.

*James said that a man is made righteous by a real faith expressed in \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(actions)*

*James' approach to faith differed from Paul's in this way:*

<u>James</u>	<u>Paul</u>
<i>Practical, external expression of _____</i>	<i>Mystical experience of Christ's dwell- ing _____</i>

*(faith, within)*

*As the spirit gives life to the body, so  
\_\_\_\_\_ give \_\_\_\_\_ living reality.*

*(works, faith)*

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. What are the general Catholic and Protestant attitudes towards the Epistle of James? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. When did James become established in the canon? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Name four arguments which support the traditional view of authorship. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Give three indications of James' leadership in the Jerusalem Church. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. List four reasons for opposing the traditional view of authorship. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What was the purpose of James? \_\_\_\_\_
7. To whom was the epistle written? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Give two indications the epistle was written at an early date. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What is meant by Greek diatribe and paranesis? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Why would James have written a letter to Jews scattered throughout the empire? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Distinguish between temptation and trials. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. How are trials helpful? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Why does man need wisdom during temptation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. What does faith do for the double-minded man? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. What is doubt? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Distinguish between natural desires and lust. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. How is man to respond during trials? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. Explain James 1:24. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. What was the author's purpose in writing in Chapter 2? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
20. Give three reasons partiality should not be shown to the rich. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
21. Why does partiality contradict the Royal Law? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
22. What is the law of liberty? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
23. Distinguish between a life of justice and of love. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

24. Distinguish between professed faith and real faith. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
25. Define the relation of faith in works according to:
- (1) The devils. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (2) Paul. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (3) James. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
26. How did James' and Paul's approaches to faith differ? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Supplementary activity (Level 2):

Read pages 93-107 in Bowman and answer the following questions.

1. Whom does Bowman consider to be the author of this epistle?
2. Explain the difference between trials, testings, and temptations.
3. Describe God's Word according to James 1:19-27.
4. How does Bowman explain the relation of faith and works in James 2:14-26?

Advance activity (Level 3)

Read pages 13-71 in The General Epistle of James by R.V.G. Tasker and answer the following questions.

1. Give a brief summary of the response to the Epistle of James in the early Church and during the Reformation period.
2. Whom does Tasker believe to be the author of the epistle and what support does he give for his view?
3. Why should Christians rejoice in trials?
4. Explain the relation of trials and temptations.
5. What did the showing of respect of persons reveal about the recipients of the epistle?
6. Explain Tasker's position on the relation of faith and works.

### Seminar Discussion

1. Why has the Epistle of James been an object of controversy in the Church?
2. Who is the probable author of the epistle? Support your answer.
3. Why should a Christian count his trials as "all joy"?
4. Why are Christians afflicted, and what is the relation of afflictions to trials and temptations?
5. Define James' concept of faith. Does it contradict or agree with Paul's?